The Vanderbilt Review

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Cover art: Robotic Hand by Yeon-Sil Yi

The Vanderbilt Review
2011 - 2012
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The Vanderbilt Review
2011 - 2012
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"Beak and Wing" By: Nicole Burdakin

The Vanderbilt Review Art Award

"Robotic Hand" By: Yeon-Sil Yi

Judges

Professor Justin Quarry
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Letter From The Editor

Thank you for choosing to read our publication and to engage with the literary works that comprise this year's theme, "The Robotic Hand." It has been a blessing to work alongside my peers to create a publication featuring talented student writers and artists. It is my hope that you enjoy the display of our robotic hand through engaging fiction, thought-provoking poetry, and awe-inspiring art. The diverse style of each writer and artist contributes an intricate component to the theme. As you turns each page, you become a part of the robotic hand and see how technical words are transformed into powerful emotions, thoughts, and images of artistic expression. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Ariel Mason
Editor-in-Chief
The Vanderbilt Review

DOVE HUNT
Thomas McLaughlin

Speech starts from afar because it's carried there:
A southern gust wailing, stalks groping, gossiping
grain gaming for a greater utterance. Stocks recoiled
on shoulders and shot scattered toward dove, quiver
of red. Grinning boys galloped back, twirling twitching
feathers, two in either hand, like party favors. Delight
placed in the crackle and protrusion against ashen
down. Smell of gunpowder idle in air. Laughter brayed
over barns, serenaded the rafters of a littered sky.
The boys preened their dirty hands with delicate vigor.
Safety and self-scholarship are attached to the sense
of place, and reflection is the habitation of belief.
But who really knows what that is? Perhaps, it's a still
thing. *Idle faith objects resting on lace-doilies. Feathers*
plucked and piled next to the grill—melted wax
and cobalt. Where in recollection does belief lie—
whatever it proves to be? One walks removed from
the maternity of memories, though footprints precede
our steps. A poem is a backward dream, with gravel
and oratory in the throat. Grief is the only separate
but still shared language. And my voice only a prefix
in search of progeniture. *Pain that binds the spirit*
to its own when-where. There's an absence in the family
photo album from the picture took in the lacery
of that cool night, evidentiary as my stained hands
at my side, gilt and red after the wringing of undeserving
doves. I was looking away in that picture.
The flash made frightening the trees in the backyard.
I am still looking away. Give again what I squandered,
when young. Let me taste the dust of dispensed song.

SIMPLON PASS OF THE ALPS
Justin. Barisich
Photograph

POEM WRITTEN WHILE BILLY COLLINS LECTURES

Jim Whiteside

It was to be a wedding with no dancing,
no drinking, and no smoking.
This was the rule of the church
and to the displeasure of everyone,
save the groom's family, the politics of weddings
had required that this be the location.

And so it was that my roommate and I
woke up early to drive to Cleveland
to attend the union of our petite
friend from college, who had somehow
found an equally petite young man
with slicked-back hair to be her partner.

And it brings to mind
my first wedding, decades ago.
Though I would not be born
until years later, I sat with
my thousands of potential
brothers and sisters in the
pews of my mother's ovaries.

But they were not married in a church,
and I can see it like in some
vintage photograph from the seventies,
not entirely clear.
The kind of picture I might find
in their attic after they've died
or while looking for something else.

My mother wearing a blue dress,
my father a strange plaid tie,
his hair also slicked back.

In my grandmother's living room,
they started something that was
different entirely, but entirely the same
as this, where the bride's niece, Jemma,
Ran down the aisle throwing flowers
while a friend played the piano—
his own arrangement of a post-rock song.

I think about all of this after the ceremony
while talking to the usher who wore
a bolo tie and sipping from his flask,
standing in the parking lot of the church.

DOUGH
Nathaniel Marshall

rummaging through our pockets
we would put together some ragged collection of coins
to equal a dollar
or close enough

walking down 47th
pass streets lined with our possible selves
selling themselves
or themselves short

we would arrive every afternoon
at the café
corner of king drive

the guy who worked there
would hand lamar a crossaint that was
probably a day old
at best

lamar cracked it open
handed me half

even week old hard bread
melts in your mouth

we ate
and were full (barely)
planned
plotted
schemed

two rappers
with nothing but the bread
on our minds

HORSE APPLES

Cayla Mackey

drip from the heavy eves of deciduous trees
melt from the tips of bowed branches
bounce rubber-ball-like
on the asphalt of a well-traveled commuter road
in the armpit of a gentle curve
on the crisp afternoon beams of autumn.

The smashed lime innards
explode
under steaming tires
paste over
the tar and pebbled surface.

A cygnet hits:
grey, linty

THE SMALLEST PERSON IN THE WORLD

Abby Hannifan

The day I turned nine was also the day I realized that, my whole life, my parents had been quiet at work building a tent around me to block out daylight's burn. Whether I realized it at the time or not, that was the day I traded the safety scissors for the big-kid ones and poked holes in the tent's ceiling. And the white-hot light came rushing in, like lightning in a dark wood.

Bobby Cross extended his clenched right fist toward mine, while shakily grabbing my hand with his left. His nail beds were girded with dried mud, his fingers long and globular at the joints, like the green beans his dad spent his days picking under the fierce Ohio sun.

"I … I found, err, *got* this for your birthday," he said, dropping an empty perfume bottle into my hand.

"It's … pretty, Bobby. Thank you," I said sweetly, like Mother had told me to.

"You can be *pleasant* to them, Mary Ellen. But you don't have to sprinkle sugar on their lips and wipe it with silk tissue," she had said.

The right corner of Bobby's mouth twitched upward a bit, wrinkling his nose. He returned his hands to his overalls pockets, pirouetted, and clunked back toward the classroom in leather muck boots.

I cradled the glass sphere in my palm. It was warm, as if Bobby had been fumbling it under the desk all through Mr. Shartz's lesson on how invasive species were pining to disrupt crop supply and send the whole town reeling. The furrows of the transparent orange were encrusted with dirt, but the bulges were shiny. I pictured Bobby unearthing the perfume bottle while digging up rocks in the riverbed that skirted the back of his daddy's property, and bandana-scrubbing it before skipping toward the amber glow of the farmhouse.

My cheeks tingled. I wrapped the bottle in a handkerchief and stuffed it in the outside pocket of my backpack.

On the bus ride home, I strategized how to bypass Mother in the kitchen, sneak upstairs, and stuff the bottle in the secret trench under a loose floorboard in my bedroom. Maybe I'd slither by her as she stared out the sink window, where I had often found her standing when I arrived home from school.

"My imagination soldiers were just marching, Mary Ellen," she'd say, when I'd ask what she was looking at. Then she'd exhale through her nose, and go back to washing a head of lettuce, or grapes. Her imagination soldiers

AA 24153
Travis Cohen
Photograph

seemed to march a lot more often after Poppa's pharmaceutical sales job transferred us from Charleston to the Ohio River Valley. Poppa's agent had told him he could "sell cigarettes to the Marlboro man," so surely he'd be able to sell Prozac to the Rust Belt's poor and working class.

Rocks tumbled under the bus tires and ricocheted into rows of corn and soybeans and dirt. A girl covered in freckles de-boarded into a deflating balloon of dust.

When Mother found out that our move to Stanton would condemn her only daughter to a substandard education at the region's only public school, she had made Poppa promise the midsize colonial roosted on the town's highest hill, maybe so she could have the *semblance* of living the comfortable life she once lived.

The ochre checkerboard of farm plots spilled toward a wall of blue sky as the bus sputtered away from the lowland. After all the farmers' kids had been dropped off, the only passengers left were hill-dwellers, the children of factory CEOs and tractor technology gurus and anyone with a job that didn't allow overalls as a work suit.

The first thing she did to the house was paint the walls—yellow, green, red, violet. Still, I overheard her whisper into Poppa's hug one night in the kitchen, "There's no color here." He just pulled her in tighter and kissed the top of her head. It's as if Mother's imagination soldiers were trying to march their way back to basecamp, back to Charleston's stilted pastel houses and hanging flower gardens. But there were too many smokestacks and silos in their way.

The bus grumbled to a stop in front of my house. I got off, and watched it plod back toward the valley, its dusty aluminum mantle now the color of the butternut squash Bobby would bring whole to lunch some days and eat with a tarnished spoon.

Mother wasn't in the kitchen when I came in. She was probably in her sewing room wrapping my presents, scraping ribbon into curlicues.

The loose floorboard was hidden beneath a squatty white-washed table in the corner. A thin layer of dust coated the teacups atop the table, arranged as if the dolls in my closet had planned a soiree long ago, but couldn't lure any guests to stop by.

Before nestling the perfume bottle next to my diary, I felt the urge to sniff it. I don't know what I was expecting, but it didn't smell any different from the autumn air streaming through my cracked window.

I re-placed the floorboard, rubbed my hands on my dress, and headed to the closet to retrieve my jeans and one-and-only T-shirt, emblazoned with "Carolina Girl," a parting gift from our down-the-street Charleston neighbor Mr. Mogsley, who had let me climb his mammoth magnolia tree whenever I wanted. Mother had made me write a thank-you, but she would compress her cranberry-painted lips every time I would wear it.

—

It turned out that year—the year Clinton beat a Republican and a bil-

lionaire, and the year I became a socialist, even though I didn't know what that was until much later—my birthday coincided with the opening day of Ohio's 142nd annual State Fair. Poppa called it quits early so we could make the hour-and-a-half drive to Columbus before sundown.

We had been living in Stanton for three years, but Mother couldn't understand the concept of a state fair.

"Why would *farmers* sacrifice some of their precious money to look at *farm animals*?" she'd say.

But Poppa looked at it as an exercise in humbling himself. Maybe to justify our living in a nice house perched on a hill. Poppa had grown up in a poor part of Durham, and his father spit all their food stamps away on tobacco. But despite a rocky upbringing—a tar-mouthed father and a scraggly waitress of a mother too sticky with bacon grease to wrap her son up in a hug—Poppa's resilient charm and smarts won him a full-ride at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he met my also-smart Mother, the feisty but refined daughter of oil-rich Texans with a soft spot for Southern boys.

"Hey, Mary Ellen, you ready to get close to *the people*?" he said when he walked into the kitchen, where Mother was lecturing me on things not to bring home from the fair.

The people. As if Poppa had forgotten he had once been one of those *people*. As if we hill-residents were some superior form of human, and the bottom-dwellers a more accurate sketch of humanity. And as if sitting at a picnic table munching on funnel cakes by ourselves made us any closer to *the people* than did sitting on our front porch, watching them zigzag through their fields of sweet potatoes.

Back then, I loved everything about those State Fairs. Fluorescent lights. Twirling fire batons. Freshly sheared sheep. Peeling back the cornhusk to take a bite. Fried Twinkies. *Fried Twinkies*. Jingles floating from the booths into the muggy air, swirling and dancing all the way up. And, the truth is, I did enjoy *the people*, as Poppa called them … the hicks who'd rev up the combine and clunk into the Big City for their once-a-year revelry. They had something warm and comfortable about them. Like the warmth of Bobby's bottle. Like the warmth that surged up my neck when his grimy fingers skimmed mine.

Mother had arranged an artful display of presents on a brown ottoman in the living room.

A rainbow nail-polish set, some frilly fall dresses, a push-up bra (unnecessary) … Mother must've snuck off to Columbus while I was away at school one day. I thanked her sweetly.

"Are you trying to turn my daughter into a girl, Claire?" Poppa nudged Mother with his elbow, and grinned at me in his conspiring way.

"Not a girl. A lady," Mother said.

"Well, it's time me and our little lady hit the road if we want to get there before dark."

"Not before she opens this."

Mother handed me a small, brick-sized wooden box wrapped in purple twine. Inside, a six-piece set of silver spoons, all different sizes, but all with the same design on the bell-bottom fan of the handle: a simple pairing of two off-kilter daisies.

"So your dolls can eat soup *and* drink tea," Mother said.

She obviously hadn't been to my room recently. That, or she chose to believe that my age was frozen at six … that Stanton had somehow stunted my growth.

But like always, I said the right things—"Oh *thank* you, Mother … my dolls will like that very much … I can't wait to wear my new dresses."

Mother smiled just enough for her crow's feet to tug at her vacant eyes. Then she started gathering tissue paper for the trash.

After Poppa convinced Mother that it was okay for me to sit in the front of the car, we rolled west. The sky blushed gold, as if the moon was tickling the sun all the way over to Japan.

Two John Denver CDs and a pit stop later, we made it to the fairgrounds, the Ferris wheel on the horizon reeling us in like catfish from a couple miles out, our mouths gaping, as if hooked.

First on the father-daughter checklist: the slide. Coughing up tokens in exchange for gunnysacks, I giggled. The same gunnysacks Mother paid more-than-tokens for to give the armchairs in the hearth room a "rustic ranch feel" were now keeping my rear from rubbing raw.

"Farm is in," she had said when I asked why our paisley furniture had been replaced by overstuffed ottomans and ugly brown-bag pillows. I had wondered, then, why Bobby, who always came to school smelling like the mulch in Mother's rosebushes out front, wasn't the coolest kid in town. Farm had been "in" for him all his life. But, then again, I guess he would've been really uncool when toile was in. There wasn't anything toile about Bobby.

Where was farm in? I would ask her now. Why (and how) Mother followed mainstream East Coast interior decorating fads was a mystery to me. I think it made her even more unhappy—all those sitting surfaces and no friends to occupy them, chattering about meringue-whipping techniques or how to keep sea salt off windows.

After slides came the Ferris wheel, then spinning swings, funhouse mirrors, the beanbag toss. Oh, and Kool-Aid Dill pickles. Mother would've probably drowned herself in a vat of Kool-Aid if she had found out that's why our lips were always so red when we returned.

Poppa would try to comfort her, "Strawberry-eating contest, Claire. Our Mary Ellen here is quite the champ." Then he'd give her a smacker right on her forehead, which she'd furiously scrub away.

As twilight melted into night, my eyelids sagged with a pleasant sleepiness. Poppa gripped a panda bear the size of me underneath his arm.

"My birthday present to you, little lady," he had said, after tossing

ring after ring at aluminum bottles, and finally passing a large bill to the pimply booth-keeper.

Poppa swung me onto his back like a spider monkey and headed toward the parking lot.

"You have fun, kiddo?"

"Mmm hmm," I hummed.

With Poppa's long steps, the last remaining tokens clinked in his pocket. I fought to keep my eyes open to store up enough sights and sounds to last me until the next State Fair, as if scrutinizing the silver-quilted carts of one-two-three-*four* corn dog vendors lined-up in a row would be enough to keep the State Fair alive inside me for a year.

I watched a man in a yellow apron try to impress a little girl by gripping corn dog sticks between each knuckle like Wolverine from those comics Poppa snuck between pages of *The Sentinel Tribune* to fool Mother. The little girl squealed. Poppa came to a quick halt.

"The smallest person *in the world*? What do you think, Mary Ellen?"

I tore my gaze to the left to a blinking sign with big, block lettering: THE SMALLEST PERSON IN THE WORLD … INSIDE!!! Experience the weirdness yourself, for just two tokens!

"Hey, kiddo, I've got two tokens left! Scurry on in there and report back to your Poppa!"

I skated down Poppa's back, grabbed the warm tokens from his hand, and tiptoed toward the diminutive circus tent. The droopy-eyed teenager tossed my tokens into a wooden box and peeled back the pinstripe canvas slit.

I ducked into a hallway, muted yellow and hazy with sawdust. My ears felt congested. Laughter and accordion tunes from outside the tent labored through the canvas's thickness and diffused in the hot air. My nostrils flared. Animals and sweat. It was as if all the patrons of that circus tent had captured a smell somewhere on the fairgrounds and released it in there on their way out of the park.

I padded over the trail of footsteps in the dust toward an opening to a larger room. When I rounded the corner, I expected to find a puppet, or a hologram.

Instead, I met what looked to be indeed the smallest person in the world, seated on a velvet throne adorned with sequins and gold spray-paint. The throne was ensconced in the center of a slightly elevated plywood stage, so that my eyes barely had to shift downward to meet hers.

"Hi," she said with lips too big for her face.

Her little fingers, like the sausages Mother bought in Charleston for Poppa's work parties, fluttered on her kneecaps. One bug eye stared me directly in the face, the other transfixed on the single theatrical spotlight above my head.

A tangled heaviness swelled and beat in my belly, and I looked down. The dust on my white, now brown, sneakers made me nauseous. Whiny mariachi music thumped in the thick air.

"I'm Gloria. I like my job. The people here treat me real nice," she said,

OLD SMOKE
James Akers
Photograph

maybe because my silence was making the stuffy tent even stuffier, or maybe because she was under an obligation to talk to me for two-tokens'-worth of time.

My throat stinging, I stumbled out of the circus tent. *The people.* Those words tumbled out of my ears, bounced off all the distractions, and smacked me in the face again. An imaginary food chain unraveled in front of my eyes, but instead of Mr. Shartz's illustration of the Ohio blue sucker preying on crustaceans preying on water insects, I saw people gnawing on each other's limbs. Now I can't help but think this is how my social world, perhaps all social worlds, worked … with my family sitting on top, eating up people like Bobby's family, and Bobby's family gobbling up any scrap of ascendancy they could find. At the end of the food chain, I saw Bobby taking a rusty spoon to The Smallest Person in the World's face.

"So?" Poppa said. He outstretched his hand.

Without taking it, I walked toward the blinking bulbs of light tangled around the exit gate.

I don't remember much from that car ride home. Poppa tried to get me to play the alphabet game, but that *S* on the "State Fairgrounds" billboard, the *M*'s from a bumper sticker reading "ask *me* about *my* 401 keg plan," the A on Exit 110 *A* … stood out to me as vividly as those melodramatically highlighted snippets of court testimonials on crime TV. It was like I was stuck in some diabolic Wheel of Fortune game, Vanna White racing ahead of our Lincoln town car like a spirit, touching all the wrong letters. *L* from "*L*inden Park – Next Exit." *L* from Holiday Inn. S-M-A-L-L … the nausea came back and I closed my eyes and drifted into woozy nightmares, leaving Poppa to play alone.

The gentle jolt of the car pulling into the driveway jostled me awake. Poppa opened the passenger door for me like a Southern gentleman and reached out his hand. This time I took it, if only to indulge his upbeat-ness.

"A sleepy birthday girl? I've never heard of such a thing," he said.

When we got inside, Mother was sitting on the Chaise lounge, gazing into the ebony night, as if she was trying to project some light into it, even though she didn't have much light in her to redistribute. Poppa broke her daze by starting the birthday song, extending the long "a" on *Haaaaappy* so my Mother would have time to join in on the first syllable. We smelled like farm and fried foods, but she smiled and joined in Poppa's song.

I gave her a limp hug, said that the carnival rides had wiped me out, and asked to excuse myself. Mother wouldn't dismiss me from my responsibilities as birthday girl until I had a lemon bar. She presented the pan so I could pick my corner. The powdered sugar, typically sifted with pristine evenness, was blotted here and there like defective fireworks. I nibbled on a square. Mother looked at me, past me, with that same yearning expression she had when she looked out the kitchen window.

Mother had placed my presents on my bed. I nestled in bed and opened the wooden box to look at the spoons more closely. The one farthest to the left

was the size of the spoons in our kitchen, the one on the right small enough to fit three, maybe four popcorn kernels in its concave belly. Upon holding it between my index finger and thumb, as if to inch food into the yawning mouth of a homunculus, my pink bedroom walls flickered and pulsated red, and I curled a pillow against my churning stomach.

That didn't help. I fetched Bobby's perfume bottle gift from underneath the floorboard, hoping to reclaim that same warmth and comfort I felt when he handed it to me. No luck. It was as cold as the concrete beneath my wood flooring. I held it to my nose again, expecting emptiness.

My nostrils flared. It was feeble and fleeting … like those millisecond-moments of lucidity, when a dream is unintentionally caught, and regretfully released. But for the wink it lasted, it was delicate. Earthy. Comfortable. And the ball of pain in my stomach floated away, like a paper boat in a receding tide.

I looked from the furrowed orange glass of the bottle, to the biggest spoon, back to the bottle.

I wrapped the spoon in the linen handkerchief, the same handkerchief that had cradled Bobby's bottle from school to the secret place in my bedroom, and burrowed it in my backpack pocket. He'd like that spoon.

"Boys like silver things, right?" I asked my moonlit room.

After saying a little prayer to an invisible God that Mother would be happier, that The Smallest Person in the World would escape, I prayed that Bobby would bring squash tomorrow. Then drowsiness drank me up.

RADIO FLYER

Jake Skinner

"Pull me" you would say,
Gripping the aluminum trim tight.
And I eager to please my brother
Listened.
Red was our chariot,
Chipped and worn from years
Of being driven like mad.
Brown rust rested
In the boundaries of its frame,
Leaving your fingers soiled by its tone.
Little by little you carried it off,
Day after day
Adventure after adventure
And Game after Game
We wore it wretched.
Till one day,
When I strained under
The weight of your fifteen years,
The handle tore straight from the body.
And I believing myself
To be its slayer,
Stared full of fault
Upon the rusted skeleton,
Not red, but brown and bent.
You rose without a word
And walked away to something else.
Leaving me
To clean up our mess.
Leaving me
With rust upon my hands.

MONDAYS WITH JASMINE

Catherine Gans

This week
Jasmine kneels up
In a straight-backed chair
Bent over a drawing of a house
Half our size. We are stick figures
With matching yellow hair,
Our hands, four-fingered
Like chicken feet
And clasped together.
She looks up,
Her nose smudged
With our paper home's
Chimney smoke
That swirls in tornado curlicues
Off of the page
Onto a copy of Eyewitness Egypt.
Across the table she asks
How strong are you?
Can you fight ghosts?
She is all certainty
With fresh glittered nails.
You can't, she says,
Your arms are too skinny.
"Excitable, inattentive,
And easily distracted,"
Jasmine shimmies out of her chair,
Folding her drawing into quarters
For me to keep.
Knock, knock! she asks.
Who's there?
One day, she says,
I will be the greatest joke writer in the world.
She is squished into her purple puffer
As we walk through the snow
And towards the bus
Where she sits near the driver, Sam,
Who knows her name too.

On the way we count presidents she knows,
One, two, skipping to four,
Until we are tired of counting
And make wishes instead.
A thousand grapes, she says,
Stopping to stare at the sky,
I wish for a thousand grapes.
The icy top crust of snow crumbles
As the bus rounds the corner,
And I imagine if, at seven,
I would have wished only
For a bowl of fruit.

TONG AND CULL

On gallery Wednesdays, I wonder what the archaeologists will orate
Of our currently outdated
In the forthcoming millennia when they ultimately locate
Our tools and vessels dust-covered
When they polish our handled bits of wrought-iron, they might
Remember back to back when
Lifting the heft of artifact from inadequate arms to backlight
Science's copulation with creation
Amass, arrange, and sell these ancient instruments and shells
To onlookers willing to pay for a
Made relic behind pressurized and controlled-temperature cells
Contrary to their intended
Our items will outlive us in the hands of another
That have blended with the

Justin Barisich

With ancestry behind us, what else could we be but proud
and will-be archaic ways
Handed down from cryptic slips of opened ground
beneath the remnants of nighted days
Tonging for oysters with sun's circadian breath to death
strong backs defined men
Clench rakes and sail skinny skiff to snatch the shallow water's wealth when
was only a means to an end
Fathers with forearms the size of thighs thrived on chopped rocks sold
taste of what they had dug out
Then rushing to pub and gamble-house for pint and card to hold
purposes and weathered clouts
Their bodies remain buried beneath the brackish waters
blood of forgotten brothers.

BEAK AND WING

Nicole Burdakin

Shadows from the cabin walls veiled the metal ladder Addie snaked down in complete blackness. A skinny rectangle of moonlight fell across the cabin from the long north-facing window, and its skeletal, marred grid of panes cast white slivers across the unfinished wooden floor. Her socks met the cold floor, and her hands withdrew from the chilled aluminum rungs. Africa was startlingly cold on summer mornings, but she knew to expect this by now.

She stretched her arms wide, then tall. Twisting her back and hearing the sharp click of her spine, she blinked and looked onto the bunk beneath her own. The moonlight illumed only Mark's feet, one foot sockless, the other socked, beneath his cloak of mosquito netting.

She stood watching until the bare foot's toes curled, recoiling from the cold draft. This is why Addie preferred the top bunk—waves of cold air would funnel through the gaps between the crooked door and its frame.

She reached above Mark into her own bed and fished her hand between the sheets that sat in the pile she had kicked them into minutes before. Her hand grasped at the open-weave of her blanket, then at the course top sheet before finding a thick clothing article. She extracted it. Her sweater.

Her hand plunged back into the cotton heap and slithered about until she caught another piece of clothing: a white ankle high sock with a grey step and toe, tinged yellow. Mark's missing sock. She lifted the mosquito netting on the lower bunk and slipped the sock over his naked foot. She imagined his silvery eyes, now closed, moving about beneath his lids. Whenever his eyes were closed, his eyelashes looked an inch long. His mouth would be slightly agape, slightly drooling. Addie had decided that most frat boys drooled.

She grabbed the backpack she had packed the night before. She slipped on her muddy hiking boots that she had left at the cabin's threshold before continuing outside onto the grounds of their base camp. She caught the door before it slammed behind her. She didn't want to wake the others.

Tom was already waiting for her by the fire pit. He had a small fire started. His boots were already on also, but he had picked the crusted mud off. Addie's still had the dry, caked mud encasing most of her shoes, save her laces. Tom also wore a brand, insulated black pullover that encased his cowbell-shaped torso. The outline of an alpine tree traced along the pullover's small breast pocket zipper.

In her university sweatshirt and side ponytail, Addie felt like a fraud. A real geologist would wear a pullover with the alpine tree stenciled over her left breast, like Tom, the PhD candidate. The real geologist. She unfolded one of

ACACIA PERSPECTIVE
Annie Olson
Photograph

the collapsible chairs and watched Tom stoke the small flame.

Tom and Addie would walk the trail around the marsh to the power company at first daylight, and they would need to eat before they left. She thought about going to the mess hall to get the oatmeal but saw the canister by Tom's feet.

So she waited. She picked out her split ends. Her long, dark hair was thinning by the day.

Since they had arrived in Benin, Addie's body had begun to wear thin. Her skin tore easily now on twigs and ferns, leaving cuts on her ankles that would burn if any of the swamp water seeped into her wading overalls. The village doctor advised her to grind local papaver bark and to mix it with maize dough in the mornings, but she was convinced that the murky water caused her color to change. Even her skin that was usually white as eggshell had turned beige. Addie knew it was the dirty showers.

For a week before busing to their university's base camp on the north side of Cotonou, Benin, Addie and the other five undergrad summer fieldworkers had spent a week in Morocco to celebrate the end of spring finals before their lab work resumed on-site. In Morocco, the slipshod trinkets, the dusty bazaars, the smell of strange, the viscid oil burning in misshapen glass lamps were all attractively alien, authentic. The clubs pulsed with American pop music recut with Eastern rhythms and instruments, and while she danced Addie would sweat, her hair would curl around her face, and she could feel the bass like she could feel her own clothing against her skin. Now in a rural area above Cotonou and assessing well water samples, she had started to think more. She was quiet. They only sent her on reconnaissance jobs now, like this one.

Tall grass obscured the earth Addie's sneakers ambled over as she followed in line behind Tom farther into the swamp. The mud, the sand, the twisted roots and rocks ran like a treadmill, cycling over and over, beneath the yellowed, grass-stained cloth that roofed her cramping toes. It was only thirty minutes passed daybreak, and they would have to walk this same route in reverse in just a couple of hours.

Wafts of sulfur came and went as they moved along the trail. The marsh smell was nauseating, and Addie pulled the neck of the sweatshirt over her nose.

Tom marched too fast in front of her with his hands outstretched, clearing brush that had fallen overnight into their trail around the marshlands.

"We're halfway," he called over his shoulder.

She didn't answer. There was nothing to say.

After another five minutes, Addie ran into Tom, entirely pressing her body against his stoic back and then falling backwards onto a plant covered in prickled leaves.

She struggled against the grasp of the thorns that clutched her sweatshirt. "What the hell, Tom?"

Tom looked back and offered her a hand without turning around.

"That's the first thing you've said to me in a week, you know."

She took the hand and freed herself from the swamp plants. "If that would have been a puddle of marsh, I—"

But he shushed her and kneeled on the path in front her, in front of a small bird.

The bird's feathers were dark and clumped with mud, ratted. Addie wondered if feathers could be combed. The little bird looked to Tom and gyrated its red neck. It hopped inch to the right, then another inch forward and repeated this in a small circle. As it turned toward Addie, she saw its chipped beak, orange and long with a triangular hole in the left lip.

"Look. It has a broken beak," Addie said.

Tom continued to watch it hop on its little pronged toes. His swanky real geologist jacket pulled around his thick torso as he hunched closer to the bird, his eyes squinting and trading the premature wrinkle lines that encircled his heavy eyes for cavernous folds. His face reminded Addie of the topographic maps that wallpapered most of their base camp.

The little bird let out a deep guttural call twice, then a squawk.

"I don't want to take it back," she said.

She imagined Tom rolling his eyes as he spoke to her. "It's nature. We have to leave it."

Addie agreed, but Tom still made no move to continue. They were supposed to reach the power plant by eight so they could collect the salt water samples on their way back from the posts that sat just off-path. She could see one post up farther, to the right: a metal pole with a boxed instrument attached to head of the stake bent in favor of the weight of the instrument, now curved. When they had put them in two weeks earlier, they had been 180 degrees straight.

"So," Addie said. There was nothing to say still. But Tom still wasn't walking.

After a moment he reached his hand out to the bird, which made no effort to escape the fist enclosing around its wings. Tom held the bird with as much delicacy as his cracked, rough digits could manage at a distance from his body, keeping the little bird almost at arm's length. He began marching down the path again.

Addie followed silently for a few paces considering whether or not to intercede, or to force him to give up the bird.

Tom pivoted back to her and held his free hand up with a flat-palmed STOP. His shoes sunk and slid in the mud as he stepped off the path. They had reached their research post. He deposited the bird on the instrument box, and they kept walking toward the power plant.

"The mud will dry, if it sits in the sun," Tom said. "That way it might fly again."

The power company had been closed, despite the manager's promise to be open that Tuesday. The next morning at first light, they set out again along

SPRING, 2010
Yeon-Sil Yi
Oil on canvas

the marsh.

The little bird still perched on the box that encased the salinity meter, a half hour's walk from the camp. Today Addie saw that its mane of feathers had mostly dried, and half its body had been cleaned of mud. With its beak, it could only clean the one side properly. She said something to the like.

"What should we call it?" Tom asked.

Addie didn't know. "Does it need a name?"

Tom shrugged. "Maybe not a name. Just something to reference, you know."

They stood and watched it together from the path. The swamp in front of them, on the northeast edge of Lake Nokoue, glistened in the sunlight this morning. Addie realized it wasn't the swamp, but instead the gossamer wings of all of the insects illumining as they pumped to keep hovering over the surface.

"What about just, Little Bird?" she said.

Tom paused and held his breath, and Addie could tell he was rolling his eyes at her again. "So uninspired. What if your parents had just named you Female Child?"

Addie shook her head. "So not the same. Little Bird. Like, the antithesis of Big Bird."

Tom gave in, and they left Little Bird to continue bathing on the post as they trekked onward.

"What is your real name?" Tom said after a minute. Addie was still trailing behind him, so he had to turn around.

"Adhara," she said. She had never liked the name, but disliked even more when other people didn't like it. She added in explanation, "Like the star."

He seemed to consider this, oscillating his head like a bobble figurine. "It's a pretty name." He had fallen into step with her, now walking beside each other on the path considerably slower and closer.

Addie looped her hands through the straps of her backpack and thought about what to say next. "What about you?" she said. That was the best she could do. This felt awkward.

"Thomas," he said and shrugged. "I'm just Tom."

The trip to the power plant had been futile again. Still closed. Gualtar, the professor leading the research team, would go into town the next day to see what was happening.

The walk to the power plant and back, collecting readings from the salinity meters once again, proved fruitful. Addie and Tom had talked the entire way, trading stories, ambitions, and fears about their research. Tom was the second researcher Addie had really gotten to know in the past month—that is, if she even could say she had gotten to know Mark at all.

She sat with Mark in silence most of the time she wasn't working in the lab, though Mark was a very popular, talkative person. They had been in a few classes together freshman year, but neither remembered the other very well. Addie had sat in the front of first-year biology, and Mark in the back. That was all

they had tried to piece together of their past. Here, though, despite exchanging few words in total, they would watch each other. They laughed a lot together. They were sexually compatible.

Somewhere in conversation with Tom she had mentioned this. He didn't seem happy that she knew this information, or that she shared it. She stopped talking the rest of the way back and let him talk about his morphology work last summer in Peru, the fungi samples he had collected, and the plane ride home where he sat next to a native Mayan whose hair beading hung over the armrest and into his seat.

As soon as they returned to the base, Mark walked straight to Addie from a folding chair outside the mess hall and asked if she wanted to go with him to the marketplace. He needed new mosquito netting.

Addie accepted and followed Mark away from Tom, leaving him in the middle of their small cul-de-sac of cabins, and out of the camp. She walked behind him. He moved quickly. They took the left fork at the end of the driveway and walked away from the swamp.

The road was crowded today. It was funny because it wasn't even a road, and there was really no solid ground to connect all of the camps and markets and houses in the area. The road had been woven—it was all reeds. You could slip things between the reeds, through the holes of the crochet, but motorcycles and small carts could drive on it without breaking the mat. Mark had showed her this a few weeks ago.

Across the street from them, a few women with jugs on their heads, filled from the town well, walked with patience while wild children ran around them. The schoolhouse must have just let out.

Two children though, a boy and girl about five years of age, walked side-by-side holding hands. They looked with stark white, bulbous eyes at Addie and Mark as their small, pink lips moved slightly. They were too far away to hear their words, which probably weren't English words anyways, but Addie smiled at them still.

She moved forward, now walking with her shoulder against Mark's.

He noticed but didn't say anything.

"My real name is Adhara," she said in a spurt. She was worried that she had said it too fast, that she would have to repeat herself.

Mark nodded. His brow furrowed, but this was barely visible beneath his curly dark hair. The humidity today had made his typically wavy Ken doll styled hair fall in ringlets. He was grinding his jaw the way he did when he was thinking. "Got it! It's the name of a star. Am I right?"

Addie smiled and nodded, content to walk in silence again.

The market had a small selection but large supply of mosquito nets. They came in plastic packages that were stacked and shoved in three large waist-high barrels outside the small building. The store reeked of mango and bug repellent.

"I just need one that has tighter netting. And that beetles can't eat through," Mark said, grabbing random packages from the far barrel and throw-

ing them one by one into the ones Addie stood near. "What the fuck, are these all the fucking same? Fuck no, I'm getting a different one."

Addie didn't work with Mark on research, so she had never heard him curse like this or seen him this frustrated. Mark worked mainly in the schools, and spent two days a week as a lab TA at the national college in the capital. That was another one of their initiatives. They were trying to educate more people in the area to be able to test their own groundwater and wells for toxins. Mark never talked much about his work though.

They left with three mosquito nets—one for Addie and two for Mark. There were no more tightly woven nets. He was going to have to double layer.

Addie knew Tom was mad, but she kept silent through dinner. She sat instead between Marcus and Leanne who were too exhausted from their day teaching at the national college to hold conversation. Their mess hall had one long dining table made from unfinished oak, flanked by two benches and different-sized crates that could double as stools. Her eyes flicked down the table to Mark, who sat opposite Gualtar and some grad students.

She caught Mark's gray eyes caught briefly before he looked to his empty paper plate, stained with tomato sauce. He turned the plate over twice in his hands before walking away from the table, disposing of the plate and leaving, letting the metal-framed screen door swing and clang behind him.

Addie moved into Mark's vacant seat to listen to Gualtar. The well meters, not the salinity meters, had reconfirmed what they had already guessed: The power company had been conserving energy by periodically graying out different power lines. They had been cutting the electricity every couple of hours at the water plant, which was contaminating and draining the wells. The water was dirty. Gualtar was going to visit the power plant tomorrow and sort things out. Addie and Tom didn't have to worry about walking over in the mornings anymore—the local council had to be involved now, and that would be their job.

That night as they fucked, Addie wished she hadn't walked with Mark to the market. The new mosquito netting tented above Mark's head as he leaned over her exposed body.

She looked into his eyes. They were still gray as a wolf.

"Try to hold my hand," she said.

For a moment that lasted too long he kept his hand flattened on the sheets, wedged beneath her hip.

She remembered how last time he had held her body upright against his. She thought of the companionship of the siblings on the road earlier, their fingers woven as tightly as the road of reeds beneath them.

His hand found hers, and he slid his knuckles into the troughs between her fingers. She found it hard to imagine this hand as one that could palm and nest the baby bird in the marsh, or as one that could hold a sister's hand on the way home from a schoolhouse. It just seemed functionless.

Addie found Tom sitting outside an hour later. He had pulled up one of the folding chairs to the rim of the unlit fire pit. She walked up beside him and stood there.

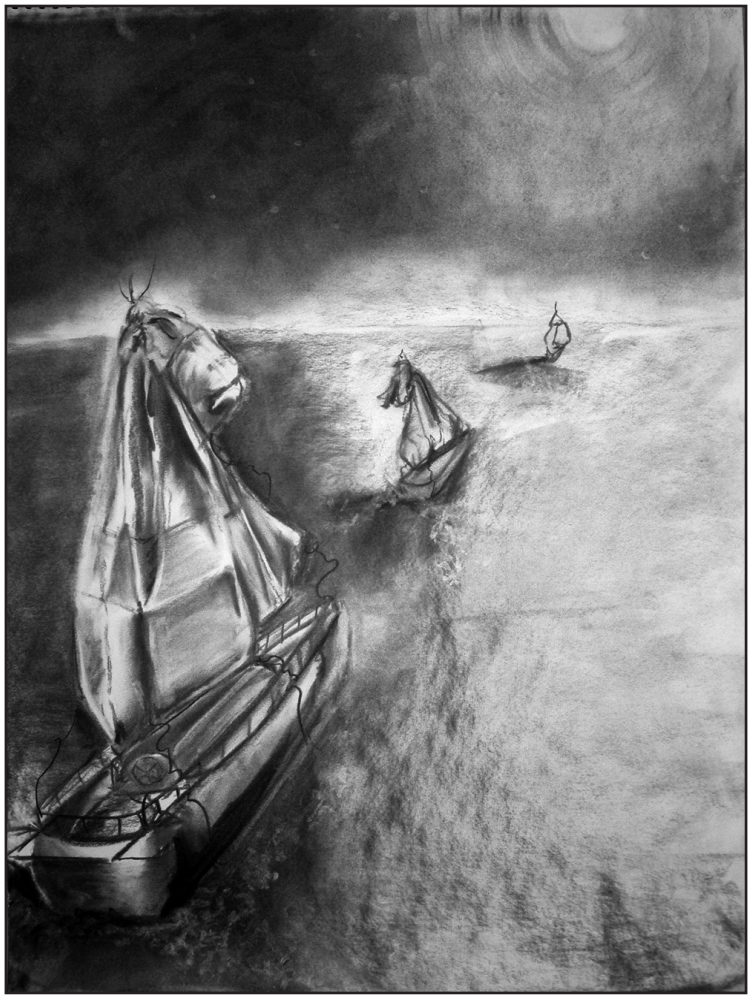
He didn't question her, didn't welcome her but didn't send her away.

The night was never fully dark there unless it was cloudy because all of the stars hung like white Christmas lights over the five buildings of the camp. You didn't even need a flashlight most nights, and the sky never lost its cobalt hue, like in Disney movies when the night skies are always colored navy, never black or even the color of shale.

Addie reached out her hand and put it on top of Tom's. Her small palm and bony fingers rested there with complete stillness.

His knuckles flexed into the gaps between hers, but then hesitated. "Do you know which star is yours?" Tom said quietly.

Addie barely heard him over the hum of insect wings. "No."



SLEEP
Allyson Patterson
Charcoal on paper

RED PEPPERS
Lauren Jopling
Oil on canvas

ACCIDENTAL ASSUMPTIONS

Anjali Sood

The door had an uninterested glass face
that offered an offended squeak as my palm flattened against it—
just above the knob—
and pressed sweat into its leanly gleaming cheek.
I saw neon, shelved and unending
and trapped in little bottles with stout, responsible caps.
Then my nose filled with souring, acid beauty,
and it was inevitable—
I'd stepped into a stereotype;
fleshy, familiar, and clingy beneath my soles
like the cherry tomatoes that will never be eaten by anyone but ants
and collect, instead, on the muddy floor of Daddy's annual summertime garden.
"How can I help you, Ma'am?" came from the mannequin mouth of the cashier
with an accent that made me think of rice and sweet and sour.
Because I couldn't bite my brain, I bit my tongue, instead, as consoling punishment,
and blushed.
"I'd like a pedicure, thank you. The deluxe."
And then she smiled and I smiled
and we trotted on sticky tile
to a long leather train of massage chairs,
so that I could prop my flushed, entitled feet up
before a face that had whole coffee-table albums of life behind it, maybe,
but reminded me only of cheap, copied cuisine.
I closed my eyes and breathed in
the slow, silky strokes of Pink Cranberry #9 spreading across my toes,
and tried to remember the August taste
of tomatoes coming apart in my mouth.

IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER, MANUEL WEINSTOCK (D. OCTOBER 2011)

Adam Bieber

I.
He, eternally coffined, consumes none of our necessities;
Beneath a frozen grass plot, his lifeless body, reminds
his hysterical daughters, who sob with
a magnetic allegiance, that they are the life left of him.
O in the silence,
the reach of his death wraps itself.

From his hospital bed,
the old face stretched under the pressures of speech,
the oval mouth refused all kernels of buttered corn (note)
and with ghostly hands
dangling, his face disappeared into the stills of memory.

But the length of his health made its fulness known,
in nine decades of precocious pussyfooting; hazzon (note)
of the dinner prayer, a nutrition trend expert, but always
a fear-filled capitalist
running from all business before they culminate.

The eldest daughter, his watchful byproduct
dining in the flooding memories of funeral grief,
uses his failures as sustenance for a maternal fear;
her son's possible
genetic injection of financial indolence.

LAKE SISSABAGAMA
Murphy Byrne
Photograph

With a mother, who cannot relieve the indented
thumbs of her father's mistakes, and rejects the intimate passions
of her son with halting advice,
a boy is ushered
into boredom of adulthood.

O in the silence,
the reach of his death wraps itself

II
You were giddy like me: your mirth permeated Sabbath;
Shooting pool, dipping wine-soaked chunks of challah, praying
from memory; Judaism's heart granted you its songs.
Now Sabbath has her merry and her tasty soup still,
for presence doesn't depend on a body: your recalled
in the hebrew rivers of belted melodies; you speak out
in the little movements of our shared idiosyncrasies, the footsteps
that mark the untrodden snow of my coming decisions: you survive,
as a psychic antique, a memory to trigger.

III

Governing body, dead from laboring days
and disease, whose doors were laid
with the rhythms of earth,
you mimic Manuel, white as birth. (Note)

With an ageless mind departed
from man's concrete shores, finished
is the author's arousal of a soul,
that oven, hot with boldness

and seeing this decayed life,
us, the living, imagine our own unknown night;
Infinite, looming, a mural of darkness!
The aerial plain composed of unconscious silence.

So soon much deathly thought began its way
into the tempestuous salts of my everyday,
into questions about ambitious time,
and swirling reflections of no common mind;

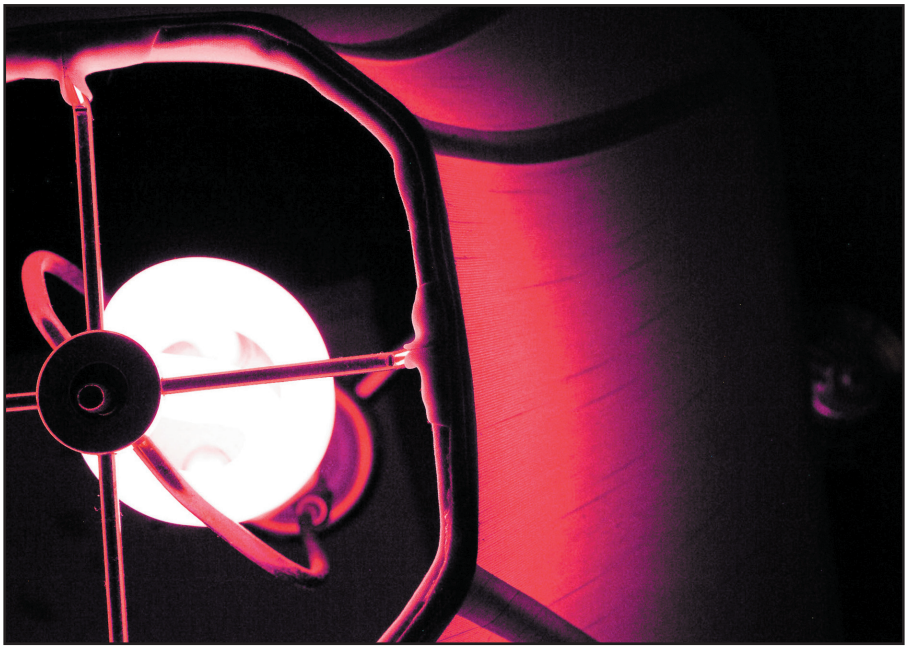
Such is why there's philosophy,
religion, fear, and hypocrisy;
To pose the pondered answers
that quells the dimming dancer,

But fact I know cannot be found,
in beliefs' billow staunch underground,
below the plates of our crystal doors,

where I clasp, lash, and scratch evermore;

So I sought the eyes of mother-earth,
as if I was her first-born birth,
and checked the diary of this watery tongue,
and the skin's surface, where sun's warmth is hung,

For placed against the tip of sight,
is unending interest to find,
where sans tumultuous emotion,
thick space makes me a sea within its ocean.



ENERGY
Allyson Patterson
Photograph

IN THE NIGHT
Lily Bienstock

Willa should have stayed with Geoff, but she followed Tee instead. Even as the others peeled off around corners, she pushed herself to keep pace with him, running full sprint along FDR as red and blue lightning nipped at the backs of her calves.

"These cops never fucking learn," Tee said. He twisted back to look at her, a grin wild on the blush of his mouth. He had held onto his glass forty, but now he chucked the half-empty bottle over the railing and into the east river.

Willa threw back her head and let loose a battle cry in the autumn night. "Let's show them," she said. Her breath flew from her in clouds of white steam. She seized Tee's hand, and pulled him into the street. The midnight traffic was sparse enough to make it to the power plant on 14th.

The police cruiser shrieked as it swerved to follow them.

Tee and Willa moved into the darkness under a shelf of scaffolding.

The officer stepped out of the car, and slammed the door shut behind him.

Willa wiped her sweat slick palms on the thighs of her jeans. She hadn't been to soccer practice in days, and already her legs felt too thin and soft under her hands.

The officer scanned their side of FDR with the hunting flare of his flashlight. A solitary, southbound yellow cab flew down the drive. The officer took a step towards them.

Tee grabbed Willa's wrist and pulled her deeper into the tunnel of scaffolding, Her arm snapped taut as he turned a sharp corner into an alleyway.

The officer ran after them, his handcuffs jingling on his belt, the slaps of his footfalls echoing in the narrowness.

Tee dragged Willa faster through the tapering passage. The crumbling, brick walls darkened as they grew closer. They scraped against Willa's shoulders. Tee let go of her hand. He took the lead as they ran a silent single file.

They wove through the twisting backstreets of the East Village, and in this labyrinth of alleyways they were like shadows. The darkness welcomed them and swaddled them in velvet, and the footsteps behind them grew tangled and faint.

At last, light bloomed in an approaching break between buildings. Willa could just make out Tee's lean silhouette before her. He was farther ahead than she had thought. He looked lithe and blurred like a ghost

Willa sped up until her lungs burned against her ribcage. Each breath of cold air left the metallic taste of blood on her tongue. She could feel the Colt

45 sloshing in her stomach. Finally, she burst through the mouth of the passageway into the orange pool of a streetlight.

Tee had taken them southwest, and they landed between the Avenue A Minimart and a closed pizza place with a plastic, green awning. The minimart was the only shop still open on the street, and it was so quiet that Willa could hear the crackle of a baseball game playing on the radio inside. Here the crisp nighttime air hit her in full, twisting around her limbs like bed sheets.

"Glad you made it," Tee said. He pulled a pack of American Spirits from the inner pocket of his black leather jacket.

"It was probably the fire kites that did it," Willa said. Her voice rose and fell with her heavy breath. She pitched her head down, a curtain of dark red hair consuming her vision, then gathered her waves and tied them into a knot.

Tee put two cigarettes between his lips and flicked his silver Zippo. "Worth it, I hope," he said, his words muffled around the filters. As he lit the tips, the flame glittered in his blue-bright eyes and cast shadows under his high cheekbones.

Willa tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Tee's mouth looked so delicate above the cleft of his chin.

Willa accepted a cigarette. "I still have newspaper," she said. "Should we send up one more?"

Tee laughed out a sail of smoke. "Hell yeah," he said. "Let's go over to that basketball court."

They crossed the empty street and slid past the metal gate onto the asphalt. Most of the white court lines had been smudged out. The rusting metal hoops no longer had baskets. The perimeter of trees obscured the light from the streetlamps and passing cars. The last dry leaves quivered on their branches with a sound like whispers.

Willa clamped her cigarette between her lips and pulled the last, folded sheet of the New York Times from the back pocket of her jeans. She knelt on the ground and folded in the corners of the page, twisting them together at the top to create a pouch. Then Tee crouched beside her and lit the four corners of the kite, and they both backed up to smoke their cigarettes and watch it go.

The fire ate through the newsprint, warming them and leaving a shell of ash around the pocket of heated air. Just as the flame guttered, the kite rose up like a hot air balloon. It was nearly in line with the tops of the trees when the embers blew out, and the ash turned dark as it escaped on the wind.

Willa finally looked away. "Do you think the others have made it to Molotov's yet?" she said. She looked at Tee.

As Tee's took a slow, final drag of his cigarette, his eyes never wavered from Willa's face. Flicked the filter away with the nail of his middle finger. "You know your eyes are like mirrors?" he said.

Willa's ears burned. "What does that even mean?" she said. She dropped her cigarette and crushed it under the heel of her combat boot. When she looked up again, Tee was close to her. He cupped her cheek in his palm. He backed her against the chain link fence of the basketball court. It gave a little as

her body pressed into it.

"It means they're like mirrors," he said. He smelled like smoke and soap and liquor.

Willa smiled. "That can't really work on girls," she said. She slid a cautious finger through the rightmost belt loop of his jeans. She hoped he couldn't feel her pulse beating in her wrist.

Tee chuckled. "Every time," he said. He brushed her cheekbone with his thumb. "If they're not like mirrors, they're like the ocean. Or the sun, you know, if they're not really like anything."

Tee's phone chimed in the pocket of his jacket. He took it out, grinned when he looked at the screen, and flipped it open. "Hey Geoff," he said. He pulled Willa closer and slithered his arm across her shoulders. He guided her back towards the gate.

"Okay, okay... relax brother bear, she's with me..." Tee smiled at Willa and she giggled. She slipped her arm around his waist. She could feel the curve of his hipbone under her fingers.

"More than, we're having a grand old time...."

They pushed through the gate and onto the sidewalk.

"I don't mean anything by that," Tee said into the phone. "Chill, we're on our way to Molotov's now." Tee snapped his phone shut and tucked it back into his pocket. "I love your brother," he said, "but he's a strange one."

Willa's hair was twisted too tightly. The back of her neck was cold. She wriggled away from Tee, and untied the knot to let her hair fall around her face. She crammed her hands in her pockets. "I'm sorry," she said. "I should have brought my phone."

"Don't worry about it," Tee said. "He would have called me anyway." He linked his arm with hers, but Willa could not look at him as they walked the few blocks uptown.

When Willa and Tee got to Molotov's, the others were laughing and smoking on the warped wooden porch. Geoff and Meena were leaning against the railing passing Geoff's silver flask. They were talking with their heads bent close. Geoff touched Meena's arm. Meena touched Geoff's hair.

Tee called out a greeting.

Meena spun to face them. Her navy blue eyes drifted from Willa's face to Tee's face to their intertwined elbows. "Good God," she said, "where the fuck have you two been?" She leapt from the porch like a lean bobcat.

As Meena approached, Willa tried to unlink her arm from Tee's, but he caught her hand and squeezed it before letting her break contact.

"Hey, girl," Meena said to Willa with a smile. When she gave her a hug, she put her lips to Willa's ear and said, "You'll tell me about this later." She smelled of gin and vanilla.

Willa fought an acute need to pull her hair over her face like a curtain.

Then Meena turned to Tee and gave him a slow hug, snaking her arms under his jacket.

"Hey, you," Tee said. He nestled against Meena's tousled yellow hair.

"Hey, yourself," Meena said. She looked up at Tee and he kissed her on the farthest corner of her mouth.

Willa's palms itched. She skipped up the stairs to Geoff. As he watched Tee and Meena, he screwed and unscrewed the cap of his flask. "And what are we drinking?" she said. She tried to take the flask from him.

"Why didn't you stay with me?" Geoff said. He turned his grey eyes to Willa and folded his arms across his chest.

Geoff's hair was brown instead of red, but like Willa his upper lip was too full for his bottom lip, and his bones were too sharp under his thin, pale skin. Like Willa he looked like a child when he pouted.

"What are you going to do?" Willa said, "Tell mom?" Her voice sounded pointier than she thought it would. She chewed her left thumbnail.

"Okay, kids," Tee said from behind them, "kiss and make up."

The other smokers and drinkers on the porch chuckled. Tee beckoned to a few of them. He took a small bag of white pills from his pocket. They were the rolls of Molly he had bought last week. Some of the strangers waved their hands, but others bought the pills from him in twos or threes.

Although Tee's hands were occupied, Meena kept both of her arms wrapped around his middle. She caught Willa's eye, arched a manicured eyebrow, and smiled.

Willa turned to face Geoff, putting her back to Meena. "How much cash can I make doing that?" she said.

Geoff shook his head and took a final swig from the flask. "Willa, even I don't sell," he said. He tucked the flask into the pocket of his green canvas jacket.

"So?" Willa said. "Please tell me you didn't just finish the gin."

"He finished the gin? Heaven's no." Tee bounded up the steps to join them. He and Geoff clasped hands.

Meena sauntered after him. She wrapped her peach cardigan more tightly around her slender waist.

"Well excuse me, little girl." Geoff said to Willa, "Isn't it a school night, anyway?"

"Fuck you," she said. "Not more than for anyone else."

"I'm pretty sure they'd be more shocked if we came than if we skipped," Geoff said.

Tee laughed.

Meena giggled and wrapped her arms around Willa. "So what?" she said. "Are you telling me to go home, too?"

"Yes," Tee said. His eyes were on Willa.

"But you're a year older," Geoff said, "so you get to stay an hour later." His eyes were on Meena.

"Well," Willa said, "it seems we're not wanted here." She stuck her tongue at Tee and pulled Meena towards the door.

Molotov's was crowded with the flannel-clad bodies of undergrads and musicians. It smelled of coffee and alcohol and felt much too warm after being

SEE YOU SPACE COWBOY
Travis Cohen
Photograph

outside.

Willa pulled Meena to the bar in the darker backroom. Tonight, a live band played something soft and electronic from the low wooden platform in the corner. Couples stood and chatted and swayed with their drinks.

"How long do you think it'll take them to get bored?" Meena said. She sat at one of the stools at short, wooden bar.

Willa shrugged and sat down next to her. "Do you think they would card me if I ordered a drink?"

Meena rolled her eyes. She took a tube of lip-gloss out of her purse and rubbed it on her lips.

Tee and Geoff ambled into the back room, and walked towards Willa and Meena. "We took a poll," Tee said. He touched Willa's waist with his fingertips. "You two can stay out past your bedtimes if you promise to behave yourselves, do you accept?"

Meena giggled. She took Willa's hand. "I refuse," she said. "We're perfectly self-sufficient, thanks." She gave Willa's hand a wet kiss, while keeping her eyes on Tee.

Willa's face felt hot. She jerked her hand into her lap.

"Are you, now?" said Geoff. "So you've ordered us drinks?" He put his hand on Meena's waist like Tee had put his hand on Willa's waist.

Willa pulled at the tips of her hair. "We've ordered Molotov cocktails," she said. "This whole city is going kaboom."

Tee laughed. "Give me a minute," he said. He let go of Willa.

Her waist felt strange where his hand had been.

At the far side of the bar, the young, caramel-skinned bartender was chopping limes into wedges. When she saw Tee approach her, she smiled and tossed her long, black dreadlocks over her shoulder.

Tee said something, and then leaned in to kiss her on the corner between her mouth and her cheek. They chatted for a few minutes, while Tee drew small circles with his pinky on the top of her brown hand. Finally, Tee took a single white pill from his pocket and slid it to her. She popped it immediately, and then ducked under the bar, and reemerged with a bottle of Jack Daniels.

Tee straightened up and hid the bottle under his jacket. Then he gave the bartender another kiss, although more quickly then the first, and more squarely on the cheek.

Tee turned to them, and nodded his head towards the backdoor.

Meena hopped off her stool, and followed Tee into the night.

Willa smiled and shook her head. She stood to follow Meena, but Geoff grabbed her by the shoulder.

"Hey," he said, "tonight, why did you go with Tee?"

Willa shrugged off his hand. "So guess who was over when I came home from school."

"You don't go to school," Geoff said.

"Fine, guess who was over after I signed into homeroom and left."

"Don't change the subject." Geoff said.

"It was James," Willa said. She nibbled the cuticle of her right ring finger.

Geoff opened his mouth and then closed his mouth. He rubbed his eyes with the tips of his fingers. He swallowed. "What did you say?" he said.

"Yeah, Mom picked him up at JFK and everything."

"They were done," Geoff said.

"Whatever."

"After the whole embezzlement thing, she said they were done."

"I don't know. Whatever. He had a suitcase."

A gust of cold air invaded the room, as the backdoor swung open and shut. Willa rubbed the tops of her arms.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Geoff said. He touched her hand.

"Let's just go get fucked up, okay?" She pulled her hand away from Geoff's and stood up. She threw herself into the crowd, heading for the back door.

Geoff called her name, but she didn't look back as she opened the door and rejoined the night.

Outside, Tee and Meena were sitting on the curb across the street. Tee was rolling a spliff and rehashing their grand escape from the cop.

Meena was smoking a cigarette. She giggled in the right places. She sat so that her and Tee's knees were touching.

Willa could not bring herself to sit. Instead she stood before them. She zipped and unzipped her jacket. She paced."Now what?" she said. Her voice sounded flatter than she thought it would.

Meena looked up and caught Willa's eye. "I don't know, it is getting kind of late," she said.

Tee laughed and shook his head. "Maybe for middle-aged bankers," he said. He touched the sticky part of the rolling paper to his tongue and sealed it.

"Willa looks pretty tired to me," Meena said. She tucked some of Tee's hair behind his ear. "Maybe she should go to sleep."

Tee shook his hair in front of his face and stood up. "Do you want to go to bed?" Tee said to Willa.

Willa smiled at him. "I'm not tired, yet," she said. She chewed her left pinky nail.

Meena crossed her arms.

The door of Molotov's flew open, and Geoff materialized in the darkness. Tee waved the spliff at him, and he jogged over.

"Thanks God you're here, Geoffrey," Tee said. "Our ladies are bored."

"We can't have that," Geoff said. He sat on the curb next to Meena. "Want to climb one of those shitty walkups on 5th?" He touched his knee with hers.

"Sounds good to me," Tee said. He put the joint behind his ear. "Willa?"

"Can we bring the whiskey?" Willa said. It had gotten colder and she wrapped her arms tight around her torso. She couldn't unclench her jaw.

Tee laughed. He picked up the bottle of Jack and tucked it into his jacket.

They walked back past Molotov's and towards 5th street. The city was almost too quiet. Save the occasional empty cab, the four of them were alone like the sole survivors of some apocalypse.

"Why aren't we drinking?" Meena said. She walked between Geoff and Tee.

"We're going to play a game," Tee said.

"What kind of game?" Willa said.

"Spliffs, sips, and confessions," Tee said. He shook a cigarette out of his pack, put it to his lips, and lit it.

"Why confessions?" Meena said.

Tee blew a plume of smoke into the air above them. "Why not?" he said. "My weed, my whiskey, my rules, and I require a sacrifice." He smiled. "Willa's game, aren't you Willa?" He caught Willa's eye and raised an eyebrow.

Meena stretched her arms over her head, exposing a strip of lean midriff. She plucked the cigarette from Tee's mouth and took a drag. "Actually," she said. "Now I'm feeling a little tired." She stopped walking.

Geoff and Willa stopped with Meena, but Tee took a few more steps before slowing and turning to face her.

Meena offered Tee his cigarette back. "My place isn't far. You're all welcome to crash." She looked at Tee from under her eyelashes.

Tee took the cigarette from her and flicked it away. "I'm not tired yet, Meena," he said. He looked at Willa. He smirked.

Meena's fingers curled into fists. She bared her teeth. She looked at Tee, then Willa, then Geoff. "Fine," she said. Her hands relaxed and she looked at the ground. When she looked up again she was smiling. "I'm still going." She only looked at Geoff when she said this. She kept eye contact with him until she turned to walk back down 4th street. She gave him a final look over her shoulder as she rounded the corner.

Tee shrugged and started walking.

Willa lifted a foot to follow him, when Geoff said, "Hey, Tee, I think I should go walk Meena home. It is kind of late."

"Meena's fine," Willa said.

"You do that," Tee said.

Geoff looked at Willa. He grinned.

Willa shook her head and laughed. "Then, get her there safely," she said.

"I'm just walking her home," Geoff said. "Just text me where you are, I'll meet you."

Tee chuckled. "Sure," he said. "We'll do that."

Geoff ran after Meena. He turned a corner and disappeared.

Tee leaned in towards Willa and said in her ear, "And then there were two."

Willa shivered.

Tee took her hand and together they turned onto 5th.

The tallest building on the street didn't have a fire escape, but the second highest had one right up to the top. Tee climbed onto a dumpster to release the ladder from the lowest level.

Willa did not look down as she climbed. The rusted ladder wobbled under her feet, and the railings were cold and rough on her palms.

They climbed up and around, up and around, and finally they pulled themselves onto the black tar of the roof.

"You have to tip toe," Tee said. "Otherwise the people below us will hear."

They crept like spiders to the far side of the roof. There they sat on the ledge and dangled their feet over the sea of city lights. Above them, the Irving Clock Tower showed four twenty. They shared Tee's jacket between them.

Tee took the spliff from behind his ear and lit it. He inhaled the smoke slowly and held it in his lungs.

The sweet, burnt smell of the weed made Willa's stomach churn. She couldn't remember eating today.

Tee exhaled and handed Willa the joint. She copied him, but when the smoke burned against the back of the throat she coughed.

Tee laughed. "You'll get it eventually," he said.

The weed tasted the way skunks smell.

Willa gave the spliff back in exchange for the bottle of Jack.

The bottle felt heavy in her hands. She broke the seal and unscrewed the cap. The sharp smell of whiskey overwhelmed the stink of the pot.

"You need to confess something before you drink," Tee said. He stubbed out the joint, and slipped the roach into his pack of cigarettes.

"Okay, let me think." The whiskey glittered like black ice in the moonlight. The glass was sleek and cold in her palms. "You know the other night, when we all took that Molly you bought?"

Tee nodded.

"I didn't actually take it, I pretended."

Tee laughed. "What the fuck, why?"

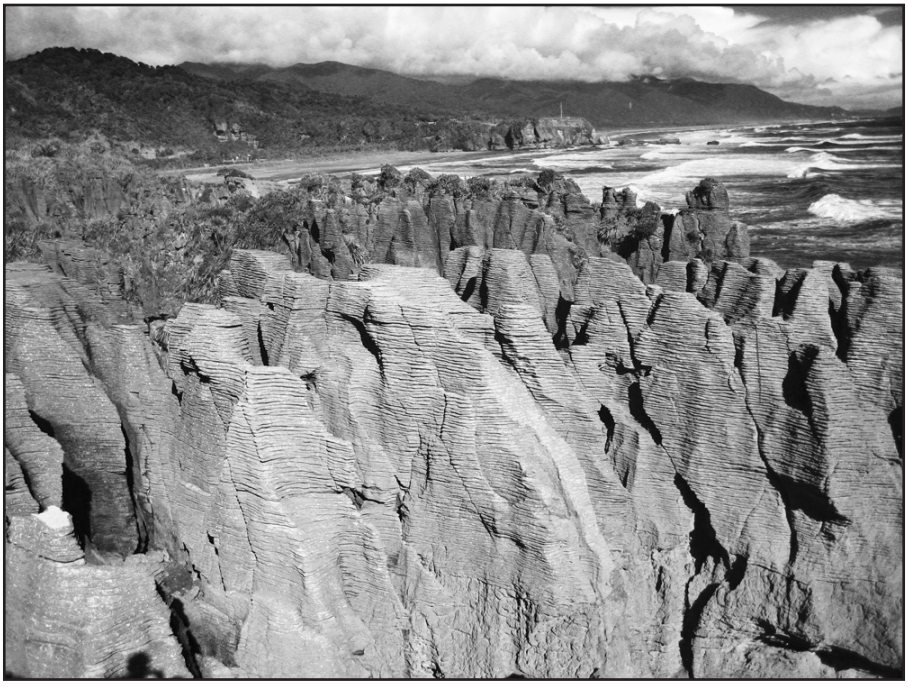
Willa laughed. "I'm not sure," she said. "I chickened out." She took a long sip of the whiskey. It was bitter and burned the inside of her mouth and nose. It felt smooth, almost oily, as it slid down her throat. She handed Tee the bottle.

A wind whipped across the roof and they huddled closer. Tee put his arm around Willa's shoulders. Willa fell into his warmth.

"So..." he said. "So I confess that I lied before." Tee moved his thumb in a slow circle against Willa's upper arm. "Lots of girls have eyes like the ocean," he said, "but only your eyes are like mirrors."

The wail of distant police sirens stretched and wavered to Willa through the thin air.

"That's not a very good confession," she said, her eyes on her knees.



THE PANCAKE ROCKS
Kyle Broach
Photograph

"Well, you were supposed to look up at me," Tee said. "So I could kiss you."

Tee ran his free hand along the side of Willa's neck. He brushed her earlobe. He cupped the point of her chin, and tilted her face up towards his. He kissed just the corner of her mouth, right on the cusp of her lips and her cheek.

Willa's breath was shallow. Tee's heartbeat pulsed in his neck. It would be so easy to lace her fingers in his hair, to bring his mouth to hers.

Tee waited, nestled against her skin. He still moved his thumb in a circle against her arm.

The clock struck five.

The sun would come up soon, but after no more than an hour or two of light, Willa knew she would have to close her eyes and sleep in the dark until it set again. Willa could not remember the color of the sky at noon.

"Tee," Willa said, "I don't think you want anything from me." Her words were more shape than sound.

Tee slid his face along hers until they were touching at the forehead and nose. "Of course I do," he said. "And you want something from me."

Willa extracted herself from the warm tangle of his limbs. "I just want to go," she said. She stood.

Tee stood. He took Willa's hand and laced his fingers with hers. "But we came all the way here," he said. "We have a whole bottle of whiskey."

"You keep it," Willa said. She pulled her hand away and took a step back.

"Willa, it's okay," Tee said. He rubbed his mouth with his knuckles. He offered her a hand. "Your brother isn't here, no one's here, there's no reason to be shy."

"I'm not," Willa said. "I just need to go home."

"But you want this," Tee said. He grabbed her wrist. His tone was clipped and low. His lips were cracked.

"I don't want anything to do with this," Willa said. She yanked her wrist out of Tee's grip. She ran across the roof, not on the tips of her toes, but on the flats of her feet. She flew back down the metal stairs and into the night, the streetlamps flickering above her like the fading ember of a fire kite.

LIVING ALONE
Robert Williams

This morning over breakfast
I read that fruit will ripen
faster when kept in a bowl.
Unable to finish them,
I scattered the bananas
all around the apartment.
Now they won't turn brown before
I've eaten every last one
Such a rare epiphany—
one that just solves everything.

MAN IN CITY
Andri Alexandrou
Photograph

BIRD GUN
Curtis Lee Fincher

As the two boys walked through the freshly fallen snow nothing made a sound except the crunch of their footsteps and the occasional gust of deep-winter wind that stung their uncovered noses and ears. They were walking up a steep hill and each step sunk down into the snow and this made the walking hard. Their legs were strong but each gulped for air that burnt the inside of their lungs with cold. Their noses were runny, too. Before they had left the house their mother had fastened their jackets tightly and warmly and in their right hand each boy carried an air rifle that they had received for Christmas four days past. They had been out before this, once, but they had found nothing to shoot except trees and rocks and flying birds that they had known they wouldn't hit. Their names were James and Andrew and they were brothers.

Later, James would become Jim and Andrew, Drew, but for now they were young and together and how each would always remember the other: plodding up a hill in calf deep snow, holding a lever action air rifle where the barrel met the faux wooden stock, and blowing little clouds of white breath out into the clear morning air. James was thirteen and Andrew was ten and they each wore puffy yellow jackets that swallowed them up and made them look younger than they were (they had both complained the winter past when their mother had brought them home after finding them on clearance). James had already started to outgrow his and when he straightened out his arms the Velcro cuffs rose up and over his bare wrists. Neither boy wore a hat or gloves or boots and each was the best friend the other had in the world, although only Andrew would admit it.

A flock of geese that should have already been further south flew out and across the cold, cloudless, cerulean sky. James stopped walking and turned to watch them and the echoing honks he heard reminded him that the woods were big and that the trees had no leaves: all of a sudden he felt lonely. But he wouldn't have called it that. He would have said he felt empty but heavy and that he wished he could move faster than his two tired legs could carry him.

Andrew raised his rifle towards the geese, aimed, and shot. He cranked back the lever, pushed it forward, aimed, and shot again. The lead pellets whizzed out of the barrel and hooked off to one side or the other after twenty yards or so.

"Don't do that," said James.

Andrew looked up the hill at his brother and the sandy blonde hair that slanted down across his forehead. He didn't remember him seeming so

tall. The sun glared off the snow and made him squint.

"Why?" he asked.

James watched the geese fly off in the direction of their home. They didn't need to flap very much to go very far, he thought, they must glide more than they truly fly. He wondered if his mother would be outside to see them when they passed. Or if his father would be awake to hear them, at least.

"They're too far and too high," said James. "You're not going to hit them anyways."

Andrew turned and looked back at the geese. They weren't that far.

"So what?" he said. "I can still try."

"It's a waste of our ammo."

Andrew thought about this and the tub of lead BB's they shared and kept under James' bed.

"Well," he said, "You did it the other day."

James started climbing the hill again. "They weren't as far then."

Andrew kicked at the snow in front of him. "Were too," he said, but his brother kept walking and showed no sign of having heard. Andrew started to follow behind. He looked down at his feet and took big lunging steps into the holes where the snow had already been packed down against the tread of his brother's sneakers. The rest of the hill didn't seem so bad. Neither boy spoke as they walked and Andrew wondered whether James ever wondered about it, too.

"James?" he asked.

"What?"

"Never mind," he said, "it was stupid."

Andrew wished James would ask what again but he didn't so they kept walking. Then they were at the top of the hill and James turned around to watch Andrew finish the climb and smiled at him. His brother was chubby and small and he knew then like he had always known that it was his job to protect him. Andrew saw James smiling at him and couldn't help but smile, too. They had a view from up here even if it was just of trees on all sides and they spun around and looked at it. James looked back to where they had come from but he couldn't see the geese anymore.

"When do we get to shoot something?" asked Andrew.

James turned back towards his brother. "When we find something, stupid."

"I would've had those geese if you'd let me," Andrew said. He couldn't hide the grin that came across his lips and

IF TAYLOR WERE A BUTTERFLY
Ashley Oswald
Photograph

showed the dimples on his round, wind-burned cheeks.

They started walking down the other side of the hill. James sat down and tried to slide down it but it didn't work and when he got up his brother was laughing: the butt of his jeans was dark and soaked.

Andrew pointed and giggled. "Stupid," he said.

James smiled to himself and wiped what snow he could off the seat of his pants. The backs of his legs were cold and wet. They walked on and the hill slowly leveled out and the trees started to grow closer together and soon they were back in thicker darker woods like the ones behind their house that they had set off in. They couldn't hear the wind anymore and this made their footsteps seem a lot louder, especially now that there were twigs and branches hidden beneath the snow. Sometimes they would step on one and it would crack like a gunshot and freeze both boys in their tracks and James would turn around and whisper:

"You see? That is why we never find anything."

They walked past heavy, massive oaks and bright green holly bushes with little red berries that stood out against the whiteness of the snow. Now and then they would pass a birch with the bark peeling off like a door opening and each boy knew this was good to start a fire with because it was what their father always sent them out to collect whenever they couldn't get newspaper or gasoline. He had taught them to break it in half to see if it was damp or dry in the middle and any good for catching a flame. They wanted him to teach them more—to teach them how to hunt ducks like he used to with the shotgun in the locked case in the cellar—but he couldn't because he couldn't see.

James could just barely remember when his father still had his sight and would leave the house and go to work and take him places, but he couldn't remember the accident at the factory or the days after it at all. Andrew couldn't remember his father being anything but blind and embarrassed, although sometimes, usually if they were alone and didn't know what to say to each other, his dad would ask him if he remembered a certain vacation and Andrew would always say yes even though the answer was always no. And once or twice a year, especially on their birthdays when their mother said he got to feeling sorry for himself, their father would tell them to go stand in front of a mirror and tell him exactly what they saw.

Each boy wondered if he would be the one to get the bird gun.

When the boys had been given the air rifles their father had joked that his shotgun would go to the first of them to come home with something big enough for dinner. He told them he had a Red Ryder model just like theirs when he was a boy. They never break, he had said, but then again, they never hit anything either.

They walked on further through the woods and still saw nothing except at one point they found some rabbit tracks that they followed until they seemed to disappear. They came to the creek where they used to try to catch minnows with their hands when they were little and found a narrow part where they could cross. Here the water ran deep and fast and the surface was

not frozen. James jumped across first and stood ready to help his brother but Andrew took a running start and got across just fine.

They had now gone further than they had the other day. Neither was particularly hungry but they didn't feel like walking anymore so they decided to stop for lunch. They found a tree that the storm must have felled and sat down on it next to each other, facing opposite directions. Each boy reached inside their jacket and pulled out a strawberry jelly sandwich in a plastic bag that their mother had made for them. James took the sandwich out of the bag and laid it on his knee. He scooped a handful of snow off the log, put the snow in the bag, and twisted and tied it shut. He put it back inside his jacket where the sandwich had been and told his brother to do the same.

"I know," said Andrew. He bent down, picked up a clump of snow between his feet, and put the snow in the bag. He twisted and tied the bag shut and put it in his coat pocket like his brother had. It felt cold through his shirt and he hoped it wouldn't leak as it melted.

They sat there eating in silence. The bread stuck to the roofs of their mouths and the jelly got on their hands and made them sticky. Andrew reached inside his jacket to check on his water, but it was still snow. The woods were as quiet and as still as anything can be.

"James?" he said.

"What?"

Andrew picked up some more snow and rubbed it between his palms to try and get the jelly off. He dried his hands on the front of his jeans and blew into them.

"Do you think Dad ever wishes he had died instead?"

James thought about it and finished the bite of sandwich in his mouth-- it was dry and chewy and hard to get down. "I don't know," he said. "Maybe."

Andrew dug his feet down into the snow and looked up at the way the sunlight came down through the crook of a tree. "But us, we're good, right?"

James was silent for a long time. "Yeah Andrew, we are."

"So what does he want?"

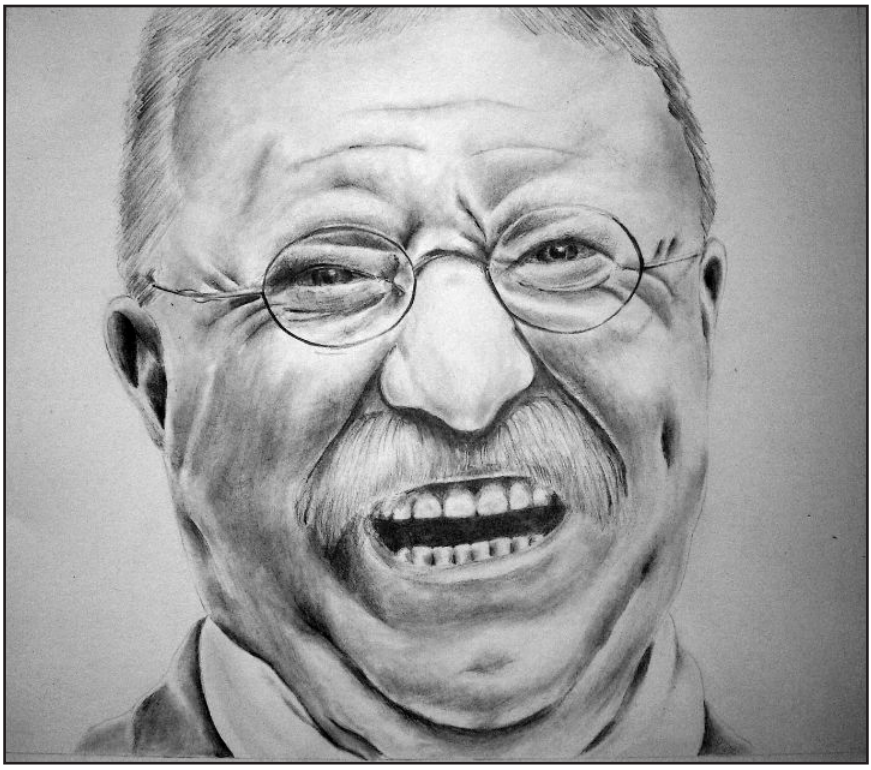
"He wants to see."

"I would too," said Andrew, still staring at his feet. "It has to be hard not to see."

"Yeah," said James, "it has to be hard," and he looked at his feet, too. Neither would ever forget that moment as long as they would live—there, sitting next to each other in the still woods, they each felt entirely alone. They sat there like that and the shadows from the trees made the white snow seem grey where it didn't sparkle in the sunlight. The wind sighed and whistled on the air and some snow shifted and fell from a tree. Andrew licked the jelly off his fingers and wiped them on his pants again.

Then he saw the turkey.

It was walking into a small clearing no more than twenty yards in front of him, strutting one foot forward at a time and bobbing its blue head



A HISTORIC LAUGH
Katherine Wehlage
Graphite on paper

and pink gizzard up and down. James was trying to find a cloud in the sky when he heard the lever action on his brother's rifle crank forward, click as the spring locked itself into place, and crank back.

"Shh," whispered Andrew.

He rose slowly from the log into a half crouch and brought the gun up to his right eye. The turkey had stopped walking and was looking towards the creek the boys had come from. Andrew took another cautious step forward: he could hear the water running and the snow crunch beneath his feet but still the bird didn't scare. James, watching his brother crouch and move, thought he didn't look so young anymore.

"Andrew," James whispered.

Andrew moved his left hand up and down, palm facing the ground, telling his brother to stay put.

"Andrew," James whispered. He had twisted himself around on the log to watch what was going to happen.

Andrew took another step towards the bird and then another. He crouched low but his legs and arms were steady. He was no more than ten or twelve yards away now. The bird looked big and dark and ugly. He sighted for its chest.

James, behind him, raised his rifle, cranked the lever forward and back, and aimed for the middle of his brother's back; Andrew didn't hear a thing. The rifle shook in James' hands: he didn't want the bird to die. The bird wasn't doing anything to anybody. The bird was just there and what would it be like to be it and feel the cold of the snow and see the light of the day and know what it was to be alive and then, all of a sudden, to have everything go black?

Andrew fired.

The bird leapt up, shedding a couple feathers, and sprinted off through the trees faster than either boy knew a turkey could run. Andrew whooped in excitement when he ran forward and saw the thick heavy globs of crimson red blood that followed after the bird and stained the clean white snow. It was these that Andrew followed as he smiled and jogged after his prey. James, still sitting, watched them go. He lowered his rifle, stood, and walked after his brother.

Andrew found the turkey no more than a hundred yards from where he had shot it. The bird lay on its side, a huddled black ball, breathing deep and slow. There was a red fleshy hole in its neck: he had missed his mark. Only later would he understand that the shot was a miracle—a BB would have never pierced the bird's chest. A glassy eye stared up at him emptily. He wondered if the animal hated him but it seemed indifferent. He wondered if it was thinking anything at all. It didn't look like it was hurting or even unhappy.

When James got there his brother was crying. His face was twisted up and he wiped at his runny nose with the back of his coat sleeve.

"I can't do it, James. I can't do it."

James walked forward and looked at the bird. He saw its ugly scaly skin and its oily feathers and its upturned eye watching to see what he would do. He saw the inflamed hole in the bird's neck no bigger than his pinky nail and he saw the bloody snow beneath. He crouched down and touched its wing and felt his hand rise and fall with its slow, calm breathing. He thought he could feel the heartbeat, too.

He turned to his brother.

"Idiot," he said.

Then he stood up, stepped onto the bird's neck, pressed the barrel of his gun into the fleshy part of the head right below the open eye, and fired. He took a deep breath, picked up the body by both legs, and handed it to his brother. Neither boy spoke on the way home.

RAPPELLING
Murphy Byrne
Photograph

SOLDIER'S GHOST

Alexandra Englis

You came back in that uniform,
the one I once washed blood from.
The Newspaper called you a patriot,
a local war hero.

I only see hollow eyes,
bones on a vanquished body
I do not recognize. While

our children watch you
through slits of a staircase,
wonder when their father
will come home.

I see you disappearing
into your crimson tales,
childhood fantasies of war
contaminated by the women and children
you laid to waste,
your own venomous vilification.

In the dark corridors of night,
you mutter of flag-burnings and riots.
You speak of genocide, homicide, recycling hate.

Sweat engulfs your sleeping body
as you thrash about, feeling bullets
nearly puncturing your skin; hearing comrades
calling out for their mothers.

When morning breaks, you hide from sunlight.
Thick silence spreads around what is left of you.

I tell you, there is a way
out of drowning.

You say, mistakes all look the same in ashes.

THANKSGIVING PIES

Catherine Gans

We'd been on the phone for forty minutes when
I asked you to Thanksgiving with my family.
"Like, maybe just for pie?"
I clenched the phone between in my hands
And scrunched my toes tight together
Until I heard you say, "Yeah, sounds cool."
A month later I couldn't decide how cool
I should play it when
You arrive or if I should put our turkey nametags together
On the table, in between the miniature gourds my family
Picked upstate—"with our own bare hands"—
I know dad will joke later over pie.
In the kitchen, mom and I are in pie
Hysterics, remembering how when we set the pie out to cool
Last Thanksgiving, my uncles' unwatched hands
Picked the maple-glazed top crust off so that when
It came time for dessert I had to duck out to the local family
Deli where the cereal boxes are so old they stick together.
When I came back with donuts we could barely keep it together,
All of us in fits over Hostess knock-offs and topless pie.
This year I nearly forget the pie entirely. I am too busy hiding family
Albums, evidence of everything I ever thought was cool,
Alternating braces colors, temporary tattoos. I am folding napkins when
You arrive, a plate of pilgrim cookies in your hands.
I move to hug you, but my hands
Are loaded with my napkin origami. Together
We blush. Setting your cookies down you smile gallantly when
My dad crushes your handshake in his and says a pie
Might've been more festive, champ. In the kitchen, dishes cool
And we line up one by one for plates, you and my family.
Seated, we brush ankles under the banquet table as my family
Says grace. I feel how one of your hands
Sweats in mine, and I let go to pass the sweet potatoes, topped with cool-
Whip. A nosy aunt elbows me, asking how long we'd been together.
I estimate three months, as if I didn't know down to the day when
You kissed me halfway up your attic stairs, how you tasted faintly of apple pie.

DREAM SONG
AFTER BERRYMAN

Thomas McLaughlin

Life is the flight of lonely to alone,
or something close to that, said Plotinus.
A few minutes to make
a man and fewer to undo. And you,
John—I can call you John, right?—you knew
too well, indeed, we need

defibrillators for the soul, some shock,
to stab into the stubborn, sluggish self,
to carve some niche in air,
however meager, step into a self-
portrait, or hide within the buoyant dark.
And to the hilt did I

believe in literature's life support.
I've read that James's shorter tales
kept you from wading out
into immortality's exitlude.
That is, until the Avenue; the blank
check that identified you.

WAKEFULNESS
Rachel Lundberg

I lay belly-down over the back of the couch, eyes straining upward to see the TV, waiting for someone to die. Does that sound morbid? Ever since I was a kid, I've had trouble sleeping. Dad used to say maybe my insomnia was caused by depression, but I didn't know I was depressed. Maybe I am, and no one told me. Whatever the reason, it doesn't change anything. Every night I sit half-alive and stare emptily at the infomercials and the low-budget action films until I get the call and I can go to work. Most nights the call never comes.

I've tried everything. All the tips and tricks, all the exercises and special foods, and a whole pharmacy's worth of drugs. I've taken all kinds of melatonin and antihistamines, even opioids, for God's sake. There were a couple types of barbiturates and benzodiazepines I tried that helped for a while, but within a couple weeks I'd build up a tolerance. And worse, they're addictive. I can cope with the insomnia, but diazepam withdrawals were a pain I just couldn't take.

It's surprising—frustrating, really—how much time there is in a day. I have two-thirds of it to myself, and I can't waste any on sleep, so I have time for a lot of things that most people don't. I put together puzzles picture-side down; I brush my teeth until the sink is full of blood and toothpaste; I cook elaborate meals that go uneaten; I clean dust from the glass coverings of ceiling lights. And still I'm just waiting for the call.

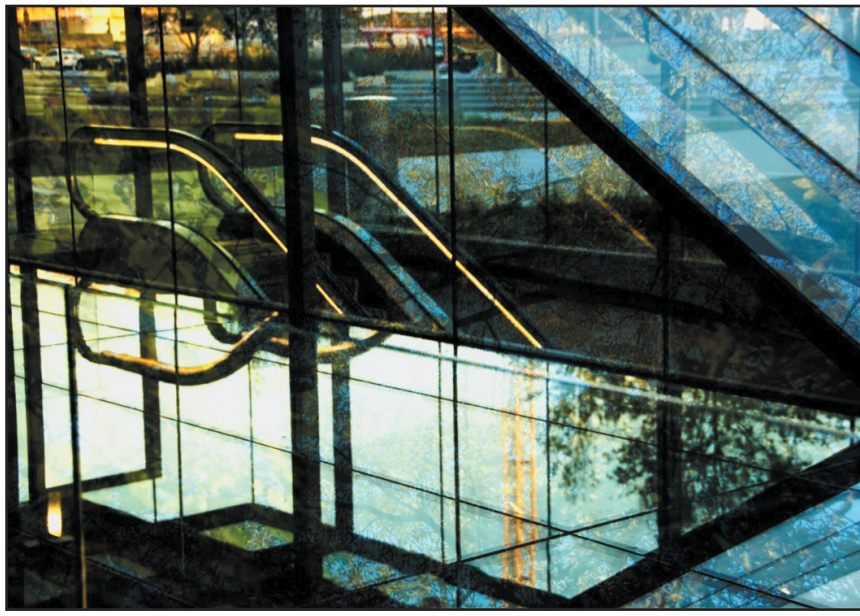
I was watching an auction of Victorian furniture, wondering if it was too soon to change the batteries on the smoke detector again. When the phone finally rang, it took me several seconds to register it. It wasn't coming from the TV, so what could that sound be? My hand reached out and grabbed the phone without my mind telling it to.

"Hey, Jonathan. Still awake?" It was Dinah; I could tell immediately by her voice. I like all the dispatch girls, but I like Dinah the best.

I checked my watch—2:48. "Morning, Dinah. What do you have for me?"

It was the usual: I was crouched next to the body inside a circle of policemen, drowning in the flood of so many car headlights, shivering in the inadequate jacket that I refused to replace. I took a good look, took my time; it was still six hours until the start of my daytime work. "Blunt force trauma," I said finally. "Lacerations inflicted post-mortem."

On my right, Detective Marcus nodded. The last one of Marcus' I looked at was two weeks ago, I think. When you're awake all the time, it's like you're living twice as many days as everyone else. It becomes difficult to mark



ESCALATOR
Lauren Jopling
Digital image

time by their scale. Two weeks ago, it was hot, ninety at least. I got the call at noon, and that thing had been cooking in the sun all morning. Marcus took an hour to show up. I imagined I could actually see it decomposing. I could certainly smell it. It was ten times worse on the inside, of course. All that week, I smelled it every time I closed my eyes. Maybe it's just in my head, but the smell of a cadaver, it seeps into my skin. It's a smell distinctly human, but intermingled with the scent of the natural world, an earthy musk of the green wild reclaiming its own. The smell could even be comforting, under the right circumstances.

"She was pregnant," I said, giving the dead thing before me a gender. Marcus raised an eyebrow. "Ten weeks, maybe," I added in response, knowing that wasn't what he was asking. If he would stop playing the idiot for a minute, he'd notice that the slight bulge of her abdomen wasn't excess fat, but I gave this detail up for lost. I pointed to her breasts, at the wide nipples and darkened web of veins, annoyed with his ignorance. Everything about Marcus annoys me.

Marcus laughed. "Pervert." I wish I could say I have no idea how he ever made detective, but despite being a crass, big-mouthed lout, he's actually pretty good at his job. I had no doubt he'd crack this one in a month or two. That's what he does. He's one of the useful few people in the world who fix problems. Me, all I do is identify them.

I thought about that as we stood awkwardly for a few minutes, feeling like it was just us there, even though there were officers working the crime scene all around us.

When Marcus finally spoke, it didn't seem odd that he suddenly changed the subject without preface. "Thanks," he said. "Your opinion's always a big help."

"Yeah, sure." He had to be bullshitting me. Marcus doesn't give out compliments.

"What's eating you?" He looked kind of disappointed.

I wasn't going to say anything, at first. But I knew if I didn't I'd be dooming myself to the same passive-aggressive conversations, over and over. "You don't respect me, Marcus," I accused, my voice sounding harsher than I'd heard it in a while. "And I can understand that. You're the big man, breaking the case, and I'm just here to cut open the corpses for you. But when you come in here and make it harder for me to do my fucking job—"

He cut me off with another of his sharp laughs. "Wow, so you can get angry." Typical Marcus. I try to be straight with him, and he just blows me off. I waited for a better answer, even though I didn't want to hear him talk.

"You know I would never intentionally interfere with—"

"And the smudges of blood on her arms, from where you clearly moved them? What do you call that?"

He was quiet then, and so serious. This was Marcus, I thought, the real person. He watched his shoes scuffing pebbles on the asphalt. "Leave me alone, Jon," he said. "I'm tired."

I really didn't want to take out that baby. I knew what would happen

if I did. But Marcus thought the girl might have been raped, so all that stuff had to come out to make sure. The first waves of nausea hit me before I'd even finished cutting the uterus loose. By the time I had the thing out and had started slicing it open, I was fit to throw up. I went and stood over by the jars of formalin to try to calm the roiling in my stomach, but of course it didn't work. It isn't the smell that bothers me. It's something psychological, it must be. Something about the feeling that this is not the way a child is supposed to come into the world.

I am not a squeamish person; this is my job, and I wouldn't have taken it if I didn't think I could handle it. I've been pulling open ribcages and sawing through skulls for a living for almost five years now, but something about removing a fetus from the womb makes me nauseous almost to the point of passing out. I took a deep breath and went back to the table to finish what I'd started. I slid the fragile, pink alien out from the incision I'd made, ignoring the throbbing in my head. Once it was done, the sick feeling abated a little. The tiny creature, less than two inches long, rested easily in the palm of my hand. I wondered whether it was a boy or girl, what colors its eyes would be, that sort of thing. Then I stopped thinking anything, which is easy to do when you haven't slept more than a few hours in the past week.

It's not that there was nothing on my mind; I had a lot to think about, actually. My sister, Johanna, called me the other day. She said she and Tom were pregnant. I laughed at her expression. She's the artist in the family, and the way she talks has always been funny to me. I told her to remember to eat right, not to overtax herself, and to always wash her hands. She said she knows all that, and stop worrying, Jon. Our mother's first child—our brother Adam—was stillborn. It's really hard not to worry. I know Johanna's thinking about it too, but she's never been the type to talk about her feelings, not even to me. She said I could be there when it happened, when she had the baby. I said that would be nice. It would be; it would be nice to see something just starting life, for once.

I kept watching, thoughtlessly, as the churning of my innards gradually slowed. I have no idea how long I would have stood motionless if the door hadn't swung suddenly open at that moment. I was startled out of my trance, my hand jerked, and I spun around to find James, a tall twenty-something guy who works as my diener of sorts. Forgetting James almost immediately, I checked my hand. It was empty. My eyes swept to the floor, where the unfortunate being had noiselessly fallen.

In the second or so during which all this played out, James had started to speak. "Doctor Giltner, I was wondering if you…" He trailed off as he noticed me staring blankly at the floor and at the battered fetus curled up on it. "I'll come back later."

I'm not a nervous sort of person. Being nervous or excited or angry requires more energy than I generally have. But during the interminable days, I felt constantly on edge, and I couldn't figure out why. I worried about everything: my house, my health, and especially about Johanna. Seeing the pregnant murder victim made me think of her, and about her baby, who would be the first one in our small family. I couldn't help it. With our parents gone, I couldn't bear to think of not having Johanna, or of her suffering the loss of a child. I found myself calling her twice in one day just to ask if she was all right. Stupid. She doesn't like it when she has to worry about me.

The more I fretted, the less I slept. Amazing as it seemed, my insomnia was getting worse. Sleeplessness isn't the same all the time; there are ups and downs. But this was more than just a down. This was the worst it had ever been, and I was afraid it would end badly. I went back to all the drugs that I'd tried and found ineffective before, at least the ones I could get over the counter. I took a little more than the recommended dosage, mixed things that maybe I shouldn't have mixed. I was constantly taking so many antihistamines that my mouth was nothing but a gaping, numb cavern in the middle of my head.

There were long periods where nothing seemed to move at all. I was living the same moment of a recurring dream, over and over. Standing, holding scalpel, waiting to cut. Feet on the floor, air still in my lungs, staring at the incision point and wishing I could just put the tool to the skin. There was so much not cutting, and not thinking, and not doing that I could swear I had entered some kind of limbo that was exactly like my life but played out over several eons.

As time moved in a way unclear to me, everything got cloudier. Seeing, thinking, speaking, it was all like looking up from far underwater, constantly struggling toward the light but never breaking the surface. I started forgetting things, missing appointments, not knowing what I was doing for hours at a time. Marcus plagued me relentlessly for the backlog of autopsy reports I owed him, but they'd fall from my mind as soon as he left the room. My mistakes were also putting pressure on James, but he didn't say anything. He's a very passive person, the type to let things work themselves out. Unfortunately, that's not what they were doing.

On the fifth straight waking day, as near as I can mark it, I remember jolting back to awareness when a hand grabbed my arm.

"What are you doing?" James demanded.

I thought about that one for a second. A trick question, maybe? I looked down and found myself wrist-deep in a cadaver, my left hand cupped beneath the man's heart and lungs, my right beneath the stomach and intestines. "I'm taking out…I guess, uh…"

"This is the stabbing victim we talked about yesterday, remember? The organs have to be removed en bloc, not en masse." He studied my face, looking for a sign of recognition.

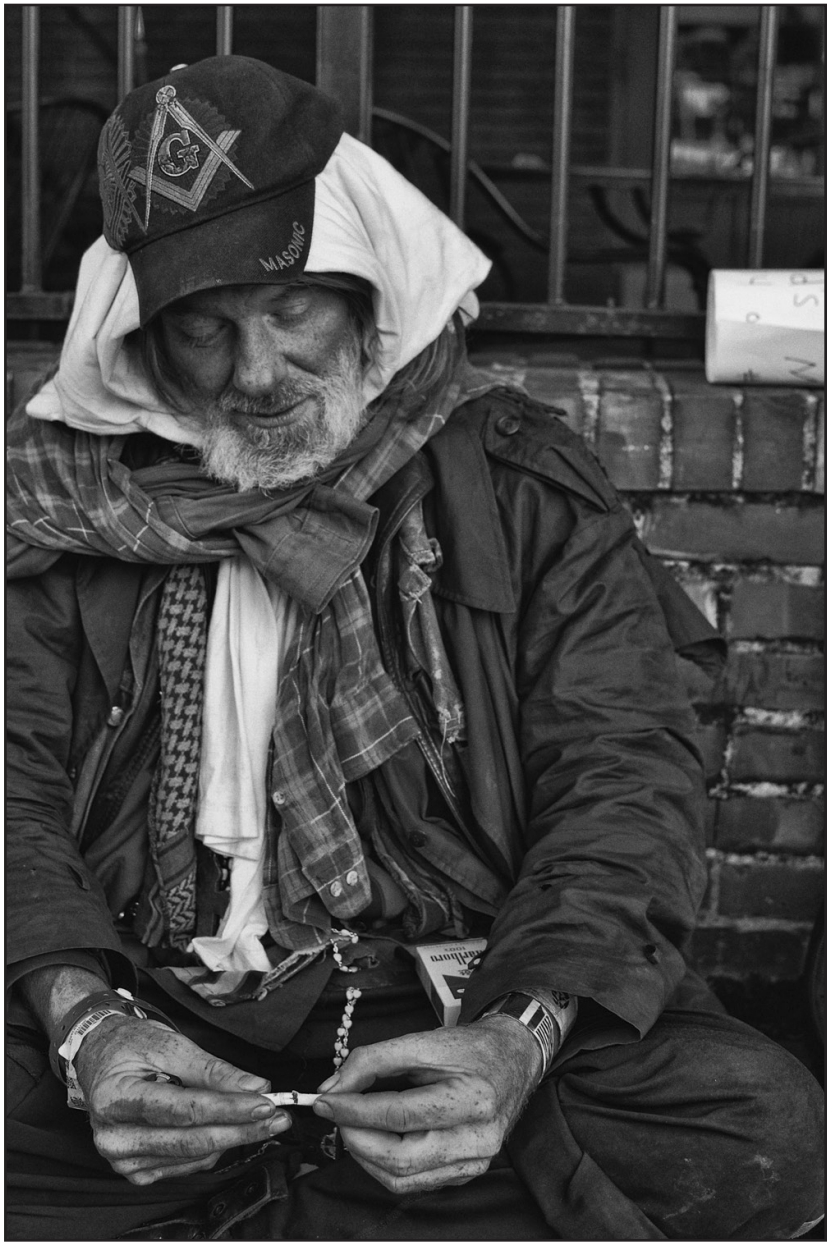
I wished I could remember the conversation from the previous day. At the moment, I was having trouble remembering who this person was who had just barged into my autopsy room. It was on the tip of my tongue, "J" some-

thing…Jake? He started to say something else, but all I could hear was that thick wheezing sound that presses on your ears when everything is completely silent.

I didn't want to sleep anymore; I had no concept of what sleep even was. I was in a familiar place, but when it was, I couldn't guess. There were people in the room, just single frames of movement at the edges of the scratchy projection that I called my eyesight. There was no point in turning around. I knew that, by definition, people cease to exist as soon as you look at them. There were several sharp flashes of light, and God, I was so thirsty. I took one of the glasses from by the sink and filled it from the tap. The gurgling liquid trickled into the crevices of my mouth and rolled over my tongue like oil. Even in my delirium, I knew that taste, a bitter pang that I had never wanted to taste again. The glass—jar, as it really was—had been half full with formalin.

I spat out the vile liquid, starting to panic a little, and stumbled back against the counter. Images bubbled up in my brain, so hazy and surreal that I couldn't tell memory from invention. I smelled that corpse—a woman, I just remembered—lying in the sun, and I yelled at Marcus for letting her wait there so long. Johanna called, and I said her baby was a boy, I knew for sure. I was eating so many bananas that I thought I would die, and I threw the peels down in the minefield of dark orange bottles. A quiz show came on, and I won a million dollars, because I'd seen that episode twice before. A powerful heart broke from a jar and beat me a message. It said, "DASH DOT DASH DOT DOT DASH…" I think it said, "CALM DOWN."

I had to call Johanna, to tell her that she would have a son, and I would have a nephew. But I decided it could wait. It could all wait. I climbed onto the earthy-smelling steel table, where no living human had ever lain, and went to sleep.



MARLBORO MENTHOLS
Travis Cohen
Photograph

NIGHT ON THE ROOF OF A BUILDING

Cayla Mackey

and the sky was this periwinkle gradient:
of bad cheap wine
of sticky black dresses
of bulk-bought finger foods from neon packages

Snorkeled apartments below hummed exhalations under orange flood lighting
and phantom gold ribbons circled the rising stench
of sewer
steaming from the street.

Tippy-toed I tilted my plastic goblet
watched gasolinewater prisms melt from the rim
float lava lamp style down
dissipated
to the concrete.

From my perch I watched a freight train:
inspected it for acetoned graffiti
whistled an echo across the stacked tracks
blinked synchronized aerial lights on winged tips of skyscrapers
squeezed lilac and marigold from their melted of windows splashed the scene
with oil pastel dust inhaled the fresh filth

then nothing

NAGASAKI

Lily Bienstock

Their fine silk left fine boxes
Woven across their sharp shoulder bones, and
The patterns of that seared skin looked almost legible,
Like ink,
Alien to our blue and green eyes.

Seventythousand.
You can say it in one breath,
And then it's gone.

SPRING, 2011
Yeon-Sil Yi
Oil on canvas

INTIMATE PROPERTY

Anjali Sood

I have this theory I'll never get over my dad—never quit typing his face onto blank pages, never quit grasping for adjectives that make him this or that or fatherly. My name is Frank and his name is Frank, and my nose is long and his nose is long. We're tied together by an intangible damnation that Somebody served us for the crime of sharing DNA and forenames.

On Mother's Day the year I turned nine, Dad propped a little television atop the microwave. With the dry kiss he pecked upon her forehead and a gentle shove towards the kitchen, he gave Mama tacit permission to lust over handsomer, happier men than the one she'd married. The living room big-screen and its remote were Dad's intimate property; now Mama, too, possessed a private dominion. She could press her fingers, still drenched in the soapy muck of dish water, to the television's plump buttons and punch until some smiling, square-jawed face peered back at her. Then she'd continue lathering plates or dicing onions—content in her loneliness as long as she had proof that some beautiful man somewhere was wooing some woman with high cheekbones and a slim waist like Mama's own. I think the most affectionate act Dad ever performed for his big-eyed bride—beyond the pleasantries that led to my conception—was the purchase of that TV.

The summer I was fifteen, Dad flew away to Chicago with a leggy twenty-six year-old. I had a girlfriend of my own. She had wavy hair and played the piano badly. We both thought she was unusually talented; we used to day dream aloud about how she'd go to Julliard on scholarship, and come back to marry me once I was a famous author. While she picked at the piano, I'd lift handfuls of her long hair and rub it against my cheeks. In August, her Daddy got a new job. Grace moved two states away, and I was heartsick for the entirety of September and October.

Dad didn't come to visit until Christmas. My parents and I sat around the dinner table eating turkey and mashed potatoes and pretending to be a family. Only Mama was happy. She had fallen out of love with Dad too many years ago to mind his girlfriends. Whenever he tried to touch her hand, she writhed out of his reach politely, nicely, and shut herself in the kitchen. From the dining room, I could just barely make out the low moan of the television

Dad glared at the kitchen door. It was cherry wood and it seemed to gleam back at him.

"She's checking on the pie," I said. I had grown accustomed to making excuses for Mama, just as lying about Dad was now mundane. I told Ms.

Carter, my English teacher, that he was managing a three-story furniture store and mailing Mama big checks every Friday. I told Principal Eakins that he was watching my sick grandmother. I figured our town would be exchanging rumors over their coffee for months—no one would ever deduce that my father was living in his dead mother's apartment, bringing girls back on weekend nights like a sneaky teen.

Dad was still glaring towards the kitchen when he pumped his fist in the air, shouting, "To hell with your mother's pies. I'm goin' to take you up north, Frank—give you a taste of pizza pie. Elaine, you hear that?"

Mama cracked the door with her bare foot. Her curls—frizzy from the heat of the oven—slipped out from behind the door frame. She said, "Hush, boys. Jimmy Stewart's telling Mary he's going to lasso the moon for her."

So Dad and I spent New Year's Eve in Chicago, with Caitlin. I shook her hand brusquely—refusing to lift my eyes above her chin both because I was a boy and her neckline was succumbing to gravity, and because I was in Honors English that school year. I wanted for her to feel the movement of my eyes as I drew a scarlet letter in the bronze space of her chest.

"Frank, your Dad tells me you're quite the Shakespeare."

I forced myself to stare up at her. She had a plain face, and I forgave her a little for her hemline. "I sent a couple poems to Reader's Digest. I'm not countin' on getting a response."

She smiled and said, "I admire writers. They can really look a person inside out, can't they? Get at what's really happening?"

I thought, at first, that she was trying to manipulate me into friendship. I pulled my gaze away from her eyes, glared at the tightness of her dress over her hips, and called her a whore inside my head.

"Frank," she said, "your Daddy loves you." Then she walked up the stairs without looking back—her calves tightening with each step.

Looking back, I see leaps in my logic. Perhaps she just liked to make men stare, perhaps it was the only dress she owned that didn't dry-cleaning, perhaps she was dressing the part of a mistress to make some sort of rebel statement. But right then, I summoned all my powers of literary analysis to determine that she'd worn the slinky red dress for me. She had crucified her hips, her legs, and her cleavage to a fifteen-year-old male because she wanted him to excuse his father's gluttony. She wanted me to forgive him. And so I decided—as I carried my luggage upstairs and tucked myself into bed—that my father was a pervert. He enjoyed snapping little hearts.

I gazed at the bedroom television for hours, with Dick Clark and all of New York for company. Sometimes I'd turn the volume up high—to drown out the sound of Dad and Caitlin whispering on the living room couch. Just once, I threw off my covers and lowered my lanky body from the bed to the floor. I pushed my ear to the crack between the door and the carpet. I listened for a half-minute or so before feeling nauseous. Then I aimed the remote at the television and punched my finger against the volume button until I was surrounded with drunken New Yorkers and my stomach felt alright again.

OUT SOUTH

Nathaniel Marshall

No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.
-Robert Frost "Out, Out"

In bruised Chicago, kids are beaten, cracked
open like eggs. Derrion couldn't fight,
broke his brow on brothers' bull-
ish courage.
Beat him blue with wood. The cameras catch
us killing, capture danger to broadcast
on Broadways. We Roseland stars, made players
for the press. Apes caged from first grade until.
Packed into class and passed like kidney stones.

I pray each day for peace, hope news won't gush
from Mother's mouth like blood of good school boys.

At best, no change at home makes me happy.
That's because Ragtown crime does not stop,
it makes waves most killings don't in the news.
Each kid that's killed, one less mouth to free
lunch,
a fiscal coup. Welcome to where I'm from.

BEYOND THE FENCES
Travis Cohen
Photograph

DO YOU THINK T HAT DEATH
COULD POSSIBLY BE A BOAT
Allyson Patterson
Gouache on watercoler paper

THE ARCHITECT
FOR ANTONI GAUDÍ

Justin Barisich

I

Our man kept one eye to the heavens
When he drew his first designs,
Dripped sand castle spires lined with sevens,
Lucky clouds embrace the holy crime.

Our man kept one knee to the earth
When he poured his first model casts.
While nautilus shell and oak fern unfurl their delicate worth,
Wind-blown sea-hunters walk waves abandoning their masts.

As a child, his mother admonished him for the incessant dirt under his finger nails.
As a student, his headmaster detained him for leaves pressed between New Testament pages.
As an artist, his contemporaries peacocked their heads and remained nevertheless baffled.
As an architect, his Güell's nationalism drew both blueprints and his wages.
As a believer, he said nothing for the public gusts that filled his silken sails.

His magnum opus would have been passion
Encapsulating all four façades in ashen swash.
Symbolism would have seeped out of every material pore.

Hand rivets driven through the mouths of Babel
Have proved colluding tribes too cavalier in their heist,
So marble horsemen guard the boulder and gamble
Over cloth besmeared with splattered blood.
Prayers and invocations line the front doors
In iron etchings spanning every locution of man.

Our man kept one palm to cold steel
When he dreamt the permanence of Christ.

II

Your work precedes and outlives you.
The scaffolding
Itself a feat of art and engineering
Begun over a century and a quarter ago.
Your body
Another piling
Piercing the souls of sinners
So that the righteous may stand taller, strong.

Todo en el nombre de la Sagrada Familia.

III

Within these walls, the sunlight spirals upward and
Shoots through the canopy of granite rainforest columns.
The suspended savior is paratrooping
Into the lavish foyer amidst a flock of man-sized doves,
Proving to both the forgiven and forgotten
How their figment truly lives and loves.

This half-divine son becomes Beowulf
Entering Hrothgar's Hall of Great Danes
Seeking to expel the spawn of Cain.
And the mead flowed heavily that eve
(blessèd water into wine, blessèd wine into blood)
For Grendel scurried back home in need of one less sleeve.

Yet even God's Architect couldn't fashion this genuflection,
And even Güell's patronage couldn't offer him consolation.
Threadbare summer coat paired with white, grizzly mane
Had him mistaken for a beggar in his golden days,
And nobody came to his aid for hours
When the tram knocked his name-brand brain.

They had forgotten his nautilus studies
His *l'amor a Catalunya*
His eye to the heavens
His knee to the earth.

But neither the lost nor the lay would ever be able to overlook
His sand castle spires that kiss the clouds and draw
Millions, devout or otherwise, to the Barcelonan skyline
Just to be dwarfed willingly by the enormity of his vision.

Our man kept one palm to cold steel
When he dreamt the permanence of Christ.
With the church as his only dowry,
May they make children of his memory.

BIRTH OF A SPIRITUALIST

Thomas McLaughlin

The slow parting of brush and heft of warm
air as we pass. Doggedess of a breeze
that complicates all movement toward comfort.
Biking with my father after long rain,
moisture the shape of shade steeps like tea leaves
into the edged asphalt. Reminded, I
conjure former times spent; before they fleet.
My father, my brother and I had gone
to hike the Highlands, where shoulders brushed
against wet saplings, snugly wattled were
replies from scragged cairn as well as bouldered
granges that our gleg feet greeted and that we
could only eavesdrop on, dismissed alone
as common—and the thistles did confirm.
Then sky began to mist and spate and groan.
A teary burden held but wavered too
between the glens, too trodden to presume
to feign some small burlesque of tone and tongue,
it did portend to drench. And so, infused
with impulse, driven by the tawes within
the rain's own raw right hand, we raced the way
back to the rented car. Unheeded in
our laughter trailing on, among the wake
of tender feet flailing and the absence
of each gait hewing a holyrood in rain,
we ran, as if we were fey folk hightailing
toward a homecoming. We placed all faiths
in deer paths and shirred-timber trails, abreast
with this particular edge of the earth,
an honesty no sophistry could ever
begin to swallow. Instances, rife with mirth,
allow the world, for me, the time to seem
sufficiently humbled, enough to clutch.
And now, my father tells me that I can
pass if it'd please me to, that I can cut
ahead, as if his pace were too slow for
my taste. No: it's a father's place to be
in front, mine to follow—same now as then,
the numen twine and simmer, now lit
again, and at long last, unraveled selvage.

STAR IN THE SAND
Kyle Broach
Photograph

GIRL WITH A SCARF
Lauren Jopling
Oil on canvas

THE SUN RISEN
Alexandra Rigl

Foolhardy soul to chide me so
You err with airs;
Thy lascivious virtue ne'er compares
To the primrose gold that tints my tableaus

Cloudy clod thou baffle me—
Egoistically likening thy mind
To the rank of a Heavn'ly deity:
Hast thee been cast adrift by some trade wind?
For thou underestimate my love's power;
On it your praise and respect should shower

In truth, thou lauded my keen, brawny beams
Art thou jealous?
For thy contentions seem overzealous—
Thy bed: the "Copernican centre?" So extreme!
Mine eyes are not blinded, leverage not curbed
Even as I wane, my brill'iance persists—
My paint palette shifts, but I'm no more perturbed
(Lackluster you claim; legacy mere gist?
I smile on you ruefully, vile withal).
A mother of pearl sheen coats the Great Falls

I know what I am and what I am not
And the nothing that thou art!
If states and princes ye be, royalty I'm part;
Prepared to conquer any Gordian knot.
Indeed I warm the world: amber and fierce
My gaze accentuates your slumber grand
Mountaintops and canopies I too pierce
And I take pride in the distance spanned
Thy sphere is my own and thou art but part
Of my domain in which dwells thy servile heart

LA VIE EN ROSE
Liz Furlow

Jimmy spots a son-of-a-bitch in an alleyway and bangs on the sideboard, yelling at me to turn around. The sun is already low, a spot of yellow melting into the horizon, but the ants are in me again. I can feel them. I try to keep driving, to ride them out, but Jimmy yells at me again and I can feel the tick, down in the thick of my guts, that means tonight won't be the night to quit. My hands shake on the steering wheel and I park the car at the corner.

Jimmy strolls up the alley, casual and cool with his hands in his pockets, all the way up to this big guy who's slouched over on the curb. The asshole's got his shorts pulled down to his knees and his wide, naked butt stretches across the sidewalk and joins with his rolling thighs in bulging folds of fat.

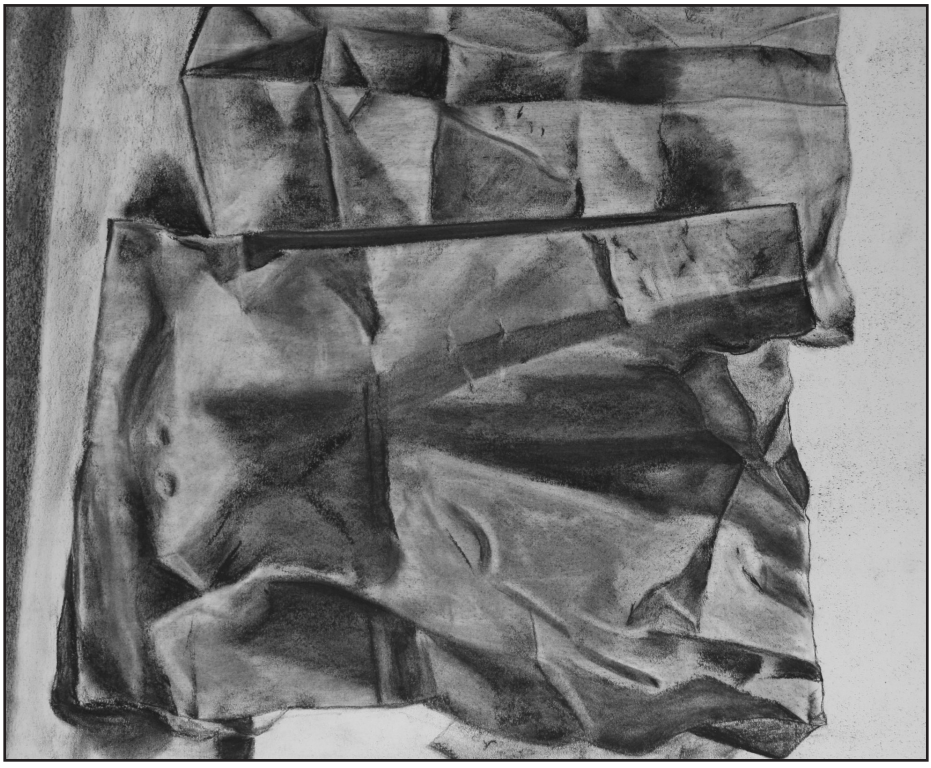
"What's up, motherfucker?" Jimmy squats on his muscular legs and his flannel shirt rides up high, exposing the pale base of his back. He leans his head from side to side, grinning at the fatso while I take in the guy's bulbous, hanging jowls and his unfocused, wandering eyes. The chubs keeps talking to himself, or singing under his breath, and then he looks up and only just begins to register that we're there, and that he doesn't know us. He looks confused. Jimmy stands up, casting a long look at the limp, loose flesh dangling between the son-of-a-bitch's legs. Then he does his customary officer swagger, adjusts his imaginary silver-star badge, and turns to me, drawing a conclusion. "Drugged up," Jimmy says. "The piece of shit."

I check my watch and Jimmy looks back down at the son-of-a-bitch. This is the fifth or sixth guy like him we've found this summer. We'll be just driving along, listening to music and taking in the light—minding our business, as the saying goes. Then Jimmy will spot one, crouching behind a dumpster or hanging out on a corner milling around. You can tell by the way the eyes move, the way they're dressed. You find a guy with crazy eyes and you've got a schizo or a crackhead. You find a guy with beat up, dusty clothes and skin like warped leather—that's a bum. A lot of the time it's all the same thing.

Druggies, bums, crazies—"Turn the fuck around!" Jimmy says in the car, and I do.

Jimmy's the one that started this. He did it after his car got stolen, even though it was parked right outside his house—right in his driveway. Sometimes you just have enough of it, I guess, and that's what happened. Because the thing about this city is that it's not a pretty place. People come and visit for parades and booze and shiny beads. But they leave again, and we stay, living in this place, day-in-day-out.

Then we've got Jimmy, who says he's found his calling. He's got a nose



PAPER BAGS
Lexsa Campbell
Charcoal on paper

for these guys. Like those hogs that search for truffles in the mud, Jimmy hunts out son-of-a-bitches in New Orleans.

Now the alley is empty except for the three of us and all I want to do is go home. Katy's there, she's waiting for me, and I told her I'd be home by seven. But then there's this guy, and I can feel my palms begin to itch.

"So you think you can jack off in public, huh? Do you think I get to fucking jack off in public? Why don't you look at me, you bastard? Are you listening to me?"

The guy's not listening to him. But the guy's not touching himself, either. He's just sitting there, looking up at us, mouth half open with uneven teeth, and he's so junked out it's hard to even think he's worth our time.

"Katy wants me home by seven."

Jimmy stares at me with a look of disgust. "Really?"

"Just do it then," I say.

So Jimmy begins, walking one half circle around the guy, choosing his mark, and then he smiles. Jimmy swings his foot and lands the first kick—at the base of the son-of-a-bitch's stomach, the place where his ribs should show, but don't—and he doubles forward, pitching against the sidewalk. The guy grunts, clutching at his stomach.

Jimmy's eyes balloon and his brows arch halfway up his forehead. A carnival mask grin stretches across his thin face.

I breathe out, clench and unclench my fists. Sweat pools in my palms.

"That's what I'm talking about!" It's hard to recognize my own voice.

It's strange to realize that these word are my own, that my body is my own, because my heart beats fast in my chest and my limbs loosen and I hop onto one foot and kick, hard, with the other, landing a shot right in his shin. Jimmy laughs and keeps up with it, aiming one blow around his kidneys and another in the guy's face. Blood pours from the guy's busted lip and splatters across the shirt.

But then he kicks back his boot and lays one more, right in the guy's groin. A stream of urine blooms in a pool across the pavement, and I have to turn away.

"Jesus, Jimmy, that's enough."

The son-of-a-bitch is groaning on the sidewalk and Jimmy's chest is puffed out and his hands are square on his hips.

"Don't you fucking come back to this neighborhood," Jimmy says. He chuckles.

We hear the crack of a door slamming and a big woman runs out of her house, her loose breasts bouncing under her mumu and her hands waving in the air, screaming at us. Jimmy slaps me on the back and we start running fast toward the car. We hop in and I jam the key in the ignition. The engine starts with a burst and we lurch forward.

Jimmy turns to me and punches me in the shoulder. "Can't you drive any faster? You're going to get us caught."

So I floor it, yanking the wheel into a jagged right turn and swinging

the back hip of the car over the curb. We barely miss a lamppost and Jimmy cackles and slaps his thigh. I clench my fingers around the steering wheel and suck in a lung full of air. After a few streets I exhale and try to breathe easy again.

The sun is below the horizon now and the streets are sinking into blue. Jimmy's face gleams with sweaty excitement and he sticks his head out the window to catch the night breeze.

But Katy's geraniums will be on the porch, and her tall green bicycle will be leaning against the railing. Her dark silhouette will be standing behind the screen door, and I wonder if she would have come out, like the woman had.

Jimmy laughs again, but it's forced this time, and I need to let him out of the car, to not see him again for a while.

I drop him off at his house and he gets out and then leans against the car door with his face through the window. "That was pretty good, huh? He could barely feel it through the fat, I bet."

I just look at him, then past him. He can tell what I'm thinking.

"Ah, come on. The guy was a fucking perv."

"Just go on," he says. So I go.

Ten minutes later I pull up to the house and the bulb is out on the front porch. The front rooms are dark, too, but there's a light on in the kitchen. I pause at the door, my fingers resting against the thin metal hatchings of the screen, and then I exhale and go inside.

I walk through the house and the rooms are cool and dark. Lights glow from the backyard.

"Well there you are," says Katy. "I was getting worried about you." She's leaning back in one of the lawn chairs with a plastic Mardi Gras cup cradled in her hand, a book in the other. Her face is pale and smooth and round and then a barb of pain spreads through my stomach like a jagged arrow.

"There's cold spaghetti in the kitchen," Katy says. "Where'd you go?"

"I had to stop for gas. And drop Jimmy off, too. He had a flat tire this morning."

A shadow from the magnolia tree darkens the side of Katy's face and cuts across her breasts. She keeps reading her book and I take a seat on the wooden steps and rest my elbows on my knees. Magnolia leaves litter the ground and I pick one up and twist the stem between my fingers. I shred the leaf and stand up. I can feel my palms getting sweaty again.

I walk inside and the door bounces against the frame. Then I pull some ice from the freezer and pour myself a full glass of whiskey, shooting it down until the liquor shocks against the back of my

WESTERN SUNSET
Kyle Broach
Photograph

throat and my eyes water. I pour myself another glass and walk outside. When I sit back down on the porch my feet begin to tingle and my arms loosen.

Katy is looking at me and I'm looking at her, and then I'm looking at the tree, the ground, my feet, the cold glass between my palms. I can see Jimmy's face, grinning, and that son-of-a-bitch gasping on his side, clutching at his stomach and trying to find his air again.

I finish off the glass and smile at my feet, then take up another leaf and fold it. I frown and slide my finger around the rim of the glass. I don't say anything. She looks up after a while and asks how work is, if I'll put on some music, maybe, but I don't say anything. I just sit there.

"Honey, are you alright? Babe?" She comes over and sits down beside me, leaning her head against my shoulder. I'm looking down at my hands and then she places her hand against my cheek and turns my head so that I have to look at her. Her eyes have the same shimmer as rain soaked leaves. "Have you been alright?"

"Yeah," I say, but my voice falters when I speak. I wait for hers.

All I can think is that Katy doesn't know. She doesn't know about the guys in the alleyways and the way my palms itch, sometimes even when I'm here, when I'm home—because I know those people are out there, waiting for her, for us.

She pulls our faces together and her forehead presses against mine, the perspiration bonding our skin. The tips of our noses are touching.

"Tell me what's the matter." She waits.

"I want us to leave," I say.

But she doesn't say anything. We've argued about it before, and she doesn't want to talk about it again. It's not worth it. She places her hand on the back of my neck and puts her lips on mine and kisses me a long time, long and slow, and I can taste the wine, earthy and bitter on her tongue. I comb her hair with my fingers and they catch in the knots.

Jimmy's been agitated the past two weeks and I know something's wrong. I pick him up after work and his face is a taut wire. He's pacing outside on the sidewalk and he hops into the front seat and slams the door.

I pull out of the warehouse parking lot and up to the top of the U-turn. We wait as the traffic races by us and then I ask him what's the matter. He doesn't answer me, but just keeps gripping the handle on his side of the car and clenching and unclenching his jaw. I've seen him agitated before, but not like this.

"Just shut the fuck up for a second, will you?" So I sit, quiet, and drive. We're stuck in traffic for a long time, stopping and starting, and the cars in front of us join to form a river of red taillights. Finally the traffic thins and we reach the Marigny, where the houses are like pinwheels, each an array of five contrasting, garish colors, and still Jimmy says nothing.

"Pull over," he says. I stop the car in front of a deep blue bungalow and he pulls a folded scrap of newspaper out of his pocket. He hands it over to me. The paper is worn and sweat marks smudge the ink. The clipping is nearly two

weeks old. By the state of the thing, he's read it more than once, probably kept it in his back pocket since he clipped it. It's from the entertainment page, and when I see the title my mind jumps back to the son-of-a-bitch, lying on his side and groaning in the dust.

"Flip it over," he says. I unfold the battered page and turn it to its back.

Then I see her, even in the blur of the black and white photograph, even though her face has aged, even though it's been fourteen years. A woman holds a microphone to her open mouth and beside her a bearded man holds a saxophone to his lips. The story of a singer, Linda Millon. How music saved her life, the headline reads. Linda Sarah Millon, our mother.

I stop and my mind goes blank. I stare at her long nose, her small mouth, the rounded cheeks that used to be thin and gaunt. Then I look at the guy next to her, a man in his fifties, balding. He's got a thick nose and the smallest hint of a second chin, but there they are together, smiling. A saxophone player, the column says. Randy Mitkam, her boyfriend.

"The bitch got clean." Jimmy's face is turned away from me and all I can see is the tendon at the corner of his jaw, clenching and unclenching, like a stunted, beating heart.

"She's here?"

"Maybe she never left." His teeth click together with a snap and I hold the picture up to my face, so close the pixels blur together and reveal nothing. I put the picture on the dashboard, Jimmy still sitting beside me. We look out on the street, at the overgrown lawns, the broken sidewalks, the sun dipping below the horizon, the dusk creeping down from the sky.

Sitting like this, just the two of us, I can see it all just as it used to be. Us in the back seat, her in the front, the skin on her face stretched taut, her cheeks hollow. Her hands trembling on the wheel, as mine do now, and that girlish excitement, that giddiness, when her outstretched, clawing fingers got a hold of a new bag of rocks. She used to leave us in the car, when she'd go to meet the men. Sometimes we'd wait for hours.

Eventually, when it got really bad, she just didn't come home. We didn't know how to search for her, didn't want to, anymore, and there we were, on our own, passed between foster families until we were eighteen.

In the car, Jimmy tells me about the research he's done, the past two weeks. He's become more than the neighborhood vigilante. Now he's the detective, the avenger. He's found the guy's spot, he's passed him in his car, he's seen the guy's double chin plunge and bob when he laughs. He's seen the saxophone, shining gold in the sunlight, and the man's cheeks blowing air into the lungs of the tube, his fingers pressing against the buttons, squeezing out sounds.

"Come on," Jimmy says. I follow him, like I've always followed him, and we shut the doors and start out down the street. The blood has sunk down into my stomach now, and the base of my intestines clench up, so hard I have to knead it with my knuckles to be able to walk. I can already see it, how it will be. It will be worse, the worst yet.

And then I see them, all of them, still frames, one after another, like

a hundred different shirts hung on a line: Randy and his busted skull, his bent, bloody saxophone; my mother, and the last time I saw her, frantically searching our house for the money she said we'd stolen, and the way she slapped Jimmy, hard, across the face, and how we'd seen her take that money, the week before, and come back with the rocks that she'd melt into rivulets of yellow liquid and smoke. Then, together, all at once, Jimmy, the son-of-a-bitch, tourists, bartenders, musicians, chefs, janitors, postmen, dockworkers, and the smiling, mourning faces of the second line bands. The whole writhing, blossoming, morphing, mixed up city, all of it, all of New Orleans.

We walk another block and the trill of a saxophone pumps through the air, the notes rising and falling, bending in on themselves. They're closer, just around the corner from us, and we are about to turn that one last street to find them.

And I can't let him. I run at Jimmy with everything in me, and I pin him to the wall, the wooden side of the building that nearly cracks from the impact of our bodies against it. He doesn't realize what's happening, not at first, and then he is a fuming, writhing mass of heat and fury against me. His face red and his eyes bulging, Jimmy's yelling—every combination of cuss words he can think of, and then just yelling—and in the background the sax falters and stops, and I've still got Jimmy's arms pinned, somehow, and I'm yelling at him to stop it, over and over again, and his name, over and over again, and somehow, somehow, he begins to defuse, and the red sinks from his face, and his eyes lose their fury, and we are crying. I hate it but I am, and he is limp, and I hug him, holding him.

A few weeks later, I take Katy out to dinner. Strings of lights hang from the branches of oak trees and a mismatch of tables crowd the courtyard. I buy a bottle of wine and a plate of hot boiled shrimp from the bar, and the heat and grease soak through the cardboard plate onto my fingers. Katy uncorks the wine and smiles at me. Around us, a man with a long beard sits at one table and three college-age kids talk in loud voices about Pimm's cups.

Jimmy's sitting at home now, thinking about us, thinking about her standing here, in front of us. He'll come, one day, maybe, but it's not time, not yet. Still, it's better for him, the talking that we've been doing. When we drive we don't look for anybody anymore, we just drive.

Katy pours me another glass of wine, and after an hour or so, the band comes in.

I drink another glass and Katy looks at me, and then at her. The sweet, lazy melody of a saxophone twists through the air, and then a woman's voice joins, nostalgic, in French. They're playing La Vie en Rose.

"That's her?"

"Yes," I say. "That's her."

The notes join, separate, join again, ascend. After the song, Katy squeezes my hand and I squeeze back. She smiles at me, and then I turn and walk toward the stage.

A PACKAGE ARRIVED IN THE MAIL.
ANTS:
Cayla Mackey

240 from the Internet
in 4 units of 60.
He received them in
test tubes
frozen with dry ice,
stunned then counted
with tweezers.
Drops in phlebotomy vials
from the place where butterflies are brittle
and shatter like fine crystal.

Their cubed amber skulls
secured sturdy jaws
threaded to an abdomen
and six mechanical legs;
their blackhead eyes
reflected tiny suns;
their antennae vibrated
to the pressure of sound.

Like a morningsong
the artificial spring of fluorescent lighting
stirred them
to re-inhabit eggshell skeletons.

First a flick of a tendril
Barely a breeze
Then a twitch of a joint
Machines creaking their gears
Loosening the stale rust
between microscopic hinges.

The teeming
technicolored batons
swarmed between his fingers.

He shook them into a glass jar.
Punched a hole in the screw cap.

He supplied sugar water sustenance,
drowned their hungry bodies
hardened their swimming limbs
In the residue of a sticky crust.
Clogged their airways.
Constricted around them
until there was no escape.
Smothered them into submission
until they suffocated.

Then he deluged the angry, tangled pile
in a colander, like blueberries.
Placed them
one by one
in a plastic Tupperware.
Washed the leftovers
down the drain.

He decided he had no use for any of them
after all of this
Brought their cosmos to the backyard
where he peeled off the sky
and left the plastic to melt
in the magnifying glass sun.

BODY

Elise Lasko

i.
The body in its last solitude lies in furious repose, tangled in
dust and sky, currents of rivers tossing it from side to side.
Its marriage to time began distant and defiant. In its years of youth,
the body danced away from its counterpart – the impossibility
of death brightening the face and hands as a streetlight creates
a halo over strangers embracing.

ii.
Before the flood, the water lifted the limbs and carried them as far
from the beginning as from the end, suspended equally between birth and
the body's lover – time's temptress pressing closer, arms outreached
like a supplication to be reborn. The body surrenders to such power,
offering the grace of its dance and the glow of its face – a bargaining
for more years of remarkable use.

iii.
Now, the muscles strain to lift those same hands in exaltation, feet
grown gnarled and frozen to the ground that once clapped it in dance.
Hinges whine at every opening and closing. Time had promised youth,
but instead whittled its paramour into a boneless marionette,
dependent on a steady hand to finish its work – to build its resting place.

iv.
Half the work is counting. The currency of life's last days is silence,
that furious repose that paralyzes the legs, sews the eyes closed and
fetters the body to memories that have been glorified and then forgotten.
Solitude is its last companion before time smothers it with the admiration
accumulated for decades – a vengeful love affair.

TO BE IN LONDON TOWN
James Akers
Photograph

BROTHERHOOD
Annie Olson
Photograph

CREATION
Jeremy Stevens

I saw a man transfixed with expectation. He stood
Held by not the art nor its placement
Nor the framing nor the image
But the touch of the painting against his breath,
As he would see someone in the desert at great distance:
The prophet John, fed on simple things,
Set to wreck a kingdom.
The honey and the locust become one in the desert of his stomach;
Prophet and painting are the foretaste of a thing.

Hastening, you could wander forty days
And never see a thing, and you could flip the lights off and on
At night and see false constellations form before your eyes,
Or you could hold a brush the same size as yourself
And make murals on the ground, rolling with the movement your own pulse provides,
Frenetic for creation and for movement for the sake of movement.
None of this survives or ushers in paradise.

Yet your breath can bridge the distance between the testaments
If you will give it, holding onto nothing in the palm
Of your breath, if the whisper of Jesus that God presses to your lips
When Maker meets masterpiece in a holy kiss lives again
When you mouth His name (brush against
The hem of his robe with no art but intent.) Some still die for this,
Allowing their breath to be lost for a full taste of transcendent bliss,
Nearness and the thought of nearness
Resounding deep to deep like when sound and thought become one.

It is far less to feel the painting's skin
For just one instant—with the fingertips—
Than to be God's brush
Forever in the hush of breathless movement.

STAFF & CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Andri Alexandrou is currently a senior in the College of Arts & Sciences and a soon-to-be intrepid traveller of the so called "real world." While she grew up on the outskirts of the City of Music She Didn't Like and vowed never to attend the alma mater of both her parents, she is finding herself ever more endeared by Nashville and the true Ivy of the South. Vanderbilt University is letting her graduate in May 2012.

James Akers is a freshman from Memphis, TN studying Human and Organizational Development and Economics.

Justin Barisich is a rising son of New Orleans, the half-Croatian middle child of a commercial fisherman, a super-senior, an educator, a poet, a satirist, a performer, and a TVR Poetry Staffer. His poetry has been influenced by a various spoken word poets and, more recently, by W.H. Auden, Philip Larkin, Seamus Heaney, and Tyehimba Jess. Justin is forever learning from his writing – both about himself and about others. He hopes that you do too.

Adam Bieber was born and raised in Long Island, New York. Actualist. Enjoys song-writing and Mad Men.

Lily Bienstock is a Creative Writing major and Psychology minor. Her favorite authors are William Faulkner and Neil Gaiman.

Kyle Broach is a senior double majoring in Earthy & Environmental Science and Chemistry. His work in geology has taken him from Scotland to New Zealand to Antarctica, and he has taken numerous photographs during the course of his travels. He greatly enjoys world culture and cuisine, music, and architecture, and he hopes to see more of the world in his year off before continuing on to his doctorate degree in earth science.

Nicole Burdakin is a Junior in the College of Arts & Science from Atlanta, GA. She is double majoring in English, with a concentration in Creative Writing, and Earth & Environmental Science.

Travis Cohen as an artist and as a human being, I'm simply interested in exploring the real, in all its beauty and all its tragedy, and expressing that spectrum in ways that will touch, tickle, or tear upon consumption. I draw on the everyday magic and strangeness of my home, Miami Beach, and try to create lively art and live artfully because that balance is essential to the seeking of truth and I am nothing if not a truth seeker. Billy Bodega, proud artist of the Autumn Alliance

Liz Furlow is a junior from Houston, TX. She is majoring in English with a focus in creative writing. After college she plans to pursue a career as a writer.

Catherine Gans is a sophomore from New York Ciy majoring in French and Political Science. She loves poetry and yoga.

Caroline Gieryn is a sophomore from Atlanta, GA majoring in Economics and English with a minor in Corporate Strategy. She has always harbored a passion for literature of all kinds and thoroughly enjoys reading the contributions of her fellow students. She also hopes to pursue a career in publishing after graduation.

Abby Hannifan is a senior at Vanderbilt studying Medicine, Health & Society and Latin American Studies. She suffers from extreme wanderlust, loves any kind of outdoor activity, can say all the U.S. presidents' names in less than 12 seconds, and prefers coffee as an ice cream flavor.

Elizabeth King is a first year student hoping to major in neuroscience. She has had a passion for reading since elementary school, when she dis-

covered Nancy Drew and Jane Austen.

Elise Lasko is a junior English major from Memphis, TN concentrating in the Art of Poetry. She has an affinity for publishing and the visual arts and fulfills these passions as an intern for Nashville Arts Magazine and as managing editor of the Vanderbilt Review. "Body" is Elise's first poem to be published in the magazine.

Rachel Lundberg lives on an elk and deer farm in Paducah, KY. She has five brothers and sisters and an awesome action figure collection.

Cayla Mackey is a musician who spends most of her time playing and writing music. Piano, keyboards, guitars, violin, bass, drums, Theremin: you name it, she plays it. Cayla is also a freelance arts journalist and music blogger. More information about Cayla and what she does can be found on Twitter @CaylaMackey.

Nate Marshall is the star of the award winning full-length documentary "Louder Than A Bomb" and has been featured on HBO's "Brave New Voices. He is from the South Side of Chicago and studied English and African American Studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. His work has appeared in The Spoken Word Revolution: Redux, The Vanderbilt Review, on Chicago Public Radio and in many other publications. He was a 2010 finalist for the Guild Complex's Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic Award. Nate is the founder of the Lost Count Scholarship Fund that promotes youth violence prevention in Chicago. He is also a rapper. Nate can be reached at nathaniel.a.marshall@gmail.com.

Ariel Mason is a senior majoring in English & History, with a minor in Corporate Strategy. The Vanderbilt Review has provided her the opportunity to balance her aspirations to become an attorney with her passion for music and the literary arts.

Thomas McLaughlin lives in Hendersonville, TN. He is an English student in the College of Arts & Sciences.

David Nakayama is a freshman here at Vanderbilt planning on studying Computer Science Engineering. I'm from Birmingham, Alabama, and I like long walks on the beach! My favorite sport is soccer and I love hanging out and watching movies. I'm a libra and a part of BYX and Navs. I'm just really glad to have been selected for this because I have lately been working the streets to stay in the art industry. My first few works didn't quite take off but now I'm on top of things!

Annie Olson is a sophomore student and Public Policy Studies major. She enjoys photography as a means of engaging with global cultures and communities. The photographs featured were taken in the Maasai Mara National Reserve in southwestern Kenya, where Annie had the opportunity to interact closely with this distinctive ethnic group and capture the beauty of the vibrant traditional wear of the Maasai warriors and their children.

Ashley Oswald is a South Floridian who plays soccer and loves sushi.

Allyson Patterson is a freshman from Memphis, TN and has no idea what she is doing with her life but strives to always allow her ardent love of artistic creativity to shine through into all that she does.

Jeremy Stevens is a sophomore English major in the College of Arts and Sciences. He is still coming to terms with the thought that Jesus is a writer.

Katie Wehlage is a characteristic midwesterner-I love my family, my country, and NFL football. I'm no artist, I simply enjoy drawing for the sake of drawing. I like using my pencil to capture some profound moment of happiness, for in my rendering I too find profound bliss.

Jim Whiteside is a senior double major in creative writing and sociology. He enjoys bosc pears, collecting sweaters, drinking tea, and going to shows in basements. He is the winner of the 2012 Merril Moore Award in poetry.

Yeon-Sil Yi is an artist who does figurative paintings. Visit my website! yeonsilyi.com

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Vanderbilt Student Writers and Artists, for sharing your work with The Vanderbilt Review. Your pieces brought life and creativity to this year's theme, "The Robotic Hand." Please continue to develop your art and submit your pieces next year to thevandyreview@gmail.com.