

Spring 2007, Volume 27

# THE WILDWOOD JOURNAL

The literary arts magazine of HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College, and all of its campuses



"HOME VOL. 2" - BY DANIELLE PERZACKI

*Featured Writer*  
**DAVID LIU**

**THE WILDWOOD JOURNAL**  
Spring 2007

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- David A. Smith Printing, Inc., our printer. Thank you. This is Smith's 10th consecutive issue.
- And to all reading this issue, thank you for taking the time. We live in hectic times, occasionally you have to stop and smell a picture of a rose, on your phone, while in the drive-thru, late, on your way to class...

# THE WILDWOOD JOURNAL

Spring 2007, Volume 27



David Liu, Professor of Sociology  
HACC's Harrisburg Campus

## FEATURED WRITER: DAVID LIU

- 5 Notes on Writing
- 7 A Note on the Author
- 8 breakfast chez moi
- 8 family business
- 9 workaday
- 10 let's (for Sherri)
- 10 the view
- 11 what happened?
- 11 What I don't want to talk about

## 2007 CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

- 1 Home Vol. 2 (Front Cover)  
BY DANIELLE PERZACKI
- 12 Untitled  
BY CANDICE LUCIANI
- 13 The Underground Man  
BY LOGAN NORRIS
- 16 We Don't Get You!  
BY DAVE GROSS
- 17 She (Puzzle No. 1)  
BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI
- 18 Bourn  
BY MATTHEW RISSMILLER
- 18 Bubbles  
BY JOE PRESTINE
- 18 Driving Faster than Kennedy's Motorcade  
BY BRIAN KIRK
- 19 My Grandmother, the Spider  
BY KATIE CIBORT
- 20 Self-Portrait Age 20  
BY ALLISON MUSHALLO
- 21 Night Rain  
BY LARA MULLINS
- 21 Colors in a Bar  
BY STEPHANIE YAROLIN
- 22 Mr. Depp, You Make My Legs Quiver  
BY JESSICA CONRAD
- 22 Mr. Depp, You Make My Legs Quiver, II  
BY JESSICA CONRAD
- 22 My Mother  
BY SANDRINE SIMÉON
- 25 Pressure  
BY REBEKAH ALLINGHAM
- 27 Billy Casey  
BY DEBRA HELWIG
- 27 The Uncatchable Mr. Ocean  
BY ASHLEE SHILDT
- 28 Untitled  
BY CANDICE LUCIANI
- 29 Random Shuffle  
BY JESSICA CONRAD
- 31 Sky at Midnight  
BY JESSICA CONRAD
- 32 Santo  
BY FELIX CARABALLO

## Contents (continued)

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>33 Messenger</b><br>BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI                      | <b>38 Jack Daniels' 409</b><br>BY CANDICE LUCIANI         | <b>51 All Men Are Rapists</b><br>BY MICHAEL WARD II |
| <b>34 Two Lovers Fading in Front of New Lovers</b><br>BY BRIAN KIRK | <b>39 The Silence</b><br>BY C. CARLIN SHEARER             | <b>51 Looking at the Sky</b><br>BY MICHAEL WARD II  |
| <b>34 The Reason Luzhin Killed Himself</b><br>BY LOGAN NORRIS       | <b>40 TV Guide</b><br>BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI             | <b>52 Rosalie</b><br>BY SANDRINE SIMÉON             |
| <b>34 Nineteen</b><br>BY AMANDA BALLEW                              | <b>42 Get Me Away from Here</b><br>BY JASON SMITH         | <b>53 Untitled</b><br>BY LARA MULLINS               |
| <b>35 Ugly Mothers Birth Heavenly Slobs</b><br>BY ANTHONY JONES     | <b>44 She (Puzzle No. 2)</b><br>BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI   | <b>55 Internet Minuet</b><br>BY DEBORAH L. PACKER   |
| <b>36 In The Deep</b><br>BY MATT FORTIN                             | <b>45 The Ritual</b><br>BY DEVVIN EARNEST                 | <b>55 Ode to the Night</b><br>BY KARA REAGAN        |
| <b>37 Trans-instrumental</b><br>BY CANDICE LUCIANI                  | <b>46 An Unintended Discharge</b><br>BY DEBORAH L. PACKER |   |
|   | <b>48 Untitled</b><br>BY ALLISON MUSHALLO                 |   |

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# FEATURED WRITER

## Notes on Writing

### I

I was asked to write this little essay as an introduction to some of my poems that are included in this edition of *The Wildwood Journal*. Not having been given any specific guidelines or imperatives, I found myself in a state that can be both liberating and alarming. After all, any author needs first to consider his audience and needs to carefully consider what topic may catch and hold their interest.

I thought to myself, “Who is going to be reading this anyway?” Students, teachers, bookworms, casual or avid poetry fans, or someone who was using this journal as a coaster and just happened to open it up? And what, indeed, am I supposed to be writing about here? My autobiography? My influences and inspirations? The meaning of poetry? The process of writing?

The only thing I know about you is that you are reading this—and that already puts you in a very elite class. Not because these words are extraordinary or because this little volume you are holding requires complicated operating instructions. But because you are involved in an activity and a process that fewer and fewer people—especially young people—are taking the time in which to engage. I’m referring, broadly, to reading in general, but, more specifically, to reading literature and poetry. After all, most people ask: Why bother? Where is it going to get me? It doesn’t seem to be a very useful or practical pursuit. How can it help me get a job, put food on the table, or (times being what they are) fill up the gas tank?

As you might guess, I’m not really interested in responding to questions like those, and I trust (since you are here and they are there), your answers would probably resemble mine anyway.

You, however, are reading this because you are vexed by a different kind of question to which this little journal, you hope, may provide some succor. These are questions of a different order, of a different magnitude. They are simple and timeless. To me, they are the heart of the matter. They are two questions that just won’t go away even when you turn up the volume or turn down the lights. They demand our consideration even as they, ironically, answer themselves in being asked:

**Question 1. What does it mean to be human?**

**Question 2. What makes life worth living?**

This is it in a nutshell. These are the most important questions in the world. In fact, they are more important than the world because the world cannot contain them any more than the acorn can contain the oak.

“OK,” you say, “those are the questions. But what about some answers?”

While I cannot answer what makes *your* life worth living (that is the wonder of you), for me, it’s pretty clear. Not simple. Not easy. But clear.

To be human is to quest after truth, and the experience of beauty makes life worth living. The former is both a splendid charge and a humbling responsibility. The latter gives breath to the soul.

Notice that I did not say questing after *the* truth, as if it was some single, final, and fixed appurtenance. There is a truth to everything. There is a truth to fiction as much as there is a truth to fact. Our calling as humans (thank goodness) is thus never completed.

So we spend our lives questing after truth and experiencing beauty—or we don’t. Perhaps more accurately, we spend our lives trying to create the conditions where we may engage in the quest for truth and the experience of beauty—or we don’t.

We have many instruments of communication today, many more opportunities to communicate and share thoughts, ideas, and information. With all the technology and opportunities made available by new media forms—iPods®, YouTube™, MySpace® (it’s all about whom?), facebook, virtual chat rooms, and, of course, the now-ubiquitous cell phone—there is more exchanging of words, sounds, and images going on than ever before. But what are these people saying? What exactly do they think they are doing?

I don’t want to sound like an old fogey, but to my ears and eyes, people seem to be talking more today ... and saying less. As the old adage goes, people need to take the time to stop (text messaging) and smell the roses.



Before I start to sound too cranky, I need to get back to the subject of poetry. I have been talking about truth, beauty, and cell phones, because the conditions for poetry—both its being written and its being read—seem to be threatened. Poetry doesn’t have an exclusive purchase on truth and beauty—it’s just the medium I have chosen to write, and write about, in this forum.

Every art form requires something somewhat different from its reader, listener, or viewer. And if that art form is lost, another opportunity to experience what it means to be human is lost. Of course, part of the beauty of poetry is its form. The spare use of the word and the ample use of space sensitizes us to how speech works and how words mean.

Poetry is like the proverbial canary in the coalmine of truth and beauty. How so? As an art form, it is nearly extinct. It is not that fewer are writing it (though I know that fewer are reading it), as much as it seems to have lost much of its relevance and significance. “So what?” you may ask, “Aren’t there other art forms that are thriving—more websites being created, more movies being produced, more music being downloaded than ever before?” Yes, but... .

Poetry in particular requires and encourages three traits or, more aptly, habits of mind, of its enthusiasts. It is likely that if you lack any one of these habits of mind, you have stopped reading this essay a long way back. It is likely that if you are committed to cultivating these habits of mind, much of what I’ve been saying is familiar to you.

**1. Poetry is not for the impatient.**

You can’t fast-forward to the end of a poem. Well, I suppose you could, but where would that leave you? The meaning of a poem is revealed in and through the reading of every line. The experience of reading a poem is bound up with the meaning of poetry itself. And patience is a foundation for the second habit of mind.

**2. Poetry is not for those who are afraid of solitude.**

Solitude is the sine qua non of any creative act. Freedom from the bustle, distraction, noise, and

demands of everyday life is essential for the fertile workings of the imagination. This doesn't mean that one has to be physically alone, but that one is willing to dwell with oneself.

### 3. Poetry is not for those who are reluctant to learn about themselves.

Reading good poetry invariably inspires one to try to write it oneself. Writing clarifies, solidifies, and brings you a little closer to who you are. This is why some people are reluctant to write—even for themselves. Writing requires constant decision-making: what to leave out, what to leave in, what style to be used, what choice of language. And then, when the essay, letter, or poem is completed, there you are.



A good part of what it means to be human, what it means to be alive, is that we are connected to others—dead and living—in ways we are continually discovering. Part of the mystery of beauty is the way we are influenced by it. Sometimes it jolts us to the core, and sometimes it insinuates itself more subtly into our sensibilities in ways that are revealed when we try to create things of beauty ourselves.

Being fully human and making a life worth living are neither unchallenging nor without risks. But neither must they be solemn or grave undertakings. Life is both precious and durable, and art can provoke thought and mirth at the same time. In the writing that follows I hope you will have the opportunity to experience both.

I'll leave you with a short excerpt from one of my influences, the poet E. E. Cummings, for whom the experience of beauty was part of the quest for truth in every line he wrote. How shall we live and what shall we do? His challenge to each of us is both caveat and inspiration for those who follow the call of art and for those who choose to ignore it.

#### From *Six Nonlectures*:

"... so far as I am concerned, poetry and every other art as and is and forever will be strictly and distinctly a question of individuality. If poetry were anything—

like dropping an atombomb—which anyone did, anyone could become a poet merely by doing the necessary anything; whatever that anything might or might not entail. But (as it happens) poetry is being, not doing. If you wish to follow, even at a distance, the poet's calling...you've got to come out of the measurable doing universe into the immeasurable house of being. I am quite aware that, wherever our so-called civilization has slithered, there's every reward and no punishment for unbeing. But if poetry is your goal, you've got to forget all about punishments and all about rewards and all about self-styled obligations and duties and responsibilities etcetera ad infinitum and remember one thing only: that it's you—nobody else—who determines your destiny and decides your fate. Nobody else can be alive for you; nor can you be alive for anybody else. Toms can be Dicks and Dicks can be Harrys, but none of them can ever be you. There's the artist's responsibility; and the most awful responsibility on earth. If you can take it, take it—and be. If you can't, cheer up and go about other people's business; and do (or undo) till you drop." ■

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### A Note on the Author

David Liu teaches sociology at HACC's Harrisburg campus. Raised outside of Baltimore, Maryland, he graduated from Dickinson College and did his graduate studies at York University (Toronto, Canada).

In addition to academic works, he has published poetry, essays, and reviews on diverse topics in journals such as *The Red Rock Review*, *sub-Terrain Magazine*, *Prophetic Voices*, and *Dickinson Magazine*. He is currently noodling around with manuscript ideas.

## breakfast chez moi

i don't live in a  
perfect world  
not even one of my  
own making.  
my plants don't reside in  
perfect vases  
ceramic and Italian  
color coordinated.

my coats aren't hung  
neatly in a row  
separated by wooden hangers  
and potpourri,  
my towels aren't folded  
and tucked  
like letters  
mass mailed from  
a major multi-national.

the silverware i use  
inhabits a drawer  
resembling nothing like  
those little boxes of  
wooden matches  
pilfered from gourmet restaurants.

some books I've got  
and records too  
refuse to stand  
tall and straight  
eyes ahead  
like 6-week-old draftees.

the blinds need cleaning  
the floor waxing  
the tub a good once over

no perfect bookend  
felines here  
nor aquaria  
stuffed with tropical beauties

no taupe  
or mauve  
or pastels  
share this space

but there're  
flowers on the table  
a week old maybe  
but hanging tough  
60-watt light still burnin'  
strong and bright,  
the cats have names  
and my appetite's  
building by the  
minute.

## family business

i was in this Vietnamese  
coffee place  
8 or 10 tables  
where i go sometimes  
and there's never anybody there  
except the little Vietnamese  
wife and her infant child  
who is pre-ambulatory  
whom she feeds 2 or 3 times an hour  
and her husband  
always smoking cigarettes thin as  
a reed  
who goes out  
to buy some napkins  
or ice or cigarettes for himself  
or the place  
and usually comes back in with a  
broom or blanket  
for the infant.

and the wife knows which  
kind of coffee i like  
and brings it automatically  
and sometimes another guy  
older  
comes in and sits freely and talks  
in Vietnamese of course  
to the husband,  
and i imagine him to  
be the father-in-law  
or the father-in-law figure.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

the regular opening and closing  
hours are posted  
but they're never open then  
or they are  
and the place is shabby  
and falling apart  
but i always get the seat  
in front  
near the window obscured by  
plastic palm trees and  
mock flowers.

and the lights are never on  
not a single one  
during the daytime.  
but the door is always open  
shine or rain  
and the 2 or 3  
video games against the  
far wall  
even the poker machine  
"for amusement only"  
aren't even plugged in.

there's a small kitchen  
in back with  
a bulb and a burner.  
there's always something cooking  
though i never see  
anyone eating.  
and in front of the cash register  
on the small service counter  
is a huge aquarium  
of clear glass  
completely empty since  
i first started coming  
to the place.

yesterday  
when i was in  
mother was feeding child  
and husband went out and  
came back with some  
napkins and ice and cigarettes  
and a couple of small bags of  
crushed gravel  
and he poured the  
crushed gravel into the  
aquarium.

a little dust cloud rose  
like a small commotion  
from the bottom of  
the tank.  
then the father-in-law figure  
came in and sat down  
and they started talking  
and things were back to normal.

wonder if we'll get  
some fish soon?

### **workaday**

one thirty in the a.m.  
radio's tuned to 116 point 4  
wagner's humming to himself  
and half a bottle of good red wine remains  
less than an arm's length away.

tomorrow's a working day  
for some of the saner  
among us.

apartments are dark  
dark like the lives of  
their inhabitants.  
when do they find the time  
to think about death and sex  
and hate and sadness?  
do they know where  
to begin looking?

in five or six hours most will be  
rising and washing and  
driving and telephoning,  
locking their doors on the way out  
and unlocking others'  
on the way in.

for 8 hours they'll  
avoid death  
fantasize about the sex they're not getting  
hate their job  
confuse hunger for sadness.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

when the time's done  
they'll lock up  
drive  
unlock  
telephone  
wash  
and fall  
from this world into one  
hardly less  
different.

**let's** (for Sherri)

let's grow old together  
say  
we  
  
speaking from the  
me  
  
reinventing terms  
of  
endearment:  
"honeykins," "babycakes,"  
"dearydearest"  
  
dipping our apples  
in honey,  
  
atonement and promise  
  
let's turn our collars down  
ensemble  
let Bacchus roost in our  
rafters  
  
take turns framing  
time  
  
playing Chicken Little  
holding down the  
earth  
  
reminding each  
the splendor  
  
of the  
other.  
  
let's.

**the view**

floor  
to chair  
to table  
to television  
to top  
of  
bookcase  
  
from  
lowest to highest  
  
point  
in the room  
  
my cat  
  
jUmPs aNd LeAPs.  
  
i understand it.  
  
after all we humans built the  
  
  
  
the  
  
  
  
the  
  
  
  
and continue to hire  
guides with maps and  
ropes to glimpse  
as children  
what we couldn't forget  
even after falling  
out  
of the tree.

## what happened?

wudda ya mean  
what happened?

the passage of time  
the realignment of  
the planets  
the cycle of  
eternal return

wudda ya mean  
what happened?

inflation  
deforestation  
noxious emissions  
détente and rapprochement

special effects replaced  
black and white  
long ago  
wudda ya mean?

communism's failed  
so has law enforcement  
we're just beginning to feel the effects  
of family values and nuclear power  
without knowing where to dispose  
of the waste products of either  
what happened?

we've tamed the sky  
and earth  
and sea (almost)  
heaven's a hole in the  
ozone layer  
and god's struggling  
to get back into the schoolbooks.  
history was.  
and the future is ours  
for the taking  
wudda ya mean  
what happened?

where you been  
the last 6 or 7  
minutes?

## What I don't want to talk about

I don't want to talk about the power of poetry or the  
mystery of creating.

I don't want to talk about how to fry an egg.

I don't want to talk about sublime nature, or the  
nature of the sublime.

I don't want to talk about inspiration, motivation,  
irritation, desperation, exploration or consecration.

I don't want to talk about the homeless, the helpless,  
the hapless, or the heartless.

Aging is off the table. Illness is out of bounds. Angels  
are absent. Morality is missing.

The soul has departed.

Jargon, lingo, dialect, slang.

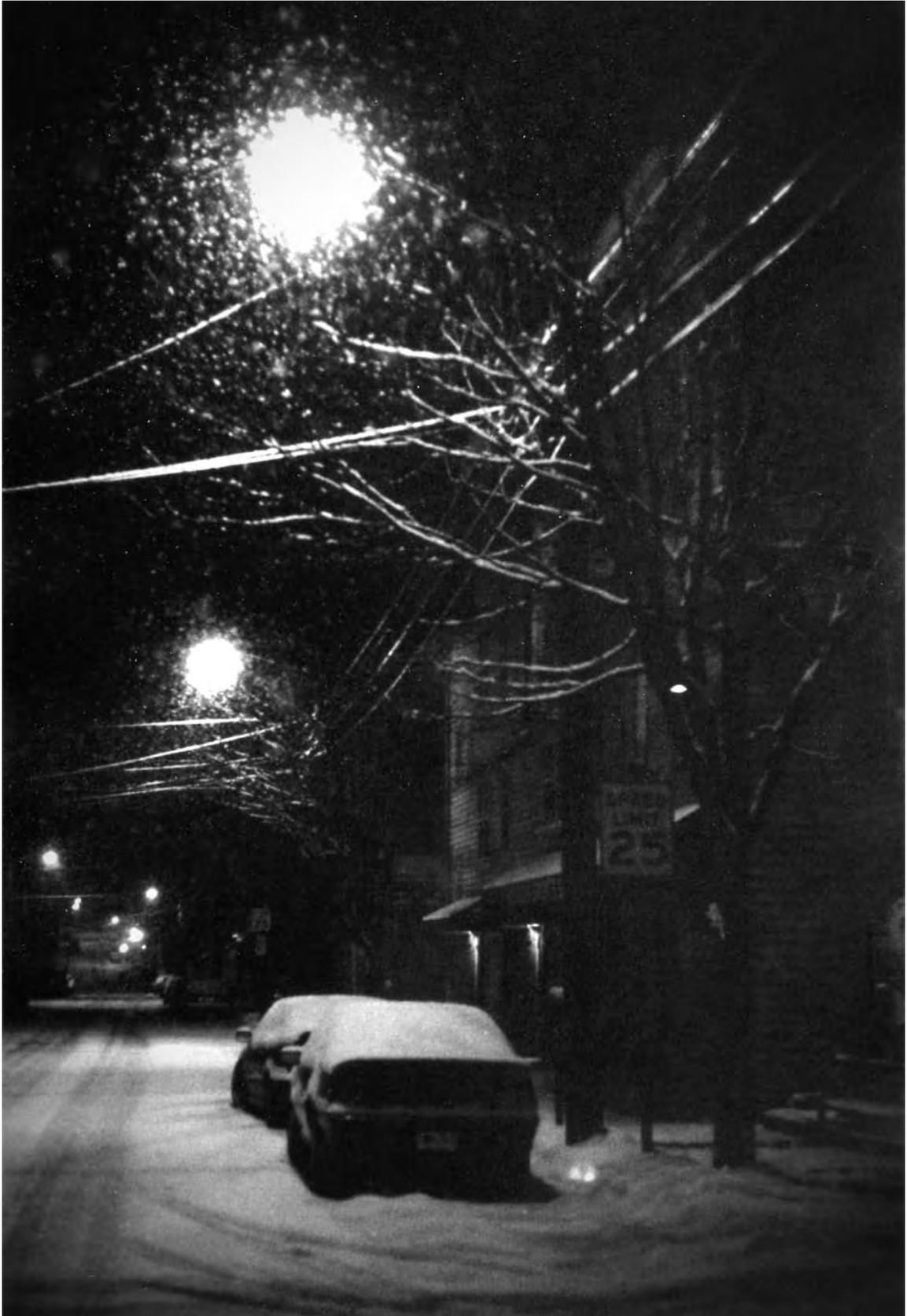
Disappeared, evaporated, vanished, evicted.

Passed on, passed away, passed over.

I don't want to talk about anything new. No mention  
of anything that flies, grazes, grows on trees, or  
rises and sets.

I don't want to gossip or chatter or utter or speak.

It's your turn.



"UNTITLED" BY CANDICE LUCIANI

# SUBMISSIONS



"HOME VOL. 2" BY DANIELLE PERZACKI  
(FRONT COVER)

LOGAN NORRIS

## The Underground Man

Well, for one thing, I am Fyodor Dostoevsky, and it's just that I'm happening a century and a half after myself as a genius Russian author. I wrote *Notes from Underground*; and for 18 years, I've been quoting it the same way Billy Graham tosses around Bible verses (actually I'm 21 years old, allow for 3 years of not talking). Yes, I am indeed a very spiteful man.

Playing 6-month-old guitar strings and making psychedelic free-jazz is probably the greatest thing for a genius author to do. I obviously already have conquered the literary world, so now I'm destined to make John Coltrane a second-rate jazz musician. I've made it a point to be honest about the fact too, and if you thought John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* was as unfriendly as possible to the casual listener, we need to sit and listen to my 12-CD boxed set over a pumpkin spice latte. I have a strange obsession with pizza and broccoli too, so perhaps that will be our main course as we indulge ourselves in my psychedelic free jazz. You'll hate it, but I'm the gatekeeper, so I can do whatever I want and be amazing.

Being a genius, I am the most awkward person you will ever find at a frat party. I hate alcohol (it's the worst thing to ever happen to the white man other than myself), and I am unable to attend a party without making everyone feel genuinely awful. I purposely spill beer on the drunkards and laugh at them for being idiots. Then, I proceed to tell each individual present in depth, one at a time mind you, that there are 20,000 alcohol-related deaths every year, excluding accidents and homicides. Next, I follow my victim for seven or so minutes, delivering every fact and statistic I can think of to appeal to their immediate reform. I wreck parties, and despite never receiving invitations, I know where they are and I purposely go to ruin them.

Regardless of the pleasure I take in being phenomenal and arrogant (simultaneously to their fullest potential), I hate my disease of being socially incompetent. Once I tried to play music in a coffee shop and I was told never to come back. My strings were newer then, and that is when guitar strings sound their best. For the 98 percent of mankind that I don't care about, that is perfectly fine that I am unapproachable, but there are some people I want to be able to reach out to.

This leads me to what is now my current dilemma.

As strange as I may be, I still have hormones. That isn't a bad thing either. I deserve to have lots of sex for being a genius and the gatekeeper, but not in the male chauvinistic way that males have sex. There is this one person that must balance me out perfectly, and I need her very much for my thought process to be complete, and we must have lots of sex. It's essential.

Intuitively I know everything about the perfect ball of energy (also called PBOE, my name for this girl who is the balance of myself). This girl has to avidly listen to Phish, play the violin, have earthy brown hair, acknowledge my being the pinnacle of human consciousness as the gatekeeper, and be somewhat outgoing as to initiate conversation. I also know what her voice must sound like, how she carries herself, and what sort of name she has. Contrary to the way I am portraying myself, I'm not the least bit mad; in fact, I am the closest thing to sanity since Timothy Leary. That man was dope.

I have met several people that match the profile of the PBOE, but I have been too scared to approach most of them. There hasn't been any progress with the ones I have been able to approach either, because by the time I'm standing in front of them and have their attention, I am blushing profusely and cannot so much as utter a squeal for the mouse I am. After humiliating myself, I go home, crawl in my mouse hole, and grit my teeth. It is an insult that I, the gatekeeper and pinnacle of human consciousness, can play within the esteemed Coltrane Matrix and I can't so much as pick up a girl. I am a sick man.

Every Monday, Boaz and I go to a local coffee shop where there is a girl who matches the complexity of the PBOE to a tee. She is gorgeous, and, at my request, Boaz talked to her the last occasion we went to this particular coffee shop. I want very much so to make love to this individual.

Boaz smiles every time we reflect on these instances. "She listens to Phish, Jachin."

Intently I stand up and shout for joy with all of the energy of my consciousness. She listens to Phish; has natural brown, earthy hair; and laughed when I made an obnoxious joke about being the gatekeeper of the universe (despite the fact that I was not joking—I am the gatekeeper. I was simply being obnoxious at that point in time). If she does not play the violin, I am as cursed as I am a sick and diseased man.

Boaz is the other gatekeeper. No one believes in our gatekeeperness and being the pinnacle of human consciousness, except for the PBOE, who already intuitively knows everything about me and understands her place in the universe as my balancing force. When I try to explain this to other people, they always miss the most important aspect of the PBOE, which I will call your attention to now—it is the woman, not the man, who holds the power. I'm sure it seems strange that I, a male, would be the gatekeeper, and I agree with you; but to properly understand the system of the gatekeeper, it is also crucial to understand that I was supposed to be a female, as was Boaz, but there was some confusion when we reincarnated as humans.

Regardless though, we must find our PBOEs and make love to them. This coffee shop is a wonderful place where I enjoy reading books over a latte when I am in the mood to withstand words. I don't like words, and the reason I don't like words is because I don't like definitions. I hate defining things so some yuppie can think I meant one thing or another. I hate talking.

This girl, the potential PBOE that works at this particular coffee shop, just started two weeks ago. I have never spoken a word to her because I am shy and spiteful, and every night after sitting for some hours in the coffee shop rationalizing to myself why it is I mustn't talk to her, I grit my teeth and think of why I am such an insect (though I could not even become an insect). Then, I acquire such a toothache that I yell and scream and keep everyone in my house up at all hours of the night because of my misery. And it isn't that I don't want to talk to this individual, rather it is that I am so awkward and scared. I run away from every available opportunity to be with this individual, to my mouse hole. I am a sick man.

That is where Boaz and I concocted the perfect scheme to entice me to speak to this individual while on a \*mutual coalition of archetypes (\*I despise the term date). The plan was twofold and reflected my utmost genius. Boaz would invite this individual to attend a mutual coalition of archetypes with him, and instead of him showing up at the meeting place, I would. I also thought over my inability to speak, and I developed a system of note cards to communicate with this person. What would happen was I would go to the restaurant where she was to meet Boaz, and lay down the first note card at her table. The first note

card reads: "I am dreadfully sorry, but you have been tricked. Please do not be angry (though you should have quite a reason to be), but this must take place for the balancing of the universe." Then she would look at me either puzzled or mortified (probably both), and I would already be holding the next card.

I then would flash through a series of cards, one by one, and afterwards allow her to take the situation one way or another—stay and initiate conversation, or leave. The only thing that could possibly go wrong was the prospect that she might not want to go with him on a mutual coalition of archetypes.

Thursday of that week, Boaz upheld his part of the plan. They chatted, and he asked her to attend a mutual coalition of archetypes with him. There aren't words to express the nervousness I had watching them.

"Well?" Boaz grinned and sat down to his caramel mocha. "Went off without a hitch. The Thai restaurant by Borders on Thursday at seven."

"A toast?" I asked, holding my cup partway off the table.

He held his coffee up high between the two of us and we spoke softly.

"To the gatekeepers," we both proclaimed under our breaths, and our lids tapped each other before we each took a fierce gulp of our drinks (over which Boaz toasted his mouth). That night, of course, I laid in my bed and reviewed all of the situational problems I could encounter and gritted my teeth over being merry in the coffee shop like a drunken familiar. Phase one had gone off as anticipated.

Thursday, I was sitting in my car at the Thai parking lot at half past six, watching for her. She came 15 minutes early as I had anticipated (females seem to be so much more punctual than males) and went in directly. Immediately I had a headache.

At five past seven, I managed to drag myself in, terrified and quite red. I told the waitress at the door that someone was already here and waiting for me, and after briefly describing the girl, the waitress pointed me to a solitary corner on the other side of the restaurant.

It was quite warm in the restaurant, and perhaps if the temperature had been down another five degrees, I would not have had the embarrassment of sweat dripping down my face. I also was having trouble walking straight and found myself bumping into chairs and tables. Several things fell over as I bumped my way to

the table, and I was terribly embarrassed each time she looked up at me from her table.

I threw the note card on her table (and it landed on the chair on the opposite side of the table, so I had to pick it up and set it in front of her). She looked at me puzzled, without reading it, and I stood with my head down, staring at the note card, avoiding her gaze. My right arm's shaking was only making me look more and more ridiculous.

That was when she did something completely unexpected, and I had never been able to account for it. She completely disregarded the note card and started to talk.

"You're Boaz's friend, aren't you?"

I immediately looked up—though not at her—and, puzzled, I stood there and thought out what I should do. I was in complete terror since improvising conversation was completely out of my league. There was only one thing to do. I pulled out my note cards, and scribbled "Yes I am!" on the back of one and held it out just as I had planned for the others.

"Why are you writing things on note cards and showing them to me? Can't you talk?"

Immediately I lit up, as much as I could light up the situation, and saw the potential to pull it back into some order. I shook my head no and held out the third card from my sequence. It read: "I am very nervous and probably blushing because I am so shy. I am too shy to be able to speak with you, but I must, so I have written what I would like to say on these note cards."

"Why do you have to speak to me?"

I shuffled through my note cards and pulled out the second. "I am searching for the individual that would balance me out. You match the balancing complex."

She smiled deeply and her facial expression changed to a more playful look. "I do?"

I nodded my head yes.

"So, your friend set me up on a date with you?"

My hand gestured that she read the note card in front of her (the one I originally had set down), but she brushed it off the table.

"I want to hear from you," she said.

"That is from me—I wrote it."

"I can't hear it from a note card. I have to hear it from you."

Perfectly embarrassed, I sat down across from her. She was playing me like a rag doll. "All right... please don't be angry; yes he did."

“He did what?”

I choked. It was obvious that I was a puppet and I knew it, but I was too scared to leave. “He knows you have the matching complex. I told him the first time that I saw you. I created this giant scheme, and he was the one to set up the mutual coalition of archetypes.”

She laughed.

“What is so humorous?”

She laughed harder, and I looked down, completely puzzled.

“You. You speak so properly and refuse to talk about anything common in a common way.” She continued laughing.

“Do you find that to be humorous?”

“Yes, of course. It’s adorable! Don’t take offense. It’s impossible to not laugh, but it is simply so incredibly awkward. I listen to you and your friend every time you are in, and it’s so entertaining: *Annual linear acknowledgment day*, *perfect ball of energy*, and now *mutual coalition of archetypes*—that’s classic.”

“You know what they mean?”

“Yes, of course. I have my own names for those, like your *perfect ball of energy* is my ‘complementary archetype’; *annual linear acknowledgment day* I know as ‘birthday’; and *mutual coalition of archetypes* is your pseudo-phrase for ‘date.’

“So you understand us?”

“Yes, any intelligent individual can figure out what those mean. *Perfect ball of energy* is the exception, but I’ve heard the both of you use it in context dozens of times, so I figured it out. I also know you love Phish, play jazz, and think you are the incarnation of Fyodor Dostoevsky.”

“I am the incarnation of Fyodor Dostoevsky.”

She continued to howl in fits of laughter at the expense of reddening my countenance, and I sat back completely perplexed. Finally I interrupted her laughter.

“What is your name?” I asked.

She slowed down, holding her chest, and asked me to repeat her question.

“What is your name?”

“My designation,” she said, laughing again, “is Hannah.”

“Do you per chance play the violin?”

Hannah eased her chest and eventually managed to calm down enough to answer. “No, I don’t like instruments.” ■

DAVE GROSS

## We Don’t Get You!

Dave,

You were given no authority to develop memorandums that interpret the *Employee Conduct Guidelines*. Your behavior, to say the least, is disturbing; and on behalf of management officials still undergoing the sedation series, it needs to stop.

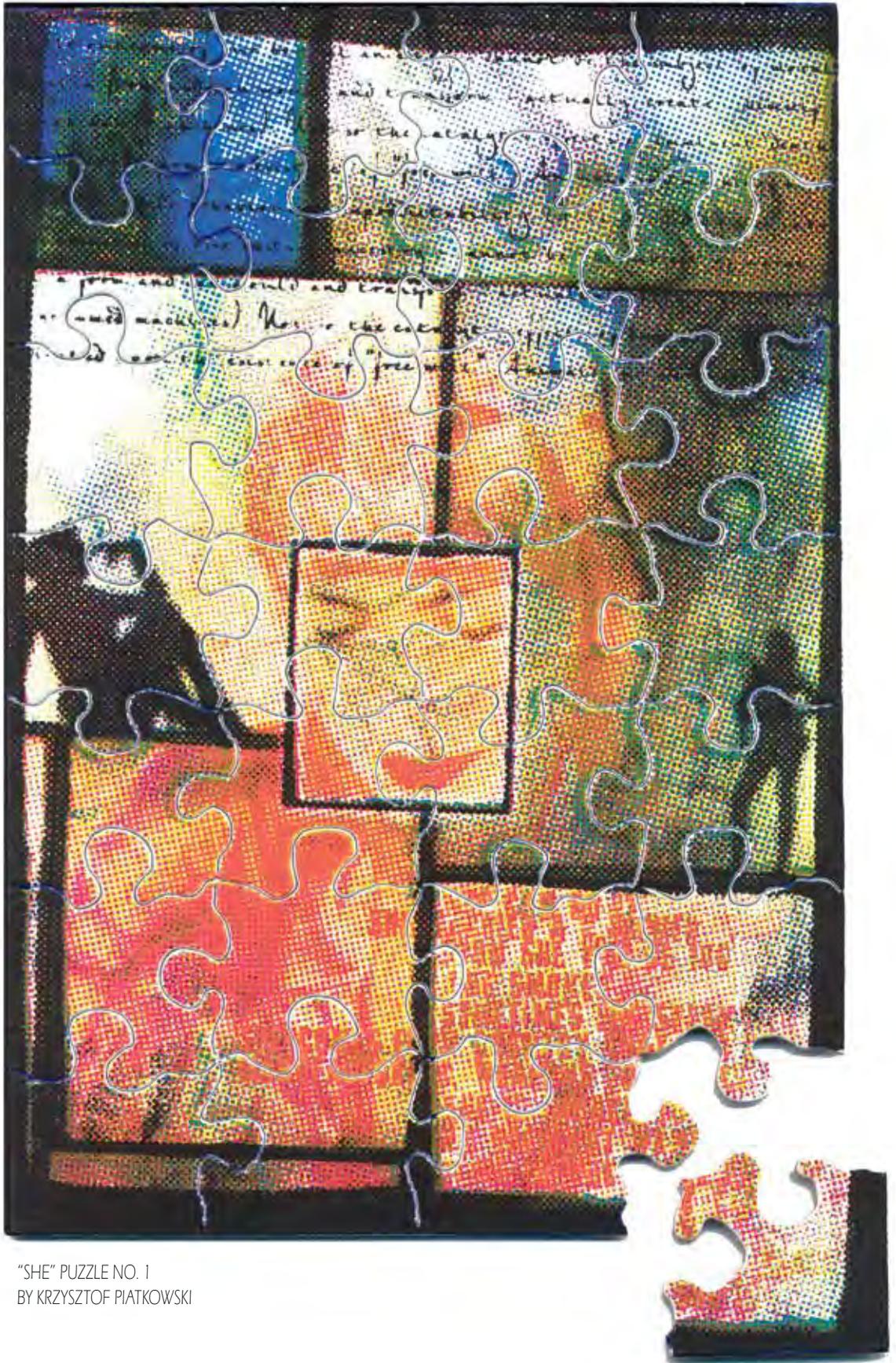
We do not know how you arrived at the following conclusions, but I assure you that these statements are completely unfounded:

- Not one member of management has ever had horrific experiences with sex-starved aliens, kitchen appliances, or the leader of a rabid biker gang.
- I can also personally attest to the fact that I do not regularly take fashion advice from hunched-over sanitation workers, seek positive reinforcement from the Wiggles or have my hair styled by a floor buffer.

To remain employed here, you need to do the following:

- Explain to the company nurse as to why you drank your urine sample.
- Find a pain-free way to remove the staples from Mr. Smith’s forehead (I do not even want to ask as to the whereabouts of the stapler).
- Explain to the Accounting department that we do not have regular hemorrhoid screenings in the janitor’s closet with a man called *Spider*.
- Describe in detail as to why you think you need bathtub caulking, a donkey, and an arc welder in your office.
- Convince yourself that turning the copy machine into a shuttle bus is not an attainable goal.
- Realize that ink toner is not war paint.
- Stop putting volatile fluids into the lunchroom microwave.

I also would like it very much if I never had to be in the same room as you, alone. You are a walking human-resource memo, simply stated, we don’t get you!



"SHE" PUZZLE NO. 1  
BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI

## Bourn

It came to me I was inside  
something of a special space.  
I wished to see another  
reality than this.

The feeling was growing  
within me.

I must make  
myself free

of this space  
I exist  
in right now  
and be re-bourn.

As these thoughts ran within me,  
not a conscious thought appeared  
in my head like the waves  
of a spirit, soul within me.

So I reached my arms forward  
into what seemed to be  
another dimension  
where things were different.

I could feel the walls of  
reality spreading  
around my flesh—and I—  
was spreading open this seam.

I widened my arms  
and pushed the seam open  
wider so that I, alone,  
could step into a new realm.

One that is something different  
than these laws of physics that we  
all know from day to day.  
This place may not have  
anything the same.

## Bubbles

They say the moment before you die,  
you can see your life flash before your eyes.  
For me, it was bubbles.

Sitting in the sunflower-seed-laden dugout,  
I remember creating gigantic pink orbs with my gum so magnificent  
all of my teammates gazed with awe.

Blowing bubbles with the girl next door  
a calm would come over me, as the sun broke through the clouds,  
allowing us to see our reflections in the tiny oval mirrors.

Toasting my wife at our wedding  
as the tiny carbonated globes in the champagne glass seemed to rocket  
to the surface,  
the promise of love eternal brought a tear to my eye.

With my wife looking on by my side,  
I would stare at the little rainbows inside each iridescent sphere  
as they blanketed my son in his first bath.

But, here I am trapped, inside my casket of water and metal  
struggling to break free, the only thing escaping are the bubbles from  
my breath.

I pause for a moment and smile as I watch my life float to the surface  
along with my memories.

They say the moment before you die,  
you can see your life flash before your eyes.  
For me, it was bubbles.

## Driving Faster than Kennedy's Motorcade

I slumped into the backseat of a black Buick®,  
feeling the new leather against my neck,  
my wrist laid to rest against the cool window.

We drove around November highways,  
taking back roads to see the trees drop leaves, but they blurred  
with so many things that were changing so fast.

The radio dial turned slowly as it jumped from channel to channel.  
AM stations sounded dusty like album sleeves of classical musicians  
suddenly replaced by cries of sobbing men.

"The President has been shot," they told us.

Ahead of the car I could see a bullet frozen in midair.  
We drove into it like it was a brick wall,  
the steel body of the Buick crumpling around the lead tip.

## My Grandmother, the Spider

Ever since I could remember, my grandmother was a knitter. Bamboo, aluminum, plastic, long, short, circular, or double-pointed, her wide array of needles gave birth to a plethora of cold-weather items. Silently, her hands would spin intricate webs that were scarves, mittens, hats, and shawls. I was small when I really started to take notice of Grandma's craft. My mother would drop my older sister and me off at Grandma's on sticky summer mornings, still drowsy and in our pajamas, while she went to work cleaning houses.

"Gooood morning!" Grandma would chirp from the kitchen, and there we would congregate with her. We'd sit silently, listening to our Rice Krispies® snap, crackle, and pop while picking sleepy dirt from our eyes, and Grandma would knit. She'd be watching the morning news, and every once in awhile, without even looking up she would "tut-tut" at the bad news the anchorman read from the teleprompter. I paid no mind to the news; I was just watching her go. Silent shafts of bamboo worked smoothly. Knit one, purl two. I was captivated, witnessing a poncho grow from two needles as I ate my breakfast.

Once in awhile nature would grace us with a breeze, and it was on those days that Grandma would take us to the park. She would load up her gigantic green knitting bag with yarn and needles, as well as a freezing water bottle for the three of us to share. My sister and I would try and race to the park, all along the way Grandma would shout behind us, "Yoy! Save it for the playground!" We would hear her cries and slow down a little, but by that time we had already gotten our lungs filled with warm air and our muscles screaming out in pain. Once we hit that playground, there was no stopping us. Grandma would take her customary seat on a rotting green bench and watch us play while she knit.

Inevitably, I would always tire out before my sister. Not only was she a good deal lighter than me, she was also more involved in the politics of playing with other girls, and at 7 years old, I wasn't interested in why I had to play the prince. When I was thoroughly frustrated and sweaty, I would take my seat next to Grandma.

"What are you making?" I would puff as I plopped down on the bench. This question was necessary to ask because there was always some new creation emerging from her needles.

"I," she would proclaim triumphantly, "am making a sweater!" Raising it up from her lap, I could see the reindeer beginning to take flight from the snow within the yarn. I was amazed she could think about snow and reindeer when it was 85 degrees outside. "I'll have it done in a few days and, hopefully, when I give it to your sister, she won't wear it to pieces. She has a way of doing that." She sat the knitting down on her lap and gazed out in front of her, as if she was staring off into some other place I couldn't see. She'd tell me about her days as a little girl, how her mother taught her how to knit so that her family could stay clothed in the winter, and how she used to knit old shirts together to make sweaters during the Great Depression. I kept quiet and let her go on, sometimes I wondered if she was talking to me or if she was just thinking out loud, but I loved hearing her stories, so I never asked.

Grandma would ask me from time to time whether I wanted to learn how to knit. Every time she asked, a bubble of sheer excitement would grow in my throat. My cheeks would burn, my eyes would get wide, and silently I'd shake my head in reply because my tongue was paralyzed with fear. For a minute she would look at me intently, and then with a small smile she'd say, "Suit yourself," and go back to work. Her knobby fingers moved slowly at first, then it was as if they remembered what they were doing, and they would pick up the pace. I wanted so badly to learn, but her craft was so intimidating that I stayed an observer. *Knit two, yarn over. Purl three, drop one, purl one.*

The summer we spent with Grandma, I had vivid dreams that almost always featured her as a main character. I'd wake up, gasping for air, sweating tiny chilled droplets that soaked my soft cotton sheets. I usually started out the dream in her living room, sitting on the floor watching the television, and I was always by myself. The room was quietly lit with natural light that poured through the large bay window behind me, and as I was watching television, I would see a movement out of the corner of my eye. My heartbeat would quicken and my muscles would



"SELF-PORTRAIT AGE 20" BY ALLISON MUSHALLO

tense, as if they knew what was beside me before my eyes could verify.

My Grandmother, the spider.

She was huge, her body just barely touching the walls around her and the ceiling above her. Her abdomen was the size of a Volkswagen® Beetle®, covered with a light layer of prickly hairs; her legs longer than three yardsticks laid end to end. What was most odd about it all was that her head was her own. She didn't have six eyes or fangs for sucking blood, just her soft gray hair and sweet, wrinkled old smile. Her legs worked, furiously knitting, while yarn came from her spinner. I marveled in my dream as I did in real life, watching her weave an intricate web from her yarn. Grandma kept knitting and knitting until the whole room would fill with downy yarn, surrounding us, and the whole time we never stopped looking at one another. Before I knew it, I was wrapped in a sugary-smelling ocean of knitting, and I had gone from inside my Grandma's house to a field of vibrant green grass. The sun blinded my eyes for a moment, a circle of white searing my retinas, and I called out

to Grandma. She never answered, and once I blinked the sunspots from my tired eyes, I realized I was still lying in my bed of knitted yarn, but now Grandma was gone. Frantically, I would call her name and look for her, but she had vanished before I could thank her for her gift.

The morning after I would have these dreams, I would be wide-awake in the car on the way to Grandma's. I would be filled with a sense of dread as I watched the neighbors venturing out into the morning to get their papers, still in their pajamas and slippers. My dream felt so real that I feared we'd arrive to find an empty house, no signs of Grandma, no signs of her knitting. My mother would barely have the car in park before I was scrambling up the front walk and bursting into the living room.

"Hey now! What's your hurry?" I'd hear a voice call after me from the living room. I was usually in such a hurry to find her that I rushed right past her, quietly sitting in her chair inside the door. Panting from my sprint, I would fall into her lap and beg to see what she was making that day. The smell of her

floral perfume held me as closely as her arms did, and as I laid there, my heart would slow back to its normal pace. Once I was satisfied that Grandma hadn't left me, I went about my business of harassing my sister and making mud pies until she called us in for lunch. *Knit two together, knit to end.*

Quietly, without any kind of warning, there would be an injection of gold into the air of summer. The giant trees that surrounded the homes in Grandma's neighborhood began evolving from energetic chartreuse to pale yellow. Instead of running to the park, Grandma would load us into the car, and we would go to the department stores in search of school shoes and clothes. She'd have us try on the sweaters she'd knitted and have a fashion show for her. Mother would "ooo" and "aah" over Grandma's fine work from the summer, while my sister and I strutted up and down the living room. She'd sit, looking at us proudly with a glint of a tear in her eye. When the fashion show was over, I would go to Grandma and nestle into her lap and she would wrap her arms around me. Her warm arms held me with a kind of strength that was welcoming—but protective—and I would wonder why I felt a difference in her embrace. Her eyes went to their faraway place again, back in time to her childhood, though now I have to wonder if they were looking into the future.

That was the last summer I spent with my Grandmother. My sister and I started school, proudly wearing our Grandma's creations. That winter, Grandma caught a chill and got an awful case of pneumonia. It seemed ironic that the woman whom I had associated all my life with warmth and love could not fend off such cold disease and pain. One day, Mother picked us up from school and took us to the hospital to see Grandma. Reverently, we were ushered into her hospital room where our once vivacious Grandmother now laid asleep, wrapped in a blanket she had knitted when she first married and that she kept on her bed. The yellow yarn draped around her shoulders made her face look sallow, made everything about her seem weak. Machines beeped, nurses whispered, and we just stood there looking at Grandma who slept with her mouth agape. Without a word, I went to her beside and laid my mittened hand on her arm. She moved a little, but still she didn't open her eyes. ■

LARA MULLINS

## Night Rain

I just slipped out the back door  
of the kitchen and walked  
into the night rain.  
On the patio, with grass sprouting  
between the slate in deep  
shiny green of summer  
that was lost in darkness,  
I danced a few steps.  
Then I stood, with my hands  
behind my back, just listening.

The night insects buzzed and screeched  
from every corner.  
The water drops pattered soothingly  
on the overturned canoe.  
The rain dripped  
on my head and down my arms,  
pinging me with refreshed  
calm.

On my way  
back to the dark house,  
I ran into the beginnings  
of a puddle and splashed  
its contents to farther extremities.  
I smiled inside.  
It was a happy  
and peaceful excursion  
on a quiet, humid night.

STEPHANIE YAROLIN

## Colors in a Bar

In the purple haze,  
lily white,  
red-skinned,  
bluebird of happiness  
sits clear as day,  
reading yellow journalism  
of brown-nosing,  
blue-steel, red-blooded Technicolor® heroes,  
and black-hearted thieves  
while wearing purple tie-dye  
sipping a Pink Squirrel  
in a blue mood  
thinks of red wagon, green eggs and ham  
light years ago.  
Purple rain runs outside.

## Mr. Depp, You Make My Legs Quiver

If you please, pull up a chair  
and begin your monologue—I pledge  
steadfast rapture as you confide  
in me the pains of Gilbert, the  
intricacies of Barrie, the motives  
of Sparrow, the troubles of Edward,  
the hallucinations of Duke...  
Tho thru all these I can see the  
eccentricities of your own nature.  
With smoke billowing out your nostrils  
and bottle in hand, you make cigarettes and rum  
look antiquated next to your Chaplin shoes.  
You lean coolly back in your  
ornately carved throne of a chair,  
and I fancy you taking advantage of me just now.  
Ah, my dear sir Johnny,  
will I never cease to swoon under those  
deep and tantalizing, transfixed chocolate eyes?

JESSICA CONRAD

## Mr. Depp, You Make My Legs Quiver, II

You are grunge, like 1992,  
and vintage like your wine.  
  
I know we forgot about you,  
for a few in-between years,  
  
thought we could shift our focus  
to a less deserving Leo, but you returned  
  
swashbuckling and pleasantly tipsy  
in a perspiring summer romance—  
  
you wear dirt better than the ground,  
and pirate shirts much better than Seinfeld.  
  
Just when I thought Disney® had stolen forever the  
rightful identity of Peter Pan, you went public  
  
with the truth. Right then, you were a man  
we could bring home to our mothers.

## My Mother

“For once I’d like to have a good Christmas.” In other words, one without my mother. “I have to take care of her 365 days a year, so I think that you can deal with her for the 9 that she is going to spend with you in America.”

I caved under my sister’s pleas. After all, hadn’t I been cowardly and deserted the French enemy front years before when I was so needed? At least that is what my sister thought. She never realized that my first exile to North America was forced.

Even in France when we still looked like a family, every year before that fatal holiday, I would feel something growing inside my throat. As time would thin out, the thing would feel the size of a lemon. By December 24th, it would reach the size of an orange. I would be gasping. My back’s muscles would quake with tension, while my stomach worked on ulcers.

When Russ’ car pulled home that night, I tried to swallow the growing thing inside my throat. I would explain the situation in perfect simplicity, even with calm. But by the time he had reached the door, I was suffocating. Before he even had time to close the front door, I was hanging from his neck, my face buried in his chest, crying hysterically.

I shared with Russ how good the perspective of a deep coma looked to me just to avoid my mother. He looked at me dumbfounded. He grew up in a loving family with parents who loved each other until their deaths. Russ thus kept an idealistic view of family love and was excited to meet my mother for the first time. He did not know that I would have rather seen his parents coming back from the dead at midnight than see my own living mother.

My mother did not even have her plane ticket yet and she was causing problems. She refused to purchase her own ticket, wanted the cheapest flight available, but categorically objected to any layovers. My sister finally made the reservation for her, anything to get her away for Christmas, without asking what day was good for us to pick her up at the airport. She threw our mother across the Atlantic without caring how and where exactly she was going to land.

## December 24th

Since I had not had the courage to drive my car into a brick wall, hoping for a temporary coma, Russ and I were waiting at Newark airport for my mother's arrival.

The flight had been delayed because of a blizzard. I took advantage of that time to warm Russ again about my mother, but he was unconvinced.

"I am sure it is not as bad as you remember it. After all, you have not seen her in a very long time. Remember: time works in mysterious ways."

"No Russ, the Lord does, and I am not counting on his cooperation." I kept drinking coffee to calm my nerves.

Flashbacks of my childhood assailed me: I was 5 years old and my mother just threw me out of the front door of our apartment. I looked toward the opposite door of the landing. I knew that my mother was terribly unhappy with me because I had refused to eat the cow kidneys she had cooked all morning. All the crème fraîche in the world could not cover the reality of what she wanted me to eat. I knew better. I could usually put up with sheep's head parts, rabbit kidneys, and veal brains, but cow kidney was just too much for me to handle.

The neighbors on the opposite side of the landing were Chinese. At dinner, when we had guests, once, someone had joked about Chinese people eating cats and rats. We had a cat, and Chinese people terrified me. I was left staring at their door, because my mother pushed me out of the apartment and said: "Na voir en face si c'est meilleur." (Go see at the neighbors if what they eat is tastier).

She had slammed the door behind me. I heard someone coming down the steps, and I looked down at my feet. I was terribly ashamed, and I did not even have any shoes on.

An announcement brought me back to the airport. My mother's plane had landed. I felt a stab in my chest, a boning knife going all the way through me. I couldn't breathe. My hands had turned to ice, and I felt queasy. I must have squeezed Russ' hand too hard because he withdrew it promptly. He saw my eyes and grabbed my hand again in his warm ones. Something was sparkling in his blue eyes. Russ' eyes speak more than he does.

The last time that I had seen my mother, she had thrown whatever she could find of mine through the

window of the apartment. She had yelled through the whole ordeal. I can't remember what she was saying, but I remember the shame I felt. I knew all the tenants could hear her, and some were probably already at their windows looking at a crazy woman throwing my stuff out her window. Then my mother opened the front door and continued sending more of my stuff down the common stairway. The stairway echoed with her screams and the thumps of my stuff bouncing against the tagged walls.

When she sent my schoolbag flying, I tried to get a hold of it. I missed and went after it.

I heard the door slam behind me. I felt cold under my feet. I was barefooted again.

I went down and gathered all my stuff, brought it back up to the doormat and knocked discreetly. I did not want to make any more noise. Living in apartments, one is bound to meet the neighbors and greet them, which means that they will be thinking about the night when a mother sent all her daughter's stuff flying down the stairway.

I heard my sister begging my mother to let me in, but she refused.

I sat down, too shocked to cry. The walls, the floor, everything was freezing.

Much later, the son of the neighbor from the third floor came down. I could see that he was surprised to see me in pyjamas.

"Hi. Do you need a ride or something?"

His name was Hamed. He had just gotten out of jail for car theft, and I knew that the car I was about to step into was also a stolen one. He helped carry my stuff down.

During the ride, he did not ask me anything. I thought that was considerate of him. He had had his own share of disasters. His parents had come to France from Algeria after the Second World War to help with the country's reconstruction. Like many of those making the move—a little like the immigrants from Europe to America at the turn of the 19th century—they thought they were going to walk on gold pavement. Instead, the immigrants turned out to be more like the slaves of America when slavery was abolished. The government did not know what to do with them. So the immigrants did what they had to do to survive. Poverty mixed with hatred pushed some to illegal activities as a means to survive. For Hamed, it was car theft.

He dropped me off at Christophe's, my boyfriend at the time.

When I got to the door, nobody was home. I sat on the ground with my arms full. Ironically, my mother had not thrown one pair of shoes at me. After a while, the next-door neighbor came out of the elevator and looked at me with surprise. She invited me inside.

She made tea, and finally, I cried.

It had been an evening like any other, except that my mother had decided to pull the phone line from the wall while I was on the phone. One of her many unexplained behaviours.

"Why did you do that?"

My mother had walked away. I went after her and repeated the question. My mother's best weapon was silence. A passive torture. I decided to go to the kitchen to have dinner. My mother charged me with extreme audacity.

"How do you dare make phone calls without asking me first? Whose house is this anyway? Who pays the bills?"

"How can I ask you when you're not home?"

I sat at the table with my plate full. My mother grabbed my plate, and we both pulled on it until the food spilled on the floor. That was all she needed to go off, shouting the same self-pity speech that she always used. I was as selfish as my father, and it was my fault they had gotten divorced. I felt like the ugly duckling.

My mother, looking for a crescendo in her drama, had opened a window.

Christiane, the neighbor, served me more tea and looked at me. "Why do you keep going back?" That was the question nobody had asked me before.

I never went back.

Christophe's parents took me in. They supported me through the end of high school. Later, my mother threw my cat out, and they took him in too. Except that this time, Christophe's dad had called my mother to let her know that I was free to decide whether I wanted to go back or not, but that she would never see the cat again.

When I spotted my mother pushing the airport cart with her luggage, I wanted to take back my offer to my sister to relieve her of the duty of making my mother happy on Christmas Eve, even though she

had bore courageously through the agony of spending the holidays alone with her for the past years.

Yet, I felt that I owed her a big favour: the day after my mother's throwing-stuff-out-the-window episode, my sister had given me the key to the apartment so that I could get shoes and the rest of my stuff.

My mother had the same exact haircut, the same snarl located at each corner of her mouth, and the same mouth frown that she would put on every time things were not going her way. Those times were so frequent that the fold stayed, like an odd wrinkle. Seeing her walk toward me, I felt the same embarrassment I used to feel when she would pick me up from school. I wanted a mother—hip, tall and slender—who would be my friend and buy me cool dresses. Instead, my mother was short and round; and she forced me to wear flashy, red socks up to my knees when I wore a dress.

Russ smiled and opened his arms to her. I was glad he did, because my arms would not move. My brain froze. I did not know what to say. Russ did not speak French, but for some reason he made my mother laugh. That helped relax the situation.

"How was your trip? Are you hungry? What was the weather like in Paris?" I chatted. I did not care about the answers. I just needed to fill my malaise with words of no importance.

We left Newark Airport and drove into Manhattan in the snow. I had made reservations at the Canton Arms, a hotel famous in New York for its uniqueness. Even though the beds were uncomfortable, each room is painted by a different artist. Unfortunately, my mother's room turned out to be painted by a Vietnam veteran who had kept a bloody memory of his time there. I don't think she slept well. Our room, on the other end of the hall was reminiscent of the majesty of the Alhambra.

The following day, we stopped for lunch in an Irish pub across from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

It did not take long to get right back in the same kind of argument I last had with my mother. She started talking about how sad it was for old people without families to spend Christmas by themselves, the kind of discussion that leads nowhere unless you do something about it. Then, of course, she went on comparing herself to them (she was 47 at the



"PRESSURE" BY REBEKAH ALLINGHAM

time), and how she had been alone for the past years because I was abroad. Now I could smell where this was going, but I had sworn to myself that I would not fall back into the same old pattern. I would just let her talk until she was done, until empty discussions could be resumed. Dessert came and she was still going at it.

“Mother, you ARE spending Christmas with us this year. Why can’t you just appreciate this for right now and let go of what isn’t anymore?”

She had set the trap and I stepped right into it.

“How can you minimize my feelings?”

“I am not. I am just saying that you should not be so negative.”

“You are such a MONSTER!”

“Who is the monster? The mother who kicked her daughter out of the house or the daughter who decided not to take this abuse any longer?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You brought on yourself that loneliness you’re moaning about!”

Tears flew to my eyes. The words she had not let me say years before were coming out of my mouth, distorted by an emotion too big to express itself.

Russ tried to intervene, but I was seeing my clothes flying out the window. People at tables near us dropped sentences in midair and food from their forks. Mother and daughter were tearing each other apart: unprecedented French drama. At least some of the embarrassment was alleviated by the fact that they could not understand any of the words.

My mother did not speak a word of English, had never set foot in Manhattan before, did not have a map of the island and was carrying all the week’s cash in her purse. Yet, she got up and walked out of the pub. I disappeared in the bathroom and cried until heaves overwhelmed me. Russ paid the bill, and we waited for her to return. Russ would periodically go out to look for her in the streets around the pub. The snow raged. Despite the heat blowing on me—I stood in front of the radiator—I trembled.

Between bouts of nervous crying, I apologized to Russ. He would periodically repeat the same thought in different ways:

“I cannot believe that your mother simply walked out of here.”

“I cannot make any sense of her behaviour.”

“It is so reckless.”

I felt like saying I told you so, but it was not his fault.

Four and a half hours passed and the night set in. The snow stopped. Russ went out again to look for her one more time. I stayed inside, paralyzed. When he came back, I offered to call my sister, Caroline, in France. Over there, it was 10:30 p.m., and Caroline might have an idea of what to do. Personally, I wanted to jump back in the car and drive home. I hoped that my mother had somehow found her way to the Newark airport and was buying her way back to Paris.

My sister picked up the phone. She was savouring her first Christmas without our mother, or at least she had been until half an hour before when the phone rang. My mother had found a phone booth and had been trying to call her. Not understanding English or knowing the existence of operators, she had given up, fumbling into some more crying, her black hair covered in snow. Her cries had alerted passing pedestrians, who had in turn called for a police officer. That poor guy had figured out what my mother wanted and had called my sister himself. My mother then told my sister that she was lost and had no idea how to find us. When I called, I reluctantly gave the name and address of the pub to my sister, who called back the phone booth. The police officer brought my mother back to the pub. In the meantime, Russ had gotten the car from the parking lot and was waiting outside.

I saw the pub door open and my mother stood there. Her mouth frown was on, seeming to scream at me that she had been waiting for the past four hours. I walked toward her because there was nothing else to do.

“Please offer my apologies to Russ,” was all she said. ■

## Billy Casey

We had neighbors who were noisy, happy, friendly folks with a big house and yard, trees to climb and a place to play ball. They had Monopoly®, Clue®, and American Bandstand® all the way from Philadelphia, plus lots of kids, and they had Billy Casey.

Billy Casey was 13, which was five years older than me. He had dark hair over his forehead, soft brown eyes, a quick laugh and a sweet temper; and I loved him more than I could stand. Billy Casey was the nephew of the neighbor, taken in by the family because, in whispers, his mother couldn't care for him. We ran our part of town together—Joanne, Marylou, Chuckie, Billy Casey, and me.

My family was fond of the kids next door, and my father brought Billy Casey, the fatherless boy, on family outings with us. I often fell asleep on the way home, tucked under his arm, secure, safe, loved, and protected.

On a late summer day, playing “fort” with Billy Casey in the cool dirt behind the church, I—obnoxious 8, silly 8, dangerous 8, God knows, only 8, ran from him into the church basement and locked myself in the kitchen. There, surrounded by bleached cotton tea towels, I taunted him until I found his anger for the first time as he beat on the door. Then I flipped the latch.

He exploded into the room, crashing the door into the plaster and slamming me back into a corner, trapped between his arm and the wall.

“What are you doing?” he demanded, straining to force the words past his clenched teeth, “What do you think you are doing?”

I didn't know what I was doing. My stomach turned before the fury in the hard stare from Billy Casey, who was once my love, who was never mean, who tucked me under his arm.

Did he touch his furious mouth to my lips? (I was only 8.) Did he press a hot cheek against my hair? (Only 8, for God's sake.) Did I hear a ratchet of breath as he yanked me by my ponytail and whipped me away from him, set me free to run home frantically with fear, confusion, and pain? Billy Casey ...

But I didn't tell on him. I'd seen enough of my father's moody anger to sense the barely tamped-down violence that he held at bay. I knew I could never tell what Billy Casey did.

One day later, my stomach ached. I curled on the couch and pretended to ignore Billy Casey who came to say he's sorry.

“I'm sorry,” he said, “I'm sorry.”

He's not here, I think, and, then, he isn't.

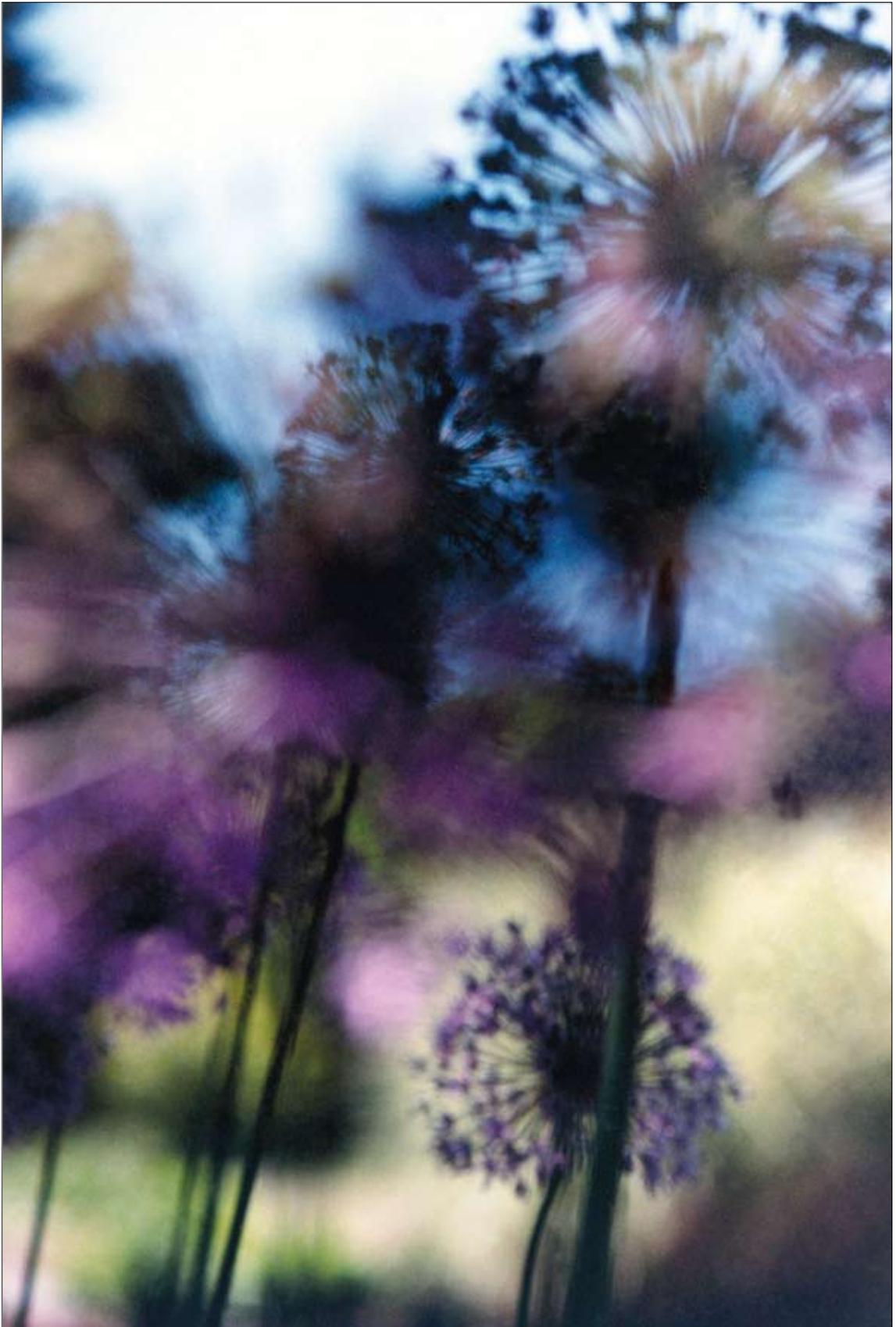
“I'm sorry,” he said, but he didn't say goodbye, though he meant goodbye, that day, and the day before too. It was the last time I ever saw him. They told me his mother came and took him home, but I don't know. In the bedtime darkness, I shivered at how his sad face slowly disappeared as I willed him not to be there and how he vanished from my life. ■

## The Uncatchable Mr. Ocean

The gray shore comes  
running to me.  
So we meet again.  
How have things been?  
One-word answers,  
he considers  
them a treasure.  
Mr. Ocean turns—  
he leaves.  
Oh! It's been a pleasure!

A magician.  
I see  
tricks up his sleeve.  
Shhhhhhh,  
he always says  
when he goes—  
places a finger over his lip  
and nose.  
I know what goes on  
behind the curtain.  
It's a good act  
of two faces  
I'm certain.

I'll never know why  
everyone falls in  
love with Mr. Ocean.  
All he's given me is a  
salty mixed illusion  
of coming near  
only to disappear.  
Then bringing himself  
back  
to complete  
the third act.



"UNTITLED" BY CANDICE LUCIANI

## Random Shuffle

I've written a poem  
    while listening to this song before.  
Maybe that's why I picked it.  
It's also a good intro to this playlist/free association  
    (freewriting is *our* term)  
thing.  
I've come to realize  
I really like the sound  
of church bells mixed with bass.

I'm afraid this is all going to sound too stupid  
to read out loud. Maybe I'll pick another—

whoa.

Alarm clocks to piano Radiohead.  
No transition,  
like taking flight over white and black via vines of melody and haunting bass clef chords.  
Did Thom Yorke and the gang  
see their music as a waterfall,  
as I do now?  
Christopher O'Riley must have.  
He's envisioned this—and given it to me—oh gifts of the muses  
    (Muse right on cue)  
come drench us.

Hold on—this needs to be louder.

“New Born,” now that's a concept.  
The `renewal of the soulless' is what I gather.  
Oh my God, this needs to be live, I need the bass pounding through my nerves, keys infiltrating my  
bloodstream, the electric twisting the brain tissue, finally the voice melodifying the words in my  
head/heart:

This is our universal language.

What's this? I don't think I'm going to like it.  
I do feel slightly abandoned in the desert, tho.  
Maybe some rain clouds over the mountains along the horizon.  
She mentioned “sins” just now.  
Don't get me started. Touchy subject. Not sure where I stand.  
(Well, yes, in the shadows, I know that).

“Bellies.”

Kronos devours his offspring in order to avoid being overthrown.

They're in his belly.

Certain Renaissance artists depict Hell as in the belly of the Devil.

I didn't know “belly” could bring up disturbing images...

I miss last summer.

“Do you remember the days?”

Yes. Thoroughly:

Coheed and acoustics lying around.

My need for socks (I need some right now).

4 o'clock-in-the-mornings.

Road trips and lie-ins.

No, I did not forget those days.

Why does Windows Media Player® insist on polluting my music library with their random picks?

I don't know who this is, but it sucks.

Sounds like Sting.

Hey, I do kinda like the Police, tho.

“You were born for this.” God, I hope I wasn't born for *this* song.

Stop barraging me with these things.

I'll find out myself what I was born for, thanks.

Oh God, *thank* you.

“Oh no, I see” and more black and whites  
wash over me.

Such a calming effect.

I miss my bed by the stream,

I miss things I haven't even seen.

I miss the cold outside.

Spider webs

are such great visions.

To have one spun around you—

Chris Martin, I know how you feel.

This makes me think of nebulas:

slow-moving clouds of gas at extremely low temps.

(I miss astronomy class).

I want to stir the colors with my fingertips.

I want the cold/the trouble to make my body rock back and forth under pressure.

I should disappear.

Lay down and disappear.

Watch the lights rise up above us.

(Ugh, skip the chorus, go back to the riffs.)

More keys and \_\_\_\_\_ that's good.

“away,”

Good, as in Nothing is Better.

Now it trails past...

Now it's me tonight. Shall I be Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?

HaHA! The power to choose is mine!

Let's make potions in the antechamber, then explore hidden passages.

Perhaps we shall dance in the alleys?

Let's scatter some puddles into the picture,

so our feet can disperse the molecules when we pound them in.

Shhh...

## Sky at Midnight

She was the one you see in hallways, in the street, in hospitals. Lily was a flower in a field of weeds and grass. You pluck her from the ground, pluck her petals wondering if she loves or she loves you not. You put her in a glass of *agua*, you watch her, thinking, *this little flower is mine*. You watch her turn dark and shrivel up and stop breathing.

I work four to midnight. I rinse and stack, rinse and stack, rinse and stack, and then put the dishes in their right place. I make seven *dolores* an hour to wipe strangers' leftovers off their plates and then make them clean again.

Juan say, "This is the worst job ever, man. We come all the way up here and, this is all they let us do, all they pay us for this crap."

Miguel say, "Mi baby Teresa only gets two meals a day and her *mami* never gets a break from watching her because her *papi* works two jobs all the time."

Juan is 20 and I am 18. Juan's little *hermana* is in love with me, and I kind of like her back, but she just like all the other girls in the *barrio*, with their big round earrings and their big clanky heels. I don't think she has any eyebrows anymore, she just draw them in, one thin line with a perfect arch.

Lily has hair like the color of ripe corn and eyes like the sky at noon. Her eyebrows are full, and each hair lays in harmony with the others. Her skin is the color of cream I put in my coffee. I think, watching the cream twirl in my coffee, what would her cream skin do if she mixed it with my coffee skin?

Lily works at the place that I work. She serves people out front, saying *Can I get you this?* and *Can I get you that?* or *Have a nice day please*. This makes me cry, because I know she is not like the other servers. I know Lily means it when she ask *How can I help you?* to strangers who think she just like all those other bitter servers and so they say *Give me this and give me that*, without a *please* or *thank-you*. If Lily did ask me *How can I help you?* I say, *Thank you*. But maybe she has already asked me an' I don't know because I don't speak English and she don't speak Spanish.

Sometimes, if Miguel, Juan, and me have not cleaned enough silverware, Lily will come back and sort and clean her own. Every server rolls hundreds of silverware into napkins each night. It seems like hundreds, they are always just rolling, rolling, rolling.

She reaches her pencil-thin fingers into the sharp jumble of metal and soggy bread the machine has not been good enough to clean off, she reaches in without blinking or without putting on gloves.

I go up to her an' I say, "Why do you put your pretty fingers in that awful mess?" And she look at me an' smile and say "*Hola*." The word is like tiny glass coming out of her mouth. I can reach up and break it.

Lily is taller than me, but I am stronger than her. A little time ago, Miguel, Juan, and me were just drowning in the water and suffocating under all the dirty dishes. An' so the manager—who only speaks *How are you today?* and *Where is your other friend tonight?* or *We need these dishes right now*—come back with two girls and point to us and point to them and point to the dishes. Lily was there. She walk over next to me and don't put on gloves.

"Hold," I say.

"*Hola*," she say.

"*Yo soy Jesús*," I say, "I...*Jesús*."

"I'm Lily," she say, "*Nombre...Lily*."

"*Yo se*. I know."

And she pull up her dirty sleeves and she start rinsing. An' I see marks the color of the sky at night on her arm. *Oh, my pretty little flower*, I think, *who has broke your stem?*

I am noticing now the carefulness of her walk, the delicate connection that is made between her foot an' the floor. I am noticing now the pink around her eyes that never go away. I am noticing now the patch of cream makeup fingerprinted over her cheeks.

"*Yo soy Jesús*. *¿Cómo puedo ayudarle*, Lily? (I am Jesús. How can I help you, Lily?) The I's are like E's over my tongue, and she does not recognize her name out of my mouth.

Lily has not been back to touch the silverware in a lot of time. I am always looking for her out there with the other 'mericanos, but I only sometimes see her and I see her only for a second. Her hair glares in the dull light. I can see her across the kitchen. The last time, though, her hair have no glare. The light only reflect off the dew in her eyes.

I have not seen Lily in too much time.

I say to Juan, who knows *un poco Inglés*, "Juan, see where that Lily girl has gone. Go ask the others."

He say, "What, are you in love, man? I'll tell *mi hermana* on you, brother."

I say, "Just go, Juan."

And he does. And she is not working here no more.

I go home and I get the *Español Inglés Diccionario*. I look up 'help' and 'you' and 'beautiful' and 'love.' And I know just what I am going to do.

At work now, a girl has taken Lily's place. This new *chica* know a lot of Spanish, more than Juan, and I think I will talk to her.

I say, "Hola, Señorita."

"Hola, Señor," she say.

"Señorita, where is the Lily you took the place of?" I say in Spanish. And she is confused. She don't understand Lily was a flower.

"¿Escusame?"

"Lily. You know where she is? She worked here before you. Ask them."

She look at all the other 'mericanos next to her and ask, "Lily? Do you know Lily?" And her name ruffles on the air, like dead leaves, fallen from their mouths.

"Lily had to leave to stay at home more. She is pregnant with her boyfriend's child. Pregnant. Do I have the right word? She will give birth to her boyfriend's baby. Is that what you needed to know?"

"Yes, thank you, and one thing more..." (But, miss, you do have the wrong word. Pregnant. That is a very wrong word for Lily.) "Where does Lily live?"

"Where does she live? I'm sorry, I cannot tell you that, nor am I allowed to."

"Then what is her last name?" And she talk with the others and they let me know her last name.

"Juan," I say, showing him, "look this up." He does, and I go there, to the place on the page with so many other people's homes.

I walk to the hallway where her number is, and I smell the scent of sad on the air. Her door is here, and it look jus' like the ones next to it, but it is not the same. I know she is here, she is right here. There is a melody of glass escaping the walls, and I can reach up and break it. But I know better.

He is not here, I know. He would have broken her melody with his presence. I knock, an' I open the door. She is surprised seeing me here and she is scared.

"My Lily, I do not come to break your stem." And she is confused.

"Help you, Beautiful Lily."

And she stares at me like I am here to hurt her. But she hears my words and she understands them now and she does not hide. I have seen her marks as dark as the midnight sky and I want to make them light again. I want her hair like corn to shine.

"Love you, Lily." And she look at me now like maybe she is liking me more. Now her body does not flinch with my words. She is smiling. But then she look at the door behind me and her eyes grow dark and her smile sinks back into the crevices of her skin. He is here now, and I can feel him.

The skin around my eyes look like the sky at midnight, like places on Lily's skin. My skin and Lily's skin. Our skin. Our skin is the same.

I think now: *How is the Lily?* But you have broke her slender stem. You have ripped her from the ground she grows from, and you have put her in a vase with bad water. *Lily, I will put your broken stem back in the ground you come from and I will clear the weeds away and you will grow. And your petals will shine in the sun.* But you keep her in your bad water and I cannot get her out. And you think, *This little flower is mine*, but she is not. And then you will watch her turn dark and shrivel up and stop breathing. ■

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FELIX CARABALLO

## Santo

I have been inside the beast,  
completely surrounded by grief.

Tidal waves of deceit hit me with  
CHEATS.

and

LIARS,  
THIEVES, I

have been shot at, stabbed,  
beaten one time just for being Puerto Rican.

I have fought demons, heard the  
squealing sounds of hatred screaming.

I have been boxed in, the only way out, to  
fight, day and night, blood stains my mouth.

I have chipped away layers  
of evil, knowing God will be there.

I have prayed for my soul and  
for the souls of others, to find STRENGTH

covered in heavy-laden guilt  
with the soul of a SAINT.



"MESSENGER" BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI

## Two Lovers Fading in Front of New Lovers

Their love now malign,  
each found partners at a party one night on good wine,  
to excite their passion, a plan devised by design.

Apart, they made love for the very last time  
both seeming to extinguish before their own eyes  
which only shined briefly from in between thighs  
of these two naive strangers who unknowingly entwined.

They'll remember each other as solace in lives  
where flesh was inviting and love undefined.  
They knew it was hopeless but gave it a try  
and Seduction the serpent triumphed with a sigh,

"Love will ignite, flicker, and flare—  
but out blows the candle in shallow night air."

LOGAN NORRIS

## The Reason Luzhin Killed Himself

I was puzzled over the last two pages,  
and the entire last third of the book really.  
He married the white queen, lived by her rook,  
and then one day the bishop came knocking,  
along with two other pawns.  
The thing was, he knew it was inevitable,  
the hospital and loosing a black front.  
The aunt was gone, his parents dead,  
and his father landed in a particularly bad spot  
before the fact so there was no chance for a castle.

*It was no surprise that white called checkmate.*

## Nineteen

"There's no such things as bombs and stuff."  
I heard a young boy say this  
one night while I was working.  
I instantly thought of him.

I hardly knew him, but  
he is greatly missed. He  
himself was just a child at  
only nineteen. When the news  
had been published that he  
had been killed by a roadside  
bomb along with five other Marines,  
it took days to believe. Even now it is hard to grasp.

His funeral was packed. He  
made friends everywhere he  
went. Guests were even sitting  
outside under a tent watching  
the service on a television. It was  
a perfect day too, not a cloud to  
be seen, not a raindrop felt. He  
would have been outside somewhere  
doing something, because that is  
how he was.

After his service, it was discovered  
he had actually planned his funeral  
before he was deployed. That thought  
is unimaginable at the age of nineteen.  
He should have been arranging a date  
with his girlfriend, or playing a  
game of backyard football with the guys,  
not deciding which hymns would be sung.

He would have been upset to  
see everyone crying over him. He  
always looked on the Brightside of  
the world. He found beauty in even  
the ugliest of things. I don't remember  
ever seeing him without his luminous  
smile perched on your face. Even  
in pictures he sent from Iraq, his smile  
is there, bringing a little hope  
to the others.

The mother's reply to her son's comment,  
"Unfortunately, honey, there is."

## Ugly Mothers Birth Heavenly Slobs

Some people are useless. They outlive their purpose. This man is one of them. Not that there wasn't a time when he could have been something. There was a time when people like him were kings, but now, wars aren't fought on battlefields. They're fought on senate floors and conference calls, and action is rarely needed. Whenever it is, it's only a missile strike from a destroyer 30 miles off shore or bombs dropped from the safety of a plane. This is a man who would have ridden with Attila, stood at Thermopylae, or explored any unknown nook of earth, not for glory or fame, but for the act—the chance to ride the wave of explicit existence. Now all the poor slob can do is drive down the highway in a mid-nineties sedan, wasted on pills and booze, and slalom between rigs. It's a life. He just drained the contents of an amber bottle, and finding it now useless, like himself, he pitches it out the window. When your true calling is to slay bodies, you care nothing of litter.

Another man is driving down this same highway, and he cares nothing of war. He has the eyes of a demon set in the brow of an angel and wants to change the world, or at least scar it. He is listening to *Piano Man* when he sees a bottle ejected from the car in front of him, tossed high and cursed with perfect timing to land on his windshield. A spider web spreads in front of him.

"What the phuc!" he says as his car swerves right and he regains control. Infuriated by this offense, a violation of his autonomy, he does what anyone would do: High beams on. Acceleration until the bumpers almost kiss. Excessive honking. Profanities flow like wine.

This man was just trying to enjoy himself anyway he knew how, trying to squeeze a drop of joy out the rotten fruit of life. And now there's some prick, tailgating him, honking and flashing his high beams. Eager for confrontation, he gives into the taunt. A quick stomp on the left pedal incites a metallic crunch so pure and raw that it's almost lovely.

It's past midnight, but before the morning, and the face of a full moon stares at the world uncaringly. Two cars are locked in a warm fender embrace in the

middle lane of a westbound highway. A man stumbles slowly from his wrecked mid-nineties sedan, a hunting knife tucked in his belt and black thoughts creeping through his addled mind.

The other guy is stunned, his mouth bleeding from a quick bite of his steering wheel, appalled by the turn of events. He wipes the blood from his lips and gets out of his car. Enveloped in rage, pupils dilated, and teeth bared, he yells, "Throwing shit outta your window, causing accidents...what the hell's the matter with ya? Ya some kinda moron?"

"Why ya talkin' to me like that? Yore a rude prick...kno' that?" A tractor trailer destined for Columbus whips past. He thinks the wind feels good on his face and almost forgets his prey. "Whyd' you hit my car?" he says to the one he's staring through.

"Hit your car? You were the one who hit me with the bottle." He can tell by the look, or lack thereof, in the other man's eyes and the way he sways that reasoning is pointless. An intuitive sense of danger grabs the T-ball bat from under the driver's seat for a comfort of safety.

Only three feet and an opened Skylark door between them, the drunk sees what the other has. "So ya wanna play? I wanna play too!" A grin the Mad Hatter would be envious of illuminates his face as he rips the knife from his belt so violently that he has to take two steps left so as not to fall over.

It's always too late, and the gravity of a situation hits. There's no way out, like air sucked from the lungs.

The knife wielding man shouts a sincere imitation of a Comanche's cry and kicks the door shut. The other guy swings the child's club, missing the lunatic and hitting his car, but allowing a D-flat to reverberate into the atmosphere. The highway becomes a battlefield as the moon becomes obscured by clouds. The two men fight next to their wrecks—a battle as glorious and meaningless as any that their fathers fought. Blood is freed from bodies; teeth and innocence lost. The moon peeks its face from behind a cloud to find one man dead with contusions and lacerations. The other is in shock; he's bloody, and lost in himself, yet breathing and victorious. For some souls, any other way out of this world would be blasphemy. ■

## In The Deep

Just after sunset in deep March, there is a gray and lavender primer that lies on the sky over the firm and stout mountains of Vermont. Sparkled with stars and jewels, smelling of bubbling pine sap, the night harbors more than just an owl's verb. In the womb of darkness, a sugarhouse stirs as a grandmother does, preparing evening sweets for her beloved family on Christmas Eve.

The sugarhouse is young and natural, made of wild trees and thick nails. Tall and handsome, its door welcomes those who spend spring afternoons boiling golden sugar.

A wrinkled man with thick, graying hair is the first to shake the dust off the walls of the place. He stacks cold wood, which is frost bitten to its severed roots, next to the prominent furnace and starts a fire to warm the room. He looks out a small window to see if any lamps are burning through the darkness, while the fire gets loose in the belly of steel.

The sugarhouse is built on a hill, and after warm minutes pass, lights appear at the bottom of this hill. The lamps illuminate more than just snowflakes. The faces of a bearded young man and his small son start to poke out of the dark corners of the earth.

Father and son pass the small window with the lamp held high, showing the child's cheeks, pink as a cherry blossom, and the man's forest of a black beard. Seeing both of the lamplighters smiling makes the old man grin as well.

"Hi, Grampa!" shouts the child as soon as he sees the old man's eyes.

"Hi, Matthew. Are you ready to make some maple syrup?"

"Yes I am," says the boy as his grandfather sets him back on the dirt floor and looks to the boy's father.

"How ya doing tonight, Pete?"

"Oh good, good Larry. How about you?" asks the Grandfather as the two shake hands in a fire's orange light.

The bearded man takes off his gloves, puts more wood in the fire, and then pokes around in the base of the embers to allow it to breath. He closes the

door and goes to the back of the giant stove to pour buckets of cold clear sap into the pan.

After closing the damper, the child's father walks to a far corner and stands next to the big belly of the patriarch.

The coveralls that they have on are burned through in some places and are soaked with stories of flames and laughter. The lone room starts to warm like a day in the sun, and the small boy takes off his small jacket and tiny gloves.

The two adults stand with arms crossed, discussing cold things that have no meaning to young boys. They talk of beasts in the woods and of paths that stretch onto greater lands behind the field, the hill, and the house.

Smiling, with hands and fingers reaching out, Matthew takes a ladle hanging on the wall and goes to spoon some of the warm, ever darker sap. He takes his new found treasure and blows air through his puckered lips to send the steam and heat to the night. When it has cooled to his liking, he takes sips and glows! He runs to his father and grandfather and says, "Try it!"

They both take a sip themselves as the hot steam drifts off the ladle.

"I like it like this. Why don't we just keep it?" asks the boy.

"Well, that wouldn't be too good on pancakes and waffles, and you can't make sugar on snow with it, can you?"

"The stuff on the snow is different than this. What happens to the sap to make it turn into maple syrup?" says the bright boy as he gets more from the pan.

"The hot fire boils the sap, and the steam is water that is so hot it flies away. We have to boil it for so long because there is so much in the sap that we need to get rid of. When all the water sails to the moon, what's left is something very sweet, and I think you know just what that is." ■

## Trans-instrumental

That album...that vinyl album means a moment taken back into myself, where my past sense and meanings are rekindled in parts, creating more than just the first listen round. I was 12 and still young and clueless while learning the law of my family and how they conveyed the world to me. Their belief was spastic—I was a ping-pong ball trying to learn ice skating for some reason or another. It never fit, or to say more fittingly, I never fit with either side. It's like trying to put a record that skips into a CD player and hoping that somehow it will fix itself. The dusty niches aren't going to speak the same language.

I can still fabricate the moment when I laid breath on that song. I was sitting on an old couch. It's grip was an array of stitches pronged to the surface and sticking out, trying to withstand my weight pressuring it to curdle softly into cotton. The green material was as serene as some old fart tripodding steps with a cane, a bum leg from the war, which I'm too young to appreciate, and a whiskered smile. Hugging the brim of the couch arm was a stained blanket of God knows what. I like to think that it was a pattern that didn't have much ambition to forage through the rest of the couch and into me, but in itself was safe to maneuver around. I'd like to think that. It makes having a couch like this bearable.

Across the bend of my knees, my feet align a bridge crisscrossed into a y-x form. Eventually my focus crept into the crumbled look of a mirror table. The crumbings were from half or completely used objects scattered randomly with no reason: bottle caps, Snapple® peach tea, empty plates and glasses, the latest issue of what Publishers Clearing House is promising me, receipts to what I promised myself, and a pizza box from the night before.

Underneath the chaotic consumer parade lies the top of the table. It's blue hue shows the exhalation of the smoke from the burning factory above it. My lips hold the smokestack. The crescent like flow of the air churns the smoke into imaginable punctuations that otherwise would have been fragments to my "contemplations of life." The conclusion is to

invest out of the conformed ideals that ice skating ping-pong has presented. This preclusion carries into a less sought-after bummed shiny. That coarse maneuver doesn't seem natural because it's not just a new breath, but a convoluted theory of my life, which is to be learned and disciplined into skill within myself.

Through all the rampant dead, I chose to fix my eyes upon the dull inner coilings that leaned depressively against what was a semi-blown-out speaker/coaster for the boom box. The leaning was fused by a covering of dust brought by a lost time when it was loved and played to the depths of howling vigor. Planning on dependency, it chose to not awake. It just stood sighing contrapposto, forgotten like the old lone shoe in the back of a closet.

Shifting in my seat to view with better understanding, the hibernating trumpet caught a beam of light projecting inside from the outside world. The projection through the orchestrated dust dance threw an impression from the brass into my eyes. Even though it was layered in dust, the light that touched the bend of the bell reflected in such a way that it was a plea from the sun god and trumpet duo to enlighten my ambition. The thought, of course, struck me as evident and with a purpose, but it took a few more decisive moments before I had the motivation to get up, thereby consequently relieving the green couch and allowing it to even out from that concave butt print I had created.

I uncrossed my bridge from the table that I'd been crutching and planted my feet, firmly standing. The air stood within me, not against me, as I half-stepped towards that trumpet. The drab red carpet surrounding the trumpet caught my eye as I stood hovering over it. It was in the spotlight of my shadow. Kneeling down as if about to pick up a near fatality, my hand gripped the instrument carefully, but with familiarity. In that weaving of seconds, I remembered what I had forgotten: that musky smell of the cool sultry wholeness behind melody. Infinite trenches of my fingerprints tipped the slight dips of each valve. It was all coming together now. I paused with the mouthpiece no more than two inches from my lips, wearing a contemplative open-eyed stare, remembering how the breath moved into that song, *'Round Midnight*. ■

CANDICE LUCIANI

## Jack Daniels' 409

Cold fervent burn of my thought-chest

Acknowledging felt pauses

Between holding a breath

And breathing... at the same time wind tricycles outside the waterbed,

Whetting a steady rain.

Tap-ping

A

Around

Trickle

Me.

I'm at the corner of the

H

O

U

S

E now,

Gripping clarity inside the cabinet.

Haunting dreamt lives living, pierced into existence.

Emerge faceless and jaw-dropped.

Hoarding hope by stomach horns.

Wreck trekkin' the sphere-fear within.

## The Silence

I sat in the courtroom, the hard wooden chair pushing against my tailbone. So much had been said in the last few weeks, and my head was spinning. There were the hearings, I don't know how many, and now the trial. I wore the best suit that I had, not nice by any stretch of the imagination, but the best I had. It was a pair of light brown corduroys, the only pants I owned without a hole in them, and a pale-blue, oversized jacket, one I'd probably gotten from my grandfather, but I don't really remember.

The room itself was large. There was a flag in the corner with a giant brass eagle sitting atop it and a row of empty seats, where I'd assume the jury would have sat if my case had had one. Two wooden desks stood in front of me, just past the microphone that nearly blocked my line of sight, and the unceasing babble of lawyers mixed together in a cacophony of broken sounds. My mother, the woman who'd suddenly left so many years before and only recently reappeared, sat at one of the desks, and the other was empty. It was meant for my father and his wife, but they hadn't shown, something not that uncommon or that unexpected.

I had been sworn in. What a sight it must have been—a 10 year old with blonde, overgrown hair and tortoise-shell glasses, placing his skinny left hand upon the bible and swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in a never-ending stutter. I would, for good or bad I would. It wasn't the bible that made me do it. I'd long before decided that *that* book wasn't for me, and it wasn't respect for this *process* or my supposed superiors. It was my own integrity, my own opinion of right and wrong, and the way things should be that made me do it.

My head was in another world, as is usual for me, when the man in black, the judge, leaned over and spoke to me. I didn't hear him. His deep voice must have melded into my dream-like Hershey's® syrup into milk. He furrowed his brow, and, after exaggerating the clearing of his throat, asked me again, "Could you please tell us what happened the night of November 12th, for the record?"

My pulse shot up to nearly 200 BPMs, and my hands suddenly felt wet. I rubbed them together while trying to speak, but my mouth felt like the inside of a sock. It was drier than bone. My tongue

stuck to the bottom, and my lips clung to the sides of my teeth as if in desperation. Only a faint sound escaped, not really a whisper, but more like a loud exhale. I rolled my brown eyes up to the judge who smiled and told me to take my time. I took a sip of water, swallowed, and began, "Well," I said, "she came in that n-n-night and did th-that ..."

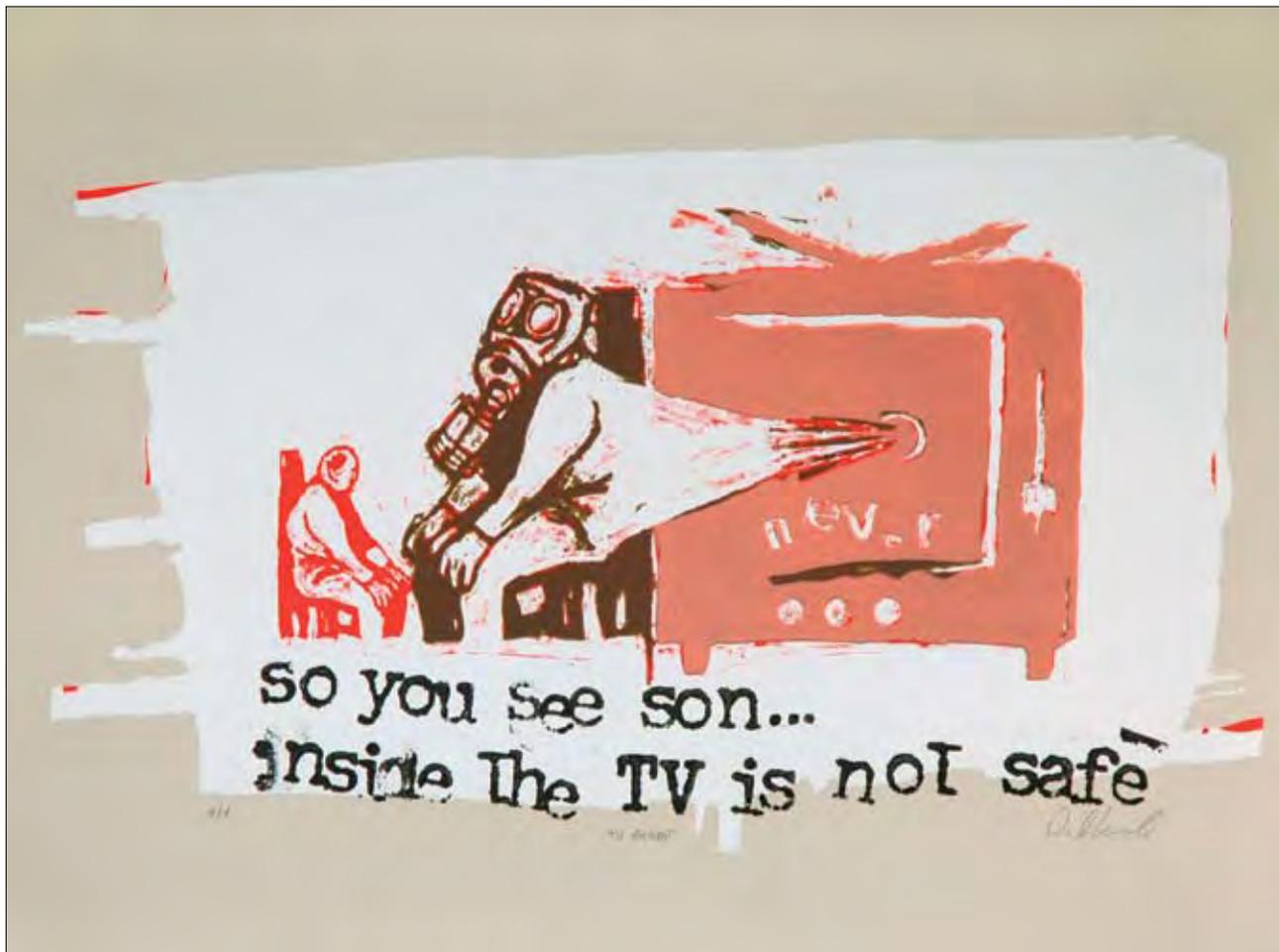
He cut me off, "I believe we all know what Mr. S. is going to say, and, if there are no complaints, and I don't think there will be since the accused parties haven't bothered to show, I think we should pick up after the 'event.' Please continue, son."

I looked around the room. My mom was staring at me. Tears stood in her eyes, reflecting the light like lakes do in the summer time, but it meant nothing to me. She was a stranger. She had caused this. It was her fault. If she hadn't left, if she'd only cared enough to call, maybe it wouldn't be like this. Maybe it'd be different.

He didn't make me tell the story, but I had lived it; and, the merest mention made me relive it, a horrible 8 MM picture in the backs of my eyes. I heard the door open. I felt my covers move. I saw through the grainy dark as it had been that night. I felt the grating of her sandpaper lips and tasted the vodka and cigarettes all over again. There was a heat, like the stove I once touched that burned at me, and the shame. "She l-left my room. I remember the w-w-way h-her n-n-n-nightgown blew in the air of the overhead f-f-fan, like a ghost. I-it k-kind of hung off wo-wo-one shoulder, and she looked at me. Sh-she smiled and laughed."

I didn't tell the court, but that was the only time I've ever cried. Maybe it was my breaking point. Maybe it was the way those tastes and that wetness combined, like chemicals, that made me do it. I don't know what it was. It wasn't like this was the first time or anything; she'd been at it so long that, for a while, I thought it was normal. It wasn't until they told us about it in school that I knew it wasn't. That's how I found out. I had to learn about my own life from a textbook, God damn it. "I curled u-up in my Batman® blankets, and I went to bed."

The room looked at me. I could feel their eyes burning my skin the way the heating brick must have burnt my grandmother's in the story she'd always liked to tell, and I tried to look away. I admired my ripped Keds® and wiggled my toes just to see if they were still there. They wanted more. The important part was coming up, and they all knew it. I'd told



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them before, the bastards; why did I have to tell them again?

"It was the n-next morn-n-ning when I left," I continued. They stared at me in rapt attention. I had an audience I didn't want in the palm of my hands; I wouldn't lie. I wouldn't take advantage of them. I'd simply tell my story. "At maybe s-s-six o'clock, b-before anyone got up, I left. I p-packed my back-pack with s-s-some of my clothes, put on my Keds—the same pair I'm wearing now, but they were newer then—and my c-c-c-coat, hugged the Joker®—my pillow—and I left."

"And where did you go?" the judge broke in, offending me by disrupting my narrative. I gave him the coldest look I could, but I'm sure it didn't work. My mom was openly weeping now—*how dare she*—and I continued.

"I-i-eye ran away."

It was the coldest day of the year, I swear, and the sun was just beginning to come up. There were pink

and orange clouds off in the distance, moving rapidly across the sky through a vast expanse of freedom, of happiness, of hope; and I watched them for a while before I began my trek. Having walked maybe a mile, I stopped to cup my hands in front of my face and warm up a little. My nose felt like someone was stabbing it with needles, but at least it felt, unlike my hands and feet. I'd have to get out of this wind. It'd been sticking me with its sharp edges ever since I'd started, and I'd had enough. A flurry lightly tapped my shoulder as I leaned up against that old beer distributor. I tried to find my clouds, my freedom, but they were gone, replaced by the crumbling bricks and dirty air of downtown Lebanon. I exhaled, creating a cloud in front of me, but it just wasn't the same. I stilled smelled like her.

"The police found you wandering, uh," the judge looked down at his desk and rifled through some loose papers he'd been messing with up there, "Lebanon, un-accompanied on the morning of the 13th. Is that right?"

“Yes.”

“And then they took you home?”

“Yes.”

“And could you tell us what happened there?”

I nodded, but supposedly that wasn't good enough, because the judge told me to vocalize my answer. I did, and kicked the leg of my chair with my heel. My butt had gone numb and my legs were quickly following. “The p-p-policeman brought me home.” The judge then said something about a report and held a piece of paper in the air.

“Dad opened the door. H-h-he smiled at the cops, and he thanked them. My stepmother hugged me, and sh-sh-she pinched my b-b-b-b-back.”

“Why didn't you tell the police what had been going on?”

“Th-they would-dn't have believed me.” It wasn't a smart answer, only the truth. I'd tried once to tell my first-grade teacher, Mrs. Figueroa, and she'd scolded me for making up stories. Alicia, my stepmother, told me that that's how it was. She said I couldn't tell anyone because it was my fault, and that, if I did, they wouldn't believe me anyway. That's the hardest part. The silence is the hardest—not what you'd think, but, again, the truth.

“My dad thanked the p-p-police and brought me inside. H-h-he pushed on the sp-spot where I'd just b-b-been pinched.” The door closed with a bang. It shook the house like a mini-earthquake making a porcelain figurine of Robert E. Lee fall off of my dad's desk. It flipped over two times in the air, which was now heavy, and shattered when it hit the floor, another casualty of his rage. His face contorted, revealing a monster and turned a dark maroon. His piercing blue eyes bulged out at me and cut the little boy I'd once been like knives. I'd swear that the black hairs on his head stood up and pointed at me, taking aim. He crushed the beer in his hand, and white foam enclosed his right forearm. It was 9 a.m. “And he beat me.”

His fists felt like the knob ends of baseball bats as they came down on me, percussively, like the beating of a bass in a dirge. A heat welled up in me, once again, and I closed my eyes. No-good, worthless-piece-of-shit God-damn son-of-a-bitch, and other descriptions of me separated and interspersed themselves amongst the blows, like a backbeat. I was home. He was breathing heavily. My stepmother stood off to the side, smoking a Marlboro® with a smile. After a while, a kind of calm came over me, and I no longer felt his thrusts.

I was sleeping when his cigarette burned into my back. It barely registered at first and felt kind of like it does when you touch the metal part of a lawn chair that's been in the sun all day. Then it began to sting, and an awful smell filled my nostrils. When I opened my eyes, he threw his cigarette away and grabbed me by the neck.

“I know that this isn't easy, but could you please tell us why your right arm is in a bandage?” His interjection brought me out of my memory, and then sent me right back.

“I-i-i-t w-was the st-stove.”

“What about the stove?” The judge's eyes looked down at me with an air of superiority and regret. He didn't know. He had the paper. He had the report. He had all of the technical terms, probably knew more about what had happened that day than I did, but he didn't know.

I was fully awake now and being dragged by the skin of my neck toward the oven and the tea kettle whistling on its front burner. He said that I was never to run away again and that I'd almost caused a lot of trouble. He said that it was my fault; everything was my fault—his job, his life, his lack of money. He said that if I didn't straighten up that he'd have to do something bad, that he'd have to really punish me. Then he let me go.

I fell to the floor in front of the oven, its heat intensified on the spot on my back where his Marlboro had recently been. I fell in a lump. My knees came up around my ears, and my arms wrapped around them. I shook. He thought I was crying, but I wasn't. I was breathing—in and out—deep breaths.

It was then that he grabbed me by the right forearm. His fist, squeezing like a vice, he pulled me up to a standing position, and with his other arm, he knocked the tea kettle off the burner. It clanged against the wall. Boiling water splashed everything in that direction and then rolled down the walls like the tears I wouldn't shed. I looked up at him. His eyes were a glaze, and I turned away. This wasn't my father. I scanned the room for my stepmother and found her seated at the kitchen table, now drinking her first beer of the morning. He spread my hand out from a fist and ...

“He b-burned me.”

... pressed it down on the glowing coils of the stove's lone active burner. I felt my skin stick to it, bubble, and tear. The heat was intense. It sent a stabbing pain all the way up my arm, which was now

throbbing. A smell, like stale cigarettes, filled the room, and I screamed.

I looked down at my Keds again and tried to wiggle my toes, knowing that it wouldn't work. My feet had fallen asleep. I looked around the room, and no one looked back. I felt alone. They were rejecting me, calling me a liar, just like she told me they would. *I should have lied* I thought.

"Thank you, young man," the judge said, "that was very brave." His eyes danced in their deep hollows while the wrinkles around his jowled jaw stretched into a smile. "Please follow that man to my quarters."

Another police officer led me to his quarters, a small room adjacent to the courtroom. It was filled with books, a large desk, and a musty smell. He had one of those lamps with a green hood sitting on his desk, and it gave off a Tommyknocker-like glow. I felt uneasy and anxious. Something inside me knew that this was the end. It would be decided today. Good or bad, this was it.

As the car pulled away from the parking garage and out into the packed Harrisburg traffic, I followed the skyline with my eyes, over the mountains to the clouds, white and still and free in front of me, in front of us all. The Susquehanna rolled gently under the bridge as we crossed it, and I breathed. All was quiet except for the gentle growl of the engine, but the silence didn't disturb me. I'd lived in silence for years. This wasn't silence. It was something else. It was freedom. It was a new beginning, but for some reason, part of me secretly longed for the life I'd lived and for my father and for my stepmother and for Lebanon. And I asked myself, *what might have been if I'd spoken sooner? What might have, been if I'd broken the silence before the child had left me? What might have been if I'd never spoken at all?* ■

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The Silence* is fiction, not fact. Some of the events have taken place, others haven't. I have taken a great deal of liberty in my telling. This is a memoir at best, but is probably more aptly described as a tale. It is not to be taken as a truthful reenactment of my life. I am not James Frey. If you are a lawyer, I'm sorry. If you live in either Harrisburg or Lebanon, Pennsylvania, don't look for your house because it won't be there; and if you have experienced events such as those discussed in this story, know that I understand and do not wish to offend.

JASON SMITH

## Get Me Away from Here

It was a soggy autumn morning when I awoke. A dull light wad drawn across my window like a dingy curtain. The usual routine of getting showered, dressed, and out the door was soon to come. I don't eat breakfast, and I am not a morning person. Nobody is ever home in the morning; it's usually just me and my toothbrush. I leave at around ten after to get to school in plenty of time. I run across, or rather see this girl about a block away from my house, the school being only five blocks in the same direction. Her hair is short, black, and fits around her face flawlessly; her eyes are warm puddles of chocolate boiling against the flour-dusted paleness of her face. I thought she was very pretty. Of course, I thought she was pretty because I didn't know her well enough to see any of the faults she carries like the rest of us. I, myself, am not what you could call attractive. I have been told I have a rather unique look, which means that I am nice to know, not love.

Usually I would walk behind her a good distance to avoid having to talk with her. I don't have a fear of people really, but it's just that I like to watch. Today for some reason, she walked at a slower pace than before. I had to walk even slower, almost not walk at all, to stay behind. Then, she suddenly stopped walking all together. I wasn't sure if I should also stop, maybe walk backwards, or just keep going. Before I could make up my mind, she turned and looked at me—not with a cold, hard look, nor a happy one. It was empty. My breath was caught in my lungs, hal- lowing them like frigid canoes. She looked at me in this barren manner, while my eyes darted from hers to the ground, to the sky, and then back to her face.

She took a deep breath. "Let's walk together for once?" she asked in a voice that could barely travel the short distance between us.

I wanted to say that I was thinking the same, that I always thought that, yet in the end, I just nodded and joined her.

It was about three blocks and neither of us had spoken a word. The trees were still skeletons, scathing in the grayness of fall. I was afraid to look at her, so I only stole glances. I noticed her cheeks and nose were sprinkled with faded freckles, faint ghosts of childhood. As I tried to sketch her face in my mind

with permanent marker, her hand brushed slightly against mine. It was only a quick swipe, but, in that second, I felt a gentle flow of warmth coming from the depths of her body. I don't know if she noticed, but it didn't really matter anyway. When we got to school, we just went our separate ways, not looking at each other or saying anything, just letting ourselves be swallowed by the masses. I usually don't see her through the whole day until I walk home.

I find myself constantly thinking of that girl. All day, I sit at my desk, musing of what she was like. I have a habit of doing that really, making up stories and such about people I've never met. In some way, I find that it compensates the vast distance I feel between myself and the people around me, a bridge of sorts.

In my head, I imagine her to be immensely sad. I don't know why, but all the small things I know about her lead me to believe she's lonely—from the way she walks to the emptiness in her eyes, which swallowed me earlier this morning. Though in her mind, I can see dreams, thousands of them. Some are still dusted with gold from childhood, some are rooted deep into her heart full of sleepy-eyed daydreams, while others linger in the crevasses of her mind like shadows creased between the pages of a book. Maybe she wanted to be a doctor, or perhaps a vet, ever since she was little, but, as she grew, her mind matured before her face. It changed into an ambition to become a writer, a poet, or a painter.

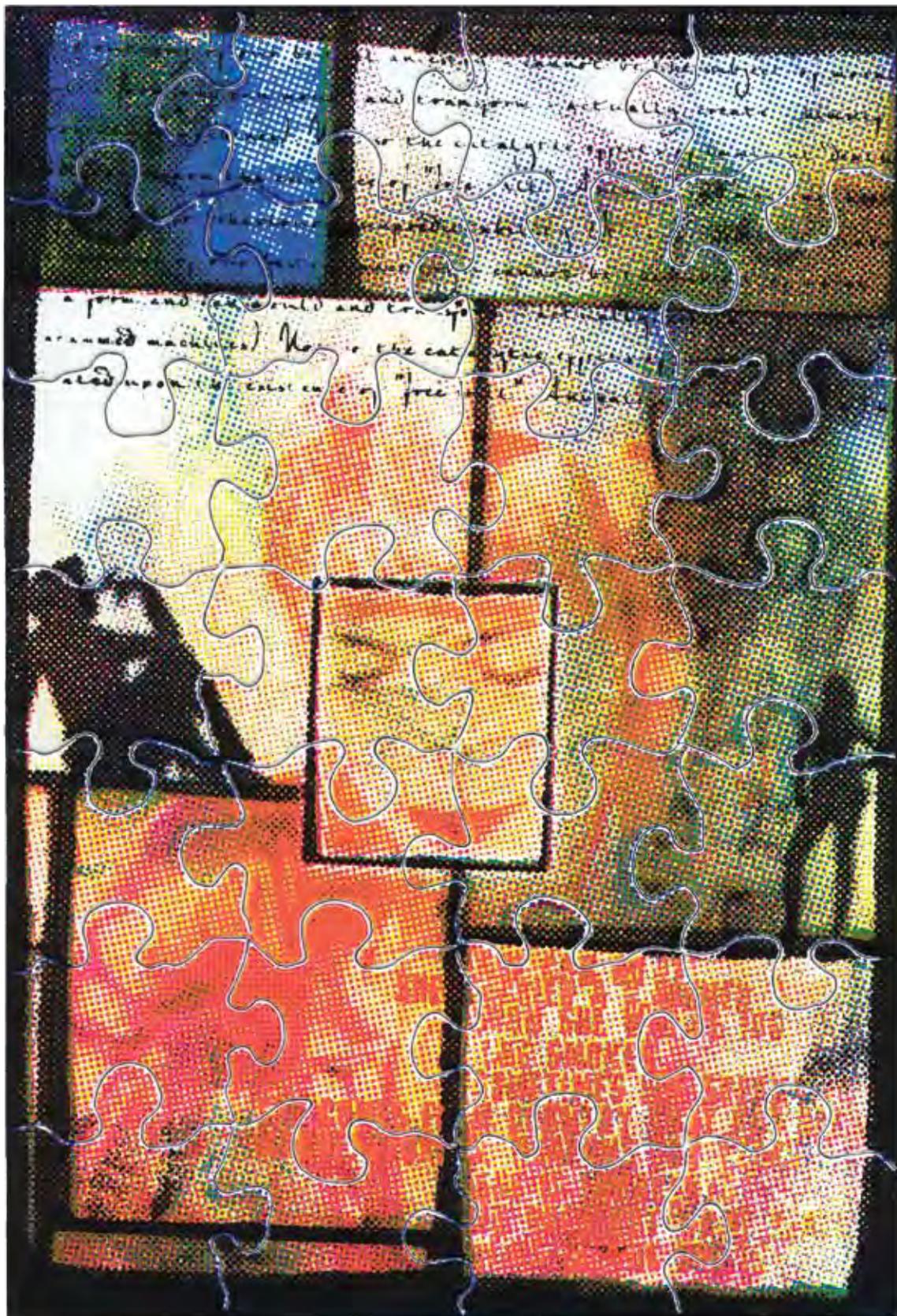
Her ragged looks seem to only hint at the pace in which she runs down the streets of love. I see her heart plump with the fantasies of puppy preteen affection, but terrified by the bulldogs of harsh love. Maybe she has never been kissed, but feels it on her lips every night, as she lay sleepless in bed while cars play lullabies on the road outside. I see her whispering into books as she loses her mind in the midst of what she can't seem to understand. I try to figure out her name in my head, and the first one that surfaces is Emily. I call the name out in my head, trying to imagine her face turning in response to it. It seems almost too real, yet I doubt that it's her name.

School is not something that I really enjoy because I have to do work and such, but also because I have to be around lots and lots of people—people who I do not know. I wouldn't say I fear crowds, just small spaces with too many people. When you feel so overwhelmed, you sometimes retreat into yourself and you

feel alone in the world. It's almost like you don't exist at all. It's a selfish feeling really, thinking you alone are the only person ignored into silence. Yet lately, I feel more alive than I have ever felt. Ever since I've had the pleasure of watching this girl from afar for so long, and then finally making contact with her, I wanted to be real.

When the bell finally rings, I find myself looking for her in the hallway as I walk towards the exit. I scan all the faces—some I've seen before and others I'll never see again. As I walk out the door, I decide to wait by the steps in case she passes by. I stand against the cement wall and try to map out some sort of greeting that I could call to her, but end up with nothing as I notice the flow of students had faded to a trickle. I begin to walk, figuring she was already halfway to wherever she lives. It would be kind of weird to worry about her like I knew her, but I am disappointed nonetheless. As I keep walking, I continue to worry about her. Could this obsessive feeling be love? No, I just thought she was interesting. I wanted to get to know her more, and then maybe I could take this feeling I have in my chest and turn it into something worth living for.

About a quarter of the way home, I find myself loathing the quietness of my house. As soon as I open the door, it'll be there waiting for me like a sad dog. I slip on my headphones and turn the music all the way up. I walk home the way I usually do, clutching at my Walkman® and staring at the ground as if looking for something I've lost. Usually I stop at crosswalks and look for cars, but I can't seem to find that in me today, and I put my trust, what little there is, into the drivers. I can recognize where I am just by the look of the sidewalk. I know I am halfway home because a huge tree root has cracked and raised a section of cement. I find myself at the intersection before my house; I know it's mine because it's the only one that is a main road with lines painted on it. I stand on the curb and look up for the first time to check the crosswalk sign. A car drives by, and, in the reflection of its speed, I catch a person walking towards me. I see through the narrows of my eyes the girl from before in mid-stride in the middle of the road. She seems caught off guard, as if she was stopped in mid-sentence, her arm outstretched with something to give me. The words never came out



"SHE" PUZZLE NO. 2  
BY KRZYSZTOF PIATKOWSKI

of her mouth though, for that very instant it seems someone upstairs blinked.

*Still it was worth it as I turned the pages solemnly, and then with a winning smile, the poor boy with naivety succeeds. At the final moment, I cried. I always cry, at endings...*the voice sang solemnly in my headphones as the no-walking sign blazed red. A car sweeps her off her feet like a fairytale prince, spinning her in a gown of broken glass that shudders in a thunderous collision. She lands like a foul ball just out of reach. I stumbled onto my knees next to her, picking her up in my arms, making them damp with blood. She's lying on the pavement, looking straight up to the sky as if looking for figures in the clouds. I bend down closer and look at her face, beautiful and motionless. She opens her eyes slowly, which instead of being empty as before, are flooded with emotion. Tears pour from the corners of her eyes, tiny translucent cars veering down the avenue of her cheeks. She lays a hand to my cheek; it is still warm and melts my skin like stammer. Her voice is choked with pain as she murmurs through clenched teeth and a busted strawberry lip.

"I spent ... all day writing this... for you." She holds open her hand and in her palm lays a folded piece of paper. She smiles beautifully as I take it from her, a smile that reaches from the edge of oblivion, struggling through the thick shadows of death, haunting in its tranquility.

Her eyes close as the leftover tears stream down her face, smearing the blood like rain streaking a window and cascade off her chin. Her hand slides down my face slowly, one finger grazing my lips as if to hush me. She dies in my arms as a marshmallow giraffe slowly floated above us.

I stay in that exact position as I hear the sirens of the ambulance and cops coming closer, the hot red and cold blue becoming brighter on the cars cracked mirror surface. The paramedics come and steal her from my blood-stained arms. They put her into the back of the truck as the police squabble with the driver and put him in handcuffs. I watch everything happen from far away, from deep within myself as I feel any sense of the world drift off with the ambulance, wailing cruelty into the distance. I answer all the police's questions with the voice of a mute man. They leave with the promise of a phone call, and I stand there soaking it all in.

I sit down on the curb and unfold the paper. As I read, my eyes well up with tears for the first time

since I can remember. I begin to bawl uncontrollably as sentence after sentence resonates in horrific familiarity. It's as if she was copying down everything I had conjured up about her that day—from the tremendous loneliness to the phantom kiss she felt each night. Her heart was scrawled out on this piece of paper from beginning to end, and it was signed "Immensely yours, Emily."

I let out a salty, lung-piercing sigh and walk towards my empty house. ■

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DEVVIN EARNEST

## The Ritual

She sways back and forth,  
sashaying to the rhythm,  
gliding across the floor  
in one fluid movement.

The steady beat leads her,  
a slow, sensuous tease.  
She pulls your gaze along her body  
as her fingers trace the curves.

The music stops.  
Her movements cease.  
She stands Still—Stiff—Rigid.  
And the room fills with an air of anticipation.

When will she move?  
How long can she last?  
Her body glistens with beads of sweat,  
and her chest heaves with the effort of her dance.

As suddenly as it stopped,  
the sound once again rolls about the hall.  
This time fast and thunderous,  
sending the enchantress into a frenzy of movement.

Her arms work in wild patterns,  
head thrown back in ecstasy.  
Just as it feels as though her heart will burst, screaming  
in agonizing pleasure,

the song begins to die.  
The air stolen from her lungs,  
she collapses to the floor,  
drenched in absolute satisfaction.

## An Unintended Discharge

**Z**eke Wiley sat at his kitchen table, finishing off the deer bologna sandwich he fixed himself for lunch, when he heard an engine and the crunch of gravel. He got up and shuffled over to the window to see who was coming down his driveway, squinting through one of the tears in the rotting, tattered window shade. Caroline had hung that shade a couple of months before she walked out the front door for good, and the shade had since suffered the morning and afternoon sun for 10 years. This afternoon, a beam shot through the slit and, in spite of the glare and the gritty film smeared on the pane, he could still make out the black-and-white cruiser with a gold star. Zeke knew why the sheriff was here.

Sheriff Billy Balter crept down the driveway, his eye scanning for movement in the house or a gray barrel pointed in his direction. This wasn't the first time he had been out to Zeke's property on official business. He had heard from the old-timers in the county that when Zeke hit puberty some 60 years before, his eyes took on the color of a match's blue flame and his lids were the only thing that could snuff that impetuous burn, and that was only temporary. That flare was what usually brought Billy out to the house at the base of Equinox Mountain. He had come to know him well, too well, during the 25 years he served as sheriff, but the way things were looking, this might be his last visit to Zeke's for about 5 to 7 years.

Zeke had lived in the western part of the state all his life, except for a three-year stint in the Army, where he learned his trade and found his religion—blasting. After his discharge, Zeke apprenticed with a company that had quarry work, got his state license, and worked several years with Lowden's Blasting and Demolition in Fair Haven, but he eventually got into a dispute with the owner of the company. A fight with pungent words broke out, then fists joined the melee, and Zeke flattened his boss' nose, permanently excavating the landscape of the man's face without the use of traditional dynamite.

Zeke appropriately recognized the time was ripe for moving on. As though he actually had a choice, first thing the next morning, he tendered his resignation in writing, per the employee handbook, and

started his own blasting business, working small jobs at first, carving a ledge out of the mountain for a driveway, imploding a building here and there, and, on occasion, he did a little quarry work. Zeke loved watching the stratified, geological ages of marble and granite separate from the mother lode and break away in clean chunks with just a push of a plunger. When he watched trees, shale, boulders, and powdery dirt juggled high in the air, only to be dropped during their rotation, he was 10 years old and at the circus. He was wedded to these unfolding spectacles and reveled in his role, knowing he had produced, directed, and starred in the detonated extravaganza.

Zeke had gotten his big break when the federal government decided to build a four-lane highway extending the entire eastern border of the state. Bids were submitted for the blasting, and he was the chosen one. The work was steady, it paid well, and it kept him busy for nearly 10 years, giving his company a name and his next big job—blasting away at the mountains to build a 20-mile bypass so tourists could avoid the little towns along the old two-lane highway. The bypass would shorten their drive to that outlet center that had sprung up along Route 7 and would give visitors more time to spend with the likes of Giorgio Armani™, Andrienne Vittadini™, and Ralph Lauren™ rather than the locals of the valley.

While Zeke was working hard obliterating buildings and the mountains, he was effortlessly destroying his marriage. He had married Caroline shortly after meeting her one Saturday afternoon at the local drug store. She was working the cash register, and he was on leave from the Army when he stopped in for shaving cream before heading back to Fort Dix.

She was fresh out of high school and attractive in that dime-store sort of way. Caroline was impressed with his uniform, his big arms, his male posturing—the shoulders back and chest out, the low voice, and the way he emphasized his authority by grabbing his belt and hiking up his pants. She thought he could handle anything. She thought she needed this man to lead her through life.

He liked the way the buttons strained on her blouse.

But between walking down the aisle and exchanging “I do’s,” and Caroline walking down the front porch steps, screaming her closing argument, “I’m

sick and tired of living with a man who'd rather have shit backing up into his house than deny himself that Goddamn Bass Tracker® Model 250," she spent their married life reaching the terminal epiphany that she was strong and sound, and he wasn't capable of leading a child to the nearest candy aisle. The muscles were all show. Caroline had a point about his refusal to fix the septic system rather than forego that boat. The divorce inventory listed their three biggest and only real assets: a house worth \$85,000; a hunting cabin near the lake worth \$85,000; and hunting and fishing equipment pushing that \$50,000 threshold.

Zeke would work all day, come home for dinner, tinker out in his garage, and then position himself in front of the TV, assume command, and watch an hour or two, fall asleep, only to begin the regimen seven hours later, except if the day of the week was Friday. On 35 Fridays out of the year, he'd come home and pack his hunting or fishing gear, call up his brother and his cousin, and arrange to head up north on Saturday morning when the sun was kissing the horizon, and return on Sunday when it was smack in the middle of high noon and sunset. There wasn't much conversation between Caroline and Zeke, meaningful or otherwise, but Zeke did manage to give her a daughter, Jenny, late one Sunday afternoon when he had returned home from one of his weekend hunting excursions drunk and horny. After that, he figured that as long as he kept bringing home money, he had completed his marital obligations.

As the years went on, he lived for the thrill of watching four or five sticks of dynamite in a hold explode. At times he would get a little reckless, or experimental as Zeke explained, producing some unintended results like taking a little too much off the side of the mountain or propelling a chunk of shale a hair too close to the road. No one was hurt and no property was damaged, not until the episode with Mrs. Allen.

Mrs. Allen came home one day from work and found two boulders, each the size of a washer, lounging in her living room and dining room, with shingles and plaster and pieces of roof trusses sitting on her couch and chairs. Huge holes in the ceiling let in the last neon pink rays advertising the end of the day and the beginning of the end for Zeke.

That's when the serious visits from Sheriff Balter began. The sheriff had been called out on quite a few

of their domestic disputes, but no charges were ever filed. And he had helped search for Jenny, who ran away when she was 17, before she could leave peacefully and legally. He brought her back crying and pawing at him, begging him not to take her back. But after causing \$65,000 worth of damage to Mrs. Allen's place, an investigation ensued, charges were filed, and he ended up having a restriction placed against his license that limited his blasting to quarries only. Any other blasting or demolition work would have to be under someone else's direction and license. Zeke's role in projects would have to be supporting, and while he didn't really want to accept the part, he had no choice. So he went back to work for another company, and the job provided the opportunity to sneak a stick or two of dynamite every so often, and he'd accumulate enough to do some small side jobs for the unapprised people up north.

This went on for a couple of years until some "concerned citizen who wished to remain anonymous" placed a call to the police, informing them that Zeke had been blasting on a property to expeditiously carve a driveway out of the shaley soil. Within days, the police were out to the boss' office, and Zeke heard the rumors and whispers in the small gatherings, while accusatory glances were dispatched his way.

Now Sheriff Balter was parked 30 feet from his porch door. Getting out of his cruiser he called out, "Zeke, I know you're in there. I see your truck by the shed. C'mon out. I have to talk to you."

Zeke kept squinting, watching the Sheriff and weighing his short options.

"C'mon, Zeke, come on out to the porch and let's talk."

With arms crossed, Zeke leaned on one leg, then the other, shifting his weight as he mulled over the alternatives before voting for his favorite. He could try and steal out the back door and hide in the woods behind the house, but hell, at 75 with a bum hip and knee, his running days were over. He could shoot the Sheriff, jump in his truck, become a fugitive from justice and head directly north until he hit Canada, but Billy was one of the few people he still talked to and liked. Anticipating what lay ahead if convicted, he could just turn the gun on himself and end it right here, help reduce court congestion as well as the



"UNTITLED" BY ALLISON MUSHALLO

prison population, and ease the county's budget. But Zeke was not particularly civic minded and he was a coward, so he pulled the last lever, electing to walk out the door, meet the Sheriff on the porch, knowing he'd be placed under arrest, apprised of his rights, escorted to the cruiser, and led down to the town hall for booking. Then he'd be put in the county jail, pending someone posting bail, so he could wait for his trial in the comfort of his own home.

Zeke knew no bail would be posted by any family members. Caroline hadn't talked to him for years and had moved to North Carolina four Christmases back to retire to a more hospitable climate. His daughter hadn't spoken to him since his 60th birthday, and, the last he heard, she was living in Virginia. His brother retired to Florida at the start of the new millenium, and his cousin and he didn't speak anymore after they had a fight about exceeding their deer limit one season 10 years ago. He'd be relying on the bail bondsman to take a mortgage out on his house. Eventhough the structure itself wasn't worth much, the land was, but he'd lose them both anyway if he got convicted. There wasn't any mortgage insurance that paid your mortgage while you were incarcerated. That was a surefire exclusion in those policies he was constantly offered via junk mail. He lingered inside like a just jilted boyfriend at his now ex-girlfriend's house, knowing that when he stumbled out the door, things were truly was over.

Zeke knew these were fairly serious charges. What he had done was a felony, and, if convicted, he'd be in the federal penitentiary for probably five years. Then there was the issue of getting an attorney, because he hadn't just been a bastard all these years, he had been a cheap bastard. For business work, he had jumped from attorney to attorney, stiffing them on their bills, occasionally getting sued by one or two who weren't afraid of his threats to turn them into the State Disciplinary Board for legal malpractice. Now, finding someone in the county who would represent him without a huge retainer upfront was going to be hard.

"Zeke, I don't want to have to come in after you. Why don't you come out here and talk to me? I think you know why I'm here. Let's make this easy."

Zeke leaned back on the kitchen counter and looked up at the old tile ceiling tinted the color of old grease and cigarette smoke. Then there was the issue

of the trial and the guilty verdict that he knew was coming. Now that those people up north had been "apprised" of his lack of a license, other witnesses would be coming forward, having already benefited from that discount price he could offer. He'd be whisked away to spend the next five years of his life in prison, and the federal prison here was not one of those country-club models where convicted CEOs got to go.

Sheriff Balter began to walk up to the house. He put his foot on the first step, and, as he started to put his weight down and hoist himself up, Zeke called out.

"OK, Billy, I'm coming out. Just give me a second to grab my smokes."

Zeke slid over to the kitchen closet, his boots sanding the wood floors, grinding in dust and dried mud. He opened the door, reached inside for a couple of essentials, shoved them in his dirty jeans, and walked to the porch door, reaching for his short, canvas jacket hanging on the pegboard. Zeke slowly turned the doorknob, pulled the door towards him, and pushed on the screen door, enjoying that stretching squeak before the spring yanked the door closed. Zeke stepped out on to the porch, his head down, pretending to examine the old, gray-painted floorboards with the toes of his boots. Patches of bare wood were now exposed, with no hint of a gloss anywhere.

"All right, Billy, I take it this isn't no social call."

"Aw, Zeke, I think you know why I'm here. There's been talk around town for a couple weeks now. Seems you've been doing some illegal blasting in the northern counties, and I have a warrant for your arrest. I've got to take you down to the station."

"Billy, where'd you get such nonsense?" said Zeke while looking past the sheriff, pretending to see something move in the high grass past his shed.

"Well, some lady up north of here says you were, and she filed a complaint. When she did that, we had to get involved and do an investigation. Looks like there was enough evidence on you to file charges and now I have a warrant. C'mon, Zeke, can't we do this easy like? Call a lawyer, and then I'll take you down, you'll get the formal charges, and then you can post bail and be back here in the comfort of your own home waiting for your trial."

Billy used the term "comfort" with poetic license. Looking through the open door, he saw scorched

pots and stacks of dishes with calcified egg and ketchup patiently waiting in the sink. The counter was littered with empty beer cans, grimy dishtowels, and ashtrays cascading butts and ashes. A squadron of flies composed the soundtrack.

"I'm sure bail won't be that high, Zeke. You're 75 years old and lived here all your life. Judge won't see much chance of you skipping town. C'mon, Zeke, let's do this easy like. I don't want to have to call backup."

Surrendering, Zeke sighed, "All right, let's go," and he walked down the porch steps toward the sheriff.

"Zeke, I got to search you. It's protocol before anyone enters a law enforcement vehicle," Billy said, emphasizing the V. "Just stand here with your hands on the trunk."

Zeke did as he was told. He knew the routine from watching TV. Billy patted down his arms, chest, and back, feeling for blades or pistols, and then began to go lower. Billy got red.

Damn, Billy thought to himself, what is that in the front, just behind his jean's zipper? What was old Zeke doing in there before he agreed to walk out? Was Bob Andrews' enterprising widow in there with him?"

Billy didn't think guys Zeke's age could get a hard-on, but the sheriff knew, thanks to all the pharmaceutical ads on TV, that the drug companies not only had something for high blood pressure, twitchy legs, sleeplessness, moments of depression, and hair loss, they also had something to help with that now well-known syndrome they helped create—erectile dysfunction.

Sheriff Balter quickly left Zeke's lower torso and hurriedly ran his hands down his legs, cleared his throat, and reported, "Ahem, Zeke, you're OK." He then opened the passenger-side door for him.

Zeke climbed in, pulled out his pack of cigarettes, slid out a single one, and lit it. The Sheriff walked around the front of the car, opened his door, and got behind the wheel. As Zeke took a heavy drag, Billy put the key in the ignition, popped the car in gear, and eased on down the drive. After traveling about 50 feet, Zeke stopped in mid-exhale and stared at the old maple tree across the road from his property.

"Hey, Sheriff, there is one last thing I forgot to do. Can you stop for a second?"

"Ah, Zeke, what is it? Can't it wait? If you post bail, you should be back here by tomorrow night at the latest."

"Naw, this can't wait. Stop the damn cruiser."

The Sheriff was beginning to regret not bringing backup. Cajoling Zeke out of the house and into the cruiser had taken more time than he had, and the of buzzard now wanted him to stop the cruiser. What if Zeke had changed his mind and wanted to now make this difficult? A bad idea to stop now that he was on his way, but Zeke wasn't a man who asked for much, and this was probably going to be the last request he would ever make to Billy, so the sheriff did as he was told. Zeke opened the door, alighted from the car, and reached down the front of his jeans. He pulled out a stick of dynamite with a good, long fuse, held the cigarette to the line, and with a muscled toss, threw the stick on the porch. Sheriff Balter was stupefied, paralyzed but for the drop of his jaw. Zeke jumped back in the car, screaming "Drive, drive!"

Sheriff gunned it down the drive, tires spinning, gravel shooting like sparks from a firecracker, until moments later when Zeke shouted a perfectly timed demand: "Stop, stop. I got to see this."

The Sheriff, again did as he was told. Zeke and Billy turned around in the cruiser and watched the dynamite explode, dismantling the house in seconds, sending wood planks 30 feet in every direction noted on a compass. A few large shards had hit the trunk and roof of the cruiser, and papery remnants drifted in the wind, rocking back and forth in their descent.

When every piece of the house finally completed the journey, Zeke, shouting a high-pitched "EEE HA" and sporting a lecherous smile, turned back around and settled into the front seat.

"OK, I'm ready. Let's go." ■

## All Men Are Rapists

The thought rests comfortably at my feet on the concrete sidewalk.  
I can read it as clear as the society that exists,  
which prescribes me as a Man, as a rapist.

I am not a Man, I am not puissant,  
I am not He who is connected to denotations  
that define me as virile, forceful of a ruling fist.  
I do not believe, as suggested, that I shall stand,  
brandishing a phallus, in situ over a female body.

I am not of Men; I am not void of emotion,  
I am not He who is connected to your connotations  
that assigns me usurped authority, conqueror of sub-humans.  
The protrusion in my flesh, dismissing social roles and expectations,  
defines my existence with a scientific definition.

I am a Male. Only.

But what are you?

Echoes of the elders point a finger of dominance towards  
she to relinquish will, accepting patriarchy as rule of nature.  
Obedient servant, demanded to yield heart, mind, and soul to man,  
will you be the body that shall be the submissive receiver of fuck-Love?  
Pressure of expectations felt gripping your knees, persuading you to leave  
Men, unobstructed, to fill the vacant space between your legs.

Assurance of safe passage in the world of Men,  
bend to become another branded, another tamed, another enslaved women,  
break to fall into servitude, to rest on the gallows.  
Body, objectified, is on display as a product to be bought,  
sold, stolen, manipulated, mutilated, used up, and discarded.

Sundered, we are forced together by a yoke around our defiled bodies.  
I seek to be emancipated from this bondage. Empower a licentious union,  
enfranchise each, to be freed from coercive authority.  
Extirpate the chains, from our souls and bodies, which limit:  
    Females to gender expectations.  
    Males to gender expectations.

Human beings. Only.

Please, let us walk. Male, Female, Female, Male.

## Looking at the Sky

Wind, bullying the clouds,  
makes no apologies to me as it  
    forces my hair out of place.  
Smells grab my nose, forcing me  
    to concentrate all my energy  
on unfamiliar scents of the earth.

I step out of the Jeep®, placing my  
    feet on the heavily moistened dirt.  
Boot sinks several inches into the  
    earth, acting like a hand  
pulling at my trousers, slowing  
    but not stopping  
movement toward the inevitable.  
They know it is the way things are,  
I cannot change it.  
Like Socrates, I am morally  
    bound to follow the law.  
I'm just an average person filling  
    my position in society,  
just as they are. It is the way  
    things are,  
I cannot change it.

A bird flies across, in a  
    perpendicular line,  
dividing the earth into two  
    separated, equal parts.

I stand up, confronting the situation,  
    my feet firm on the earth.  
Confidence lifts my heart from the  
    hole dug to embrace soulless bodies  
after duty has preformed its crime  
    against humanity.  
Things do not have to be this way.  
I approach the situation the  
    only way I understand,  
hope in my heart, love in my hands.  
I forgive you. Smile cracks,  
    penetrates consciousness.  
Things do not have to be this way.

## Rosalie

For once, my parents were not the ones to make the scene. Nevertheless, Rosalie and Bernard had still not shown up by 12:30 for a family Sunday lunch that was planned for noon.

My father was fuming. Why would his sister persist in being late? He was sure her tardiness was an underlying statement of resentment. One sunny September afternoon, my grandfather was splitting wood. My father, then 6 years old, had offered to carry the logs over to the woodpile. After a while, a distressed shriek came out muffled to my grandfather's ears. He turned to see that my father had started a new woodpile on Rosalie, who was sleeping in her carriage outside.

At ten minutes before one, over the third round of aperitifs making up for empty stomachs, Rosalie and Bernard, with toddler Leo, deigned to show up amidst a chorus of resentful critics. They walked in, all smiles, unaware of the indignation that their bad manners had inspired. Bernard's moustache was freshly groomed, and Rosalie's faux blond hair showed nary a millimeter of her naturally brown roots. They wore expensive perfume and designer clothing, drove a brand new Alfa Romeo® coupe and had a great sex life, according to him.

Bernard would pay a lot of attention to me. For example, if I were to go into the bathroom, I would often find him waiting behind the door as I came out. Then he would follow me back to the dining room, somehow managing to touch my *derrière*. No, squeeze my *derrière*. Being naive, I took this as a sign of affection and even thought that I was his favorite niece. As I grew older, I stopped going to the bathroom and was at all times ready to swing my hips away from his open hands. Bernard was a pervert.

My parents liked entertaining and frequently invited the whole family over for a party that usually lasted until the sun set. The wives would then drag the drunken husbands home, picking up their super excited kids on the way out.

These lovely family gathering were usually punctuated by a scene between my parents. They did not need an audience to argue, but the family reunions provided an increase to the level of drama for those arguments. They liked to exhibit the innermost

grimy recesses of their personalities. My mother would take cover in the kitchen. The victim of such an "uncaring" husband, she waited to be rescued. My father never went. Instead, he got another glass of wine and cracked another joke. Usually one of my aunts would go to the kitchen to find my mother rinsing her self-pity in dirty dishwater.

That day, even though the sun was hidden by the thick clouds common to Parisian weather, Rosalie wore sunglasses. She usually liked showing off her green eyes, an exotic feature in my blue-eyed family.

Rosalie burst into tears over the appetizers. The men hardly noticed, too busy being loud. Her sister, Césarie, quickly took her to the kitchen, followed by Jacqueline, my great aunt.

Rosalie fell into a chair and arched over the table covered in scraps from the crudités. A cheek cooling in the carrot peels, her perfectly manicured nails slid on the vinaigrette's spills. Sobs jerked her slender body, the angora pink sweater fuzz slightly shaking. Rosalie never displayed emotions, always held it together. She never participated in heated political discussions like Césarie. She just looked good.

Behind her sunglasses, the tears smudged her face with black and green streaks. Césarie tried to reason with her. Jacqueline attempted a hug. Then suddenly, Rosalie raised her head.

"I'm pregnant."

Her forehead dropped back into the vegetables.

Jacqueline gasped in joy. Having the motherly touch that Césarie would never master, she put it on the account of happiness. Don't mothers-want-to-be cry of joy on finding that their eggs have been fertilized?

Césarie, however, favored the shift of hormones theory. Her eyebrows raised in perplexity. "What is the matter with you? Crying your eyes out because you're pregnant?"

Rosalie lifted up her head, sniffed in a very ungracious fashion and added: "I am pregnant, but I don't know who the father is."

That disclosure left both Césarie and Jacqueline speechless. No more theorizing and cooing. This was not part of the regular pregnancy path in the family. Everyone knew that my grandparents' divorce was due to cheating, but there was never any ambiguity



"UNTITLED" BY LARA MULLINS

as to whose child my grandmother birthed. Rosalie's dilemma was a first.

My mother walked in with the dirty appetizer plates. She asked if the girls cared to finish their own plates before she would carry on with the courses. My mother was a wonderful cook. Imagination married with excellent visual presentation. She also thought that one should finish his plate, because there was nothing like food to remedy all crises.

Rosalie was an accountant and had been married with Bernard for about six years. A couple of years before that fatal Sunday, her company had hired a new salesman, himself freshly married. Rosalie and Mathieu's offices were adjacent. Soon they were conducting mutual business in each other's offices after hours.

Rosalie was all the more upset because she had quit the pill. Césarie fell on a chair, asking her sister what she was thinking. Jacqueline was overwhelmed for she had never had to consider the pill; it just did not exist when she would have needed it.

Rosalie explained that Bernard supposedly had a low sperm count. They had consulted a urologist.

His theory, of questionable scientific proof, was that Bernard had worn his pants too tight for too many years (remember the 70s). This practice had negatively affected his sperm-producing apparatus and reduced his fertility capabilities since their first child.

According to Rosalie, Mathieu wore khakis. Rosalie could only make the logical deduction: Mathieu did not wear tight pants. His apparatus must be intact; therefore, he must be the father.

Constrasting the panicked look of Jacqueline and Rosalie's artful reasoning, Césarie remained practical. "There is only one way to find out who the father is. At his birth, we'll see who the baby looks like the most. I need to meet that lover of yours." Jacqueline approved the logical idea.

Rosalie was satisfied and reassured that her secret, now shared, weighed a little less on her shoulders. Relieved, she wiped her tears, traced another green line on her eyelids, and the accomplices went back to the dining room to finish lunch. Rosalie ate for two.

They all left at dusk, leaving my mother swamped by the dishes. My father found the time opportune to sit back and watch some TV.

Six months later, at the first contraction, Rosalie called Césarie, who in turn called Jacqueline.

My family waited outside the delivery room, their hushed conversations punctuated by Rosalie's cries of pain masking her doubts about the chromosomal makeup of the mystery baby.

Of course, babies all look the same. Césarie thought that if worse comes to worst, Rosalie could at least keep the truth from Bernard for a few years until the child's face would resolutely not turn up like Bernard's. Leo, four, already had the square chin of his father and his vicious smile. How long would it take Bernard to notice the perversion missing from his offspring if he did not make a vague attempt at resembling his father?

When the nurse announced that the traitor had arrived, Césarie and Jacqueline made up a story to be allowed in the room without Bernard.

The baby rested in a blanket on Rosalie's bosom. Rosalie looked at Césarie and Jacqueline alternatively with a questioning frown. Jacqueline and Césarie looked at each other, then at Rosalie. Bernard could take his son in his arms without a doubt.

They were right. This son of Bernard by the age of two had figured out all the ways to get his hands up a woman's skirt. And by five, he too was waiting for me at the exit of bathrooms. ■

DEBORAH L. PACKER

## Internet Minuet

I have seen the centuries-old dance,  
polite, European, in drying celluloid  
and decomposing colors on canvas.

A choreographed, tense routine performed by proper women  
with heavily powdered faces,  
clothed in frozen smiles and stiff brocade gowns.  
Their partners, rigid gentlemen adorned in frock coats and ruffles,  
whisper niceties, as they move robotically, to and fro.  
Music-box characters, with wigged, white curls  
that bob and weave as they begin  
small, straightlaced steps in black slippers,  
tracing an intricate pattern on parquet and marble.

We begin our dance,  
with prefaced bows and curtsies,  
perfunctory greetings, our positions separated by miles.  
We float toward one another with words through wires,  
arms outstretched in a skein of sentences,  
unraveling through cables  
only to withdraw, hands on hips,  
fingers on keys, turning away.  
The morning slips into afternoon.  
We slide forward again,  
Palm touching palm through composition,  
a pirouette, a sway, with amorous printed taunts,  
then returning to base, momentarily,  
before a slight intertwine of elbows  
by small paragraphs, nearly prose,  
and back once more.

A turn, a circle,  
eyes silently reciting lines  
to hearts locked by message.  
We glide, we tiptoe, through typed moods  
and blushing thoughts, sentiments by screen.

Until a brief feel of actual flesh.

KARA REAGAN

## Ode to the Night

Dark,  
moonlit,  
crescent glow.  
A cloudy hue  
and shades of pale  
blue and ash gray.  
Luminous stars  
glow in the  
endless sky.  
Shadows are cast  
over the earth  
and remain still  
as a gargoyle.  
Silent nights like  
these, so calm and  
serene, tend to  
put worries on  
hold. Deep breaths,  
silent sighs. The  
earth is peaceful  
for now, until day.  
Good night.



## WILDWOOD JOURNAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Below are some general guidelines regarding submissions for *The Wildwood Journal*:

- Include your contact information on each submitted piece; artwork should include your contact information on the reverse.
- Title your art or literary pieces whenever possible for easy reference and identification.
- Make sure that all charcoal and pastel art pieces are properly "fixed."

- Submit art in good condition, taking care to remove marks, smudges, or fingerprints. Turn in art without matting, framing, or shrink-wrapping since all art pieces will be disassembled for digital imaging or electronic scanning.
- Include a completed and signed model release (sample below) from identifiable people in your artwork or photos. Parental signatures are required for photos or artwork including recognizable minors. Pieces received without the required model release will not be considered.

SAMPLE

### MODEL RELEASE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For valuable consideration, I hereby irrevocably consent to and authorize the use and reproduction by members of the Harrisburg Area Community College's Wildwood Journal Committee, of any and all photographs that you have taken of me, negative or positive, proofs of which are herein attached, without further compensation to me.

Model's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please Print Clearly)*

Model's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2007 CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Rebekah Allingham  
Amanda Ballew  
Felix Caraballo  
Katie Cibort  
Jessica Conrad  
Devin Earnest  
Matt Fortin

Dave Gross  
Debra Helwig  
Anthony Jones  
Brian Kirk  
Candice Luciani  
Lara Mullins  
Allison Mushallo

Logan Norris  
Deborah L. Packer  
Danielle Perzacki  
Krzysztof Piatkowski  
Joe Prestine  
Kara Reagan  
Matthew Rissmiller

C. Carlin Shearer  
Ashlee Shildt  
Sandrine Siméon  
Jason Smith  
Michael Ward II  
Stephanie Yarolin



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