

LIZARD DREAMS

THE LHSP ARTS & LITERARY JOURNAL

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Our mission is to create a student-run publication that showcases vibrant and engaging work produced in the LHSP community during the academic year.

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Carol Tell

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lately I've been reading the poet Louis MacNeice. He was from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and though remarkably talented he isn't as well known as such contemporaries as W.H. Auden. One of my favorites is a short poem, "Snow," written in 1935. If our editors will indulge me (and if space allows) I'd like to quote it here:

The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various.

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes—
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palm of one's hands—
There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses.

As I look through the impressive prose, poems, and artwork of *Lizard Dreams*, the 2013-14 LHSP Arts and Literary Journal, MacNeice's poem looms. I am struck by the

journal's overwhelming eclecticism—it is a work that is, as MacNeice describes, “in-correctly plural.” How to square a poem as elegant and evocative as Haley Fox’s titular “Lizard Dreams” with one as postmodern and playfully self-conscious as Matthew Yodhes’s “(And the Snow Weeps...)”? Or integrate the contemporary realism depicted in Laura Brillman’s “This Is Good” with the dreamlike fairytale of Polina Fradkin’s “Beauty and the Beast”? The artwork too—the eerie romanticism of Cellik Adams’s photography juxtaposed to Adriana Zardus’s witty, unassuming portraits drawn with white-out and sharpie pens. Each conjures up evocative but in some ways incompatible worlds.

It isn’t always the case that the pieces in the journal are so wildly and splendidly diverse. In some years, for example, students seem to hit on similar themes, or the works might vary in subject but are tonally consistent. This year, the pieces convey precisely that “drunkenness of things being various.” Which makes the task of the editors, who must gather such pieces, order them, and make them cohere, even more difficult. Thanks to the fabulous first-year editors, who took on particular challenges this year, and also to the editors-in-chief Tanaz Ahmed, Jamie Monville, and Matthew Yodhes, who are by now old pros at this work. Aaron Burch, our Managing Editor/Advisor, provided his sensitive and good-natured supervision (while he also launched his own book of stories, *Backswing*—congratulations, Aaron!).

Special thanks go to the LHSPers 2013-14—a uniquely talented group who, despite their differing visions, formed one of the tightest communities we’ve seen in Lloyd. I hope readers of the book will join me in reveling in these heartfelt and intelligent pieces—some dark and raw, others mischievous and full of whimsy. They are as varied as our own dreams can be from night to night, and, taken together, pull us in so many incorrigible directions.

Carol Tell
Director
Lloyd Hall Scholars Program
University of Michigan

Tanaz Ahmed, Jamie Monville & Matthew Yodanis

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The title of this year's journal, *Lizard Dreams*, comes from Haley Fox's poem of the same name. The poem, about the tenuous line between real and ephemeral experiences, resonated with us. "Lizard," something deeply real, old and pure seems odd paired with dreams, the most ephemeral experiences we all deal with. But those ephemeral experiences are deeply real in another sense. Dreams, whether the ones drifting through our brains as we wake up, or the secret desires that we silently work towards, hoping one day without realizing it we'll find ourselves living, are in essence what an education at the University of Michigan and the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program specifically is all about.

When the LHSP freshmen walk into Lloyd that first move-in day their eyes are bright — visibly excited at the opportunity to mold their dreams of being a fashion magazine editor, a movie score composer, an engineer or a writer into something that constitutes reality. Their vision is vibrant, fueled with passion, but like a dream far away. Then of course they're faced with classes and securing internships, the tangible building blocks of their future. For the first time in their lives that dream starts to mean something; for the first time in their lives this path is unbelievably and sometimes frighteningly real.

Art is both its antidote and counterpart, for it occupies the same gray areas. The ephemeral vision is captured in the tangible brush or keystrokes, acting as either an escape or a foundation. In this way, each piece in this journal is, in one way or another, a "lizard dream." Concrete yet also evanescent.

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Laura Brillman
THIS IS GOOD

“Okay, okay, my turn,” Lola laughed, bringing a hand to her forehead in order to quell the spinning of the basement. “Never have I ever...been in love with a girl.”

“What about Brooke?!” called Cece, confrontationally, but laughing.

“I thought I was in love with Brooke. I just wanted to be her friend and fuck her stupid,” Lola called back, raising her whiskey.

I looked around the room as everyone deliberated with their fingers up. John put one down. Connor put one down. Cece’s fingers remained up. Anna’s fingers did not move. Then over to Ryan. No movement. Pained deliberation on his face. Lola waited. All she could hear was the beating of her heart and last week’s *Friends* dully re-running in the background. Ryan made a very small shake of his head, as though it was just to himself, and his finger did not move.

“What the fuck, Ryan?” Lola exploded across the room. “Did you fucking forget something?”

Ryan looked panic-stricken. “Calm down. You’re drunk... can we talk about this later?”

“Naw, dude, we can talk about this right the fuck now.” The smile on Lola’s face refused to fade, even as her lips burned white hot and her chest tried to collapse in on itself.

“So what? That was just like, fun to you? That we were in love while we were dating? That was just like... a neat thing to say?”

“I didn’t know... I thought I was... I don’t even really know what love is – can you stop screaming?”

“That’s not the kind of thing you just go with, dude.”

“You said it, so I said it back. I just don’t know and I don’t think I was.”

“Awesome. Great. Cool, man. I guess this should make me feel better, right?” She could feel herself laughing hysterically. “I was so torn up about losing your love six months ago, but I shouldn’t feel bad, right? You never loved me anyway! I didn’t lose jack shit! Well, guess what? I’m not going home with you. Not tonight, not this weekend, and you’re gonna have to work pretty damn hard to come back from this if you ever wanna fuck me again!”

Shocked silence. Ryan’s face was frozen in horror. His glass had dropped and whiskey was steadily flowing on to the shag carpet. Lola felt herself deflate. The smile finally faded off of her face to be replaced by glowing red cheeks and tears stinging her eyes, her lips trembling but her brow still set in its angry glare.

“Holy shit,” muttered John.

Ryan had left long ago, stormed out after Lola’s comments, her betrayal of their secret arrangement. Anna was passed out on her bed upstairs. Connor had just gone back home after the party began to peter out and the heated drama had fizzled.

Lola was lying on the floor, her head resting on Cece’s smooth, exposed stomach (she had taken off her shirt after about the third tequila shot). John’s finger was lightly tracing her kneecap, and his eyes were closed contently as his 6’5” frame lay strewn across the stained beige carpet somewhere to her left. Lola felt Cece attempt to adjust herself, and figured she should allow her to move onto her side to hurl.

Lola waited, but when she looked up Cece was not puking. She was face to face with John, their noses almost touching. Cece was fumbling at the zipper of her pants with her unsteady hands and shaking fingers.

Lola got up as far as her hands and knees and felt as though she was swimming through Jell-O as she attempted to crawl through the still vaguely smoky room toward them.

“Guys, no,” she managed. “No, John, what about Emily?”

“She won’t have sex with him,” giggled Cece, pressing her chest against John’s Pink Floyd T-Shirt.

John shot Lola a warning look. “She’s just waiting till she’s on birth control.” His hand was now moving up and down from Cece’s belly ring to just underneath her baby blue bra.

“No, you guys can’t do this, though.” Lola tried to speak seriously, though she felt like she sounded like a toddler attempting to mimic an adult.

“No, it’s fine. Em and I aren’t that serious. We’re not gonna do anything that’s gonna hurt her,” John said slowly, trying to focus his bloodshot eyes on Lola’s.

Cece was now in nothing but her purple laced underwear and bra, looking up at John and Lola, both fully clothed.

“Come ooooooon,” she whined.

Before Lola could refocus her brain in an attempt to make another case against what she knew was about to happen, John was on top of Cece, their mouths messily mashing together. Lola recoiled slightly, but didn’t look away.

Cece’s huge blue eyes appeared from behind her raised legs, which were wrapped around John’s acid wash jeans, unblinking, staring at Lola in an almost quizzical manner.

John looked up as well, and twisted to look over his shoulder at Lola, mirroring that same curious expression, before stalking slowly over to her and kissing her full on the mouth with his own dry lips. Lola gently pulled away, dazed.

“I always wondered what that would be like,” mused John, before taking Lola’s hand and guiding her over to Cece, who was rolling around on the floor like a child grabbing for her drink, which John withheld, looking concerned. Yet a slight, amused smile creased the left side of his shaggy face.

Lola slid slowly onto Cece, wildly speculating in her cluttered head about how far she could take this. She’d been dreaming about this for so long – Cece knew that. She knew Lola’s intentions and what she’d always wanted from her. Maybe she was finally getting out of her so determinedly straight head and giving into something she always knew would be good...

John looked on as he sipped his drink, his eyes widening when he heard Cece whisper, “I’ve never had a real orgasm,” as she clumsily slid her underwear around her ankles.

Lola looked over at John uncertainly. John shrugged and gestured as if to say, “be my guest.”

Lola excitedly looked down. Cece looked so different from herself.

Cece started to get that feeling in her chest, like when there’s a tight knot around one of your coronary chambers and someone is pulling on the rope, trying to free it from its brothers. There was sharp pain, followed by euphoric relaxation, then more constricting of the chest and throat. It’s the whiskey, she thought. It’s just the whiskey. Nothing is wrong. This is fine. This is good. But the spinning wouldn’t stop, and she was still incapable of just opening her eyes to look up and find a way to plead for the world to stop. Her eyes were glued shut, and instead of lifting up, they opened and gave way to terrible visions. She couldn’t remember who was above her, who was making their way down her body, all she saw were awful sights and sounds of men with rude hands and hairy chests, men who couldn’t understand her through the cotton and Wild Turkey taste in her mouth. But still she said nothing.

It’s okay, she heard, out of the fog, from somewhere distantly beneath her. A cooing female voice that floated through her body. It’s fine, right? No one’s getting hurt. No one can get pregnant. No one can get an STI. This is good. Just relax, okay?

The noises coming from Cece’s mouth were unfamiliar to her ears as she tensed and relaxed. She was not present. This was not her body and she did not need to do anything except wait for it to be over to return to herself and go to sleep. The mouth – mouths? – on hers were phantoms. They were hallucinations. This was not real. The vague smell of sweat and vanilla belonged to scenes of other people’s lives – clung to other people’s bodies. This is fine. This is good.

Her eyes fluttered open only for her vision to be completely obscured by a broad, pale pair of shoulders, defined muscles wrapped around bulging shoulder blades with shaggy hair resting around the neck. She sat up slightly to look down, and through her swimming vision, she saw the hands firmly wrapped around her hips – perfect, confusingly manicured fingers. Hot pink. There was a pair of soaked purple underwear cast aside near her feet, and a congealing wet spot near her legs. The sky was pinkish outside, and she had a vague headache nagging at the back of her skull, pushing its way forward.

Madison Brow
THIS IS HOW WE FELL

Snap.

The child awoke.
Uncle was asleep at his desk
There was an open, drowsing hand
There was a pencil on the ground
There was everything
Daddy's words
You never liked my brother
Mommy's words

Pick up your coat, Miles

His blue one
By the squared lady
The grey lady
With a sad resting face
She looked dead
Mommy's words
It's rude to stare, Miles

Mommy had pictures and pictures
Bright colors
Daddy didn't like them

Daddy had the squared lady
The grey lady
With a sad resting face

Mommy didn't like her

There were ladies in Uncle's room
But different ladies
Red lips and beaming white teeth
They twisted in all sorts of shapes
Like in a circus

Mommy came into the room
She was loud
It woke Uncle up
The child sat
And Mommy waved her hands around a lot
It was loud

Mommy doesn't like those ladies much

Snap.

The man looked up.
His eyes wavered
That waitress
had dropped it again
Sound curled across the space
Dancing through the man's ears
His wife
Looking down at her copy of-

A cough came from across the room

His wife looked up and,
Wrinkling her nose,
Returned her eyes to the page

He looked at her
and
 discreetly
Brought his eyes to the cover

Back
And
Forth

These two women

Her blank eyes smiled only at him
And he took in her painted face

This woman

Was it his wife?

Snap.

His breath
In and out
 He ran

The strap hit his shoulder
Leaving behind the branch
 The leaf
 The Wood

Late

Eyes glancing down
The rain began

Run

 Keep Running

In this dark room
Where the light refines you
It will all be worth it

My breath

 It will all be worth it

Breathe In

 Breathe Out

Clutching the Lens
The Base
The Body
The Film

And Ran

Snap.

Girlish shrieks
Reminder of the days of bows and petticoats
Not jean shorts
and slit skirts

Up into the air
Lift it high
A chant
 A pause
 A click

More screams

Laughter, smiling laughter

Snap.

Attention: You Have 1 Message.

View, please
Loading.

 Waiting

New Message from Sarah.

 Looking

...

 Laughing

Delete?

 Delete.

Claire Bryan
GIFT WRAPPED

It burns the left corner of my throat. It burns like two and a half years of expectations. I knew it was going to burn, but not like this. Not like foreign waters that find you in a kitchen with ice-cold linoleum under your feet.

I want to vomit. I can feel the frozen liquid in my stomach immediately. I really didn't think it worked like that, but I swear I can feel it. It tears at the sides of my esophagus and sits at the top of my stomach, encroaching under the acidic lining.

Strangers who I had been calling friends for five weeks smile at me. I smile back, a more ingenuine smile than the forty-second one you give during orientation. But then I realize they aren't smiling, they are laughing. I look down at the shot glass in my hand. It is heavy. It curves at the bottom. It is cold beneath the finger pads of my two pointer fingers. I'm not paying attention: my shot glass still looks completely full. Damn it.

It was sophomore year of high school and prom night. My junior date I had met two and a half weeks earlier stood next to me at the top of a staircase as we talked to Ray Alvarez and his blonde girlfriend. I'd spent my last summer watching them wandering in and out of my best friend's older brother's house in Mission Beach. I'd spent my school year gazing over Ray's hair and confidence in not turning in any assignments in creative writing class. Ray asked me where my sister was. We were all friends in his eyes that night. He tilted the bottle of champagne he had been tossing back and forth between his palms in my direction. I blushed, shaking my head, and he tilted the bottle towards my date, raising his eyebrows.

“I’m alright, thank you, though,” my date said calmly, with eyes that said not drinking was going to be easy. Ray smiled and the two of them began talking about their new song they’d been writing and how it was turning into something they never planned. I turned to Ray’s girlfriend to compliment her shoes.

“Thank you, Claire. How was the dance? Did you see the sculpture in the front of the museum?”

“Yes! I loved it.”

“I couldn’t stop staring. You know the guy who made it is only sixteen years old. Supposedly it takes months to set up in every location. He’s moving it up to LA in July to be displayed at LACMA. Have you been there?”

In high school, I refrained from drinking, but I learned to not see the differences between the confinements of a cup. I knew that though I was sober this weekend, the next I very well might not be. I began to love the environment as equally as my friends did. The twitch and the edge, the hazardous laughs and great comfort of eager hugs that comes with drinking had us all hooked. Older kids laughed at my jokes and sat me down to tell me about their recent fight with their boyfriend or the summer internship they thought they had a chance at. Anyone in the room was yours to talk to, they had the courage, and you just had to go along with the overindulgent friendliness.

I never felt pressured, at first. Maybe because of my age or my persona, but no one really expected me to drink. But as they graduated and young friends grew old, that mask slowly disappeared. And as months of memories morphed into years of memories, requests to embark on drinking flew through my ears. These requests built up a soft confidence around me. It was a confidence in the fact that I always knew what I was doing. I began to hear the same lines every night, because just like drunken acts can begin to feel monotonous, so can sober ones.

“You don’t have to, Claire.”

“Okay, but when you do decide to drink, can I make you your first drink?”

“Well, I’ll talk to you in a few years, you’re still young. It’ll grow on you.”

“Never be so sure, Claire.”

* * *

It is cold and dark, but while cold has disappeared, the dark has heightened in my eyes. I am gone from that foreign kitchen and down the cement sidewalk too fast. I giggle at the hand that I am suddenly holding. We raise our arms higher together and over two guys who have been walking ahead of us for quite some time. We laugh at ourselves. I don't care that the guys look right at us with strange eyes. I don't think about who they are, where they come from, or what they're doing. They are nothing but a fleeting moment in my intoxicated mind.

I slow my feet and stop. I feel heavy. My arms are bowling balls and my shoulders are dumbbells. Anyone could nudge me and I'd fall without a fight. Falling over and not caring should scare me, but it doesn't. My mind doesn't pause like I know it usually does, it doesn't fixate to think, it just moves cursorily onward. I need someone's attention like I never have needed it before. My eyes begin to search for Eva, needing her to see everything I am doing. I couldn't be my solitary figure; I couldn't be on my own.

"Claire," Eva says with a greedy smile. Eva, being one of the two distant friends that came across the country with me to school, is having her own fun executing this night. She holds my bare arms and her palms are fire. Three others come up behind me, embracing me, and it feels like there are eighteen hands covering my cold skin. I don't feel disoriented; I don't feel lost or confused. I don't feel much at all.

I can't count how many times someone has asked me to explain my reasons for not drinking. The first ten times it was a fascinating conversation, relieving almost. The topic became tangible and it felt concrete to give reasons. But my responses always changed.

My true reasons are afternoons on the couch with my mom telling me about her own reasons. How she was eight years old and couldn't find enough food in the house to feed her younger sister or couldn't remember the number of times she had to call the ambulance because she couldn't wake her mom up in the morning. My reasons are the

pinch in my mom's smile when she looks at my dad ordering a third drink at dinner. My reasons are watching my older brother, who sat on our back patio drinking his first beer with my dad on his twenty-first birthday.

My mom, among the millions of similar victims, has suffered from not just one alcoholic parent, but two. And when statistics like "the odds of becoming an alcoholic are four times higher than for the sons of nonalcoholic fathers" have been drilled into your brain since elementary school, you can't help but form an irrational aura around the concept of alcohol.

And yet there I stand in the center of a frat house's living room, surrounded by faces I have memorized, but names that have disappeared from my mind. I fixate on perspiration I can see dripping down the poorly painted white walls. My eyes throb along with the flashing lights towards the front of the room. I watch homogeny swing left and right to the blaring music. My outward actions become my biggest fears and yet I don't listen to that fear.

Girls move around me fast, coming in and by and over me with loud voices and fleeting hugs. My neck bends to the sides of each new face's cheek. I feel the need to curl up inside of something. Someone behind me bumps me forward and I run into Emily. I smile at her but don't say anything.

Looking around, I find a familiar face and run over to Zach. I don't remember my feet moving, but I'm suddenly by his side. I tug at the sleeve of Zach's shirt and bury my head into his chest. He looks down at me endearingly, making sure everything is all right. I smile at him but hide my head again. It is not easy to face the scene in front of me.

The fifth Meghan I have met this semester begins talking to us. Carlee comes up behind her, giggling. Not Carlee, her name can't be Carlee. I haven't met any Carlees in college. I've fallen into myself and am not in the room or their conversation. I feel the need to be recognized in the conversation. Why can't I just listen?

"I don't know if I agree with that. I went last year and it was so much fun," I speak up.

I don't recognize my voice; it is high and louder than usual. Now they are all looking at me too much. Now I want to run. I can't stand still. Every conversation is uninteresting; I need to get to the next one. I need someone else. I need attention.

I need attention. I can't shake it.

I'm outside again and bright orange shirts are piled over sweatshirts on three tall guys; behind them four girls sit on a stone wall. I recognize one of them who nods in my direction. I smile and scurry onto her lap. She holds the back of my head as I lean it on her shoulder. I'm happy, unsure why.

"How are you?" she asks behind my ears. I can't seem to think beyond the night, beyond situational circumstances. I can't pinpoint past actions or emotions, not now.

"Great" stumbles past my lips and into the crisp air. Nothing else leaves my mouth even though a hundred thoughts race in my mind. I'm too aware of who I have become tonight: I act confident in actions but don't feel confident in reality. I stop listening to my observations and start talking before I think. But not in the passionate, talkative way I get when someone asks me about where I want to live when I'm 28 years old or what I want to change about how I spend Sundays. I become mindless and gift-wrapped. I become a blurred version of myself.

I can see my breath. The temperature is miraculously still refreshing to my sticky skin. The freezing stone burns the skin of my legs but I do nothing to move them. The air stings the tip of my nose but I make no decision to move inside. I don't fight to find anything more tonight. I have settled to be content in this foreign identity. I settle for inadequate.

I begin to remember why I loved my old identity, and phrases from every sober night blare loud in my drunken mind. I loved being someone's escape.

"Will you sit with me? I just need to be with someone who will listen."

"Drive me home?" – "Alright."

"Well, you are the only sane-minded one here, I need that right now."

"Claire, tell us what actually happened."

But then the phrases blur together and I hear the ones that made me hate my old identity.

“You are just scared of not being you.”

“Typical CB.”

“That’s you just getting in your head and not believing in anything else.”

It wasn’t the fact that it was drinking alcohol or not. It could have been anything, but it happened to be alcohol. I had built it up in my head as a stigma, a boundary I could never cross because some crashing wall would tumble if Claire wasn’t sober. I could never muster up the guts to realize I’m not my mother; I’m not my grandmother. I also am not my brother or my sister and don’t have to follow down either of their paths.

6008. I enter my pin slowly and push the gold handle down and to the left. My door swings open and I peer to my right in search of my sleeping roommate like I usually do. She isn’t there. I sigh, relieved, flip the light switch, and watch the florescent lights blink on.

The blue desk chair is four feet below me and I fall too long in the air as I go to sit on it. I stare at my white converse and they are spinning. I begin to untie the dirtied laces but there are too many of them. My neck is weak and my head is heavy again. I’m slipping slightly to each side; my eyes are swinging back and forth.

Giving up, I stand and walk to the mirror on the other side of the room. I stand too close to the mirror, staring at pale, translucent eyes. My eyelashes are thick and stringy, laced in black mascara. My eyelids have a film over them and are covered with grey lines that have stuck together in the folds of my eyelids. I see the edges of my face in my peripherals. I see the edges of another face in front of me. And I see edges of a third face in the reflections in my eyes.

Strangers’ words fly around the room.

“Well, why do you hang out with us then?”

“You know it’s pretty weird that you always just watch.”

Lines from old friends that are so far away right now interject.

“I want to be there the first time you drink.”

“You don’t know what you’re missing, I can’t wait to show you.”

“Promise me something.”

“I’d be honored.”

Did I find friends with different objectives than I? I didn’t want to find new friends, and I didn’t want my friends to change their ways. Did I need to change mine? Why did the people here make me hate the stigma? Why is sober, in this vacuum, hostile? Why a disease? Sober is an unlevelled playing field where no one wins.

“Just wondering, but why?”

“I don’t get it.”

“It can’t always make you happy, Claire.”

My eyes blink and focus, momentarily, on the third face that is resting in the reflection of my eyes. That face remembers every drunken friend she took care of and every time she accused them, silently, of being selfish.

My eyes blink again and see the drunken ones in the immediate reflection. That face hates alcohol because it made her mute tonight. That face needs every memory to count.

My eyes pulse, unable to choose which complexion of myself they want to focus on, to land on. They wander, failing to focus on me; on my hands, my feet, the skin at the tip of my nose. I’m not sure how long I stood there, unsure of what to do, feeling alone in no one’s body. Feeling indefinite.

Kennedy Clark
REMINISCENCE

At dawn your absence germinates,
like the hues of tea leaves,
soaking,
lingering,
like a fond recollection.

Suspended are the fragments of yesterdays.
evoking traces of your plum lipstick,
that still stain the chipped porcelain
of the teacup that I raise to my lips.

Leaves,
drenched with the scent of your hair
and the honeyed tone of your voice,
sink to the floor of the cup.

They settle beneath the dregs of dried petals,
compelling me to rummage
through our collection of early afternoons,
where we unwrapped
parcels of Spring and
corners of Sundays.

Kennedy Clark

SKIN

Droplets drip from a perforated nozzle.
They run over the subtle curve of my hip,
and down the protrusion of my kneecap.

I lift my hands and stare,
at a collection of
melanin saturated,
pigment laden, cells.

An organ,
entrenched in volumes of antiquity,
chronicling the brilliant noise
of our ancestors.

Celebrated,
are the souls we'll never know,
but the ones who strained
to embrace the fabrics of humanity.

Digression,
scuttles for the drain,
like the dirt of our sins

that hid under my fingernails,
leaving traces on the grooves,
of the nude underbelly,
of my large toe.

Carlyn Darr
AN OPEN FIST

A bitter bunch of pennies sit on the back of my tongue,
Each time your fist makes love to my eye.
We always begin with a dance of words.
The battered goat in the basement of our love
Limps into light,
All matted fur and tattered ears.
You create the creatures in the corner
That crawl up my spine.
I force you to feel like you are always from the 35th floor.
Nightmares and fears:
Weapons best wielded by the ones we trust the most.
Our words have weight behind them,
Then we put our weight behind them.
Strange flowers, the prints of knuckle on flesh.
Strange paint.

Carlyn Darr
HOW TO BE A TREE

close your eyes and imagine
note: this is not
a test

(everything
is a test)

imagine you are curled
into the tightest blip
of a ball

(wrap your spine around
your knees
put your fists in
your mouth, swallow)

imagine you are many feet
under rich dark earth

(this is not
the death of you
this is only
the beginning)

feel the whole of you

(what you have been taught
to call bones and
blood, those scientist
cells)

explode
 upward with feeling
reach the tips of you
through the damp darkness
feel

(pause now —
try to feel everything
your life has made you
understand
focus on the pain
 flip it)

the cool air on your parts
you are small

(for now,
for the rest of your life)

there is so much

(too much)

feel the essence
of everything — soak it in

(the rain, the fear, the
sunlight)

understand in your very
essence of everything
that you will
never know

(anything,
everything)

now grow.

Jack Foster
THE HAPPY MAN

hes much happier these days
tho his mind has been twisted
and he dont know where he been or seen
the underground legend, the psychedelic queen —

yeah he a animal on the mic
cause you know he bust and he sick
and he dont give a fuck about the glitz
cause he been through some shit

and he aint slick no more
with his collar turned down
and his crack pipe lit

but he been through some time
and he still cut you like a ninja
cause he raw like he was back in 1969

Jack Foster

THE MOBILE IN THE BARN

the wind in the trees and the trees in the yard
and the barn by the trees and the mobile within
and the fire thats made by the wood from the walls
and the cold thats outside
and the three legged man and the girl with eight eyes
that lookie through the holes in the night at the world

Jack Foster
STAYED A LONG TIME

I woke up from a nap
on the beach in the hot hot

sun to a European couple making
out and I felt

a bit pointless after
and went for a walk

thinking about what to do. I
must have fallen asleep

again because the trannies
were out in Little Haiti

in pumps and sparkle
gowns.

Purple and yellow
light spilling from the clubs,

the throb of life —
I wanted to go

home to leftover ravioli
but couldn't find the keys

and stayed a long long time.

Haley Fox
LIZARD DREAMS

Dreams decline the offer to dance.
Like lizards they dart in and out of sight,
flicking their tongues,
flirting amid the shadows.

But, if you happen to latch on,
a bit of their tail will break off in your fingers,
mocking you with its smallness,

a strange reminder
of something that tangoed away
and turned to dust as the morning came.

Polina Fradkin

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

She looked pretty sitting on a hill in the park at dusk, reading a book, surrounded by the kinds of vividly yellow daisies one only sees in movies, and there was nothing around her but air and earth until she heard sneaky steps stealthing behind her, so she finished the sentence she was reading, placed her finger on the page, and carefully turned her head only to see a large grey wolf's wet nose hovering over her right shoulder — and she said, “hello, Wolf,” and he said, “hello, child, I am here to eat you,” and she expelled an annoyed sigh and replied, “I certainly didn't expect you, Wolf,” raising an eyebrow, and as she proceeded to ask if she could at least finish the book, the wolf, cocking his head and narrowing his beady eyes on her slim figure, replied with a sniff, and sat beside her, resting his furry wolf head on her soft, warm, human lap as she took her time flipping through the pages of her book and occasionally petting the animal, and the technicolor sun was setting and the wind was kissing the bowing flowers and the picture of the Beauty and the Beast was serene and beautiful, and when the park ranger took his daily stroll in the morning, he found a small, neat pile of bones resting by a closed book, in the middle of a field of bright yellow daisies.

Polina Fradkin
UNCHARTED

I fell off the chart this year.

I was on a wild horse ride, leaning forward, steadily gazing out, galloping at full speed through thousands of years of human history. I thought, what if I fall off? What if I die? The thing was, I wasn't afraid. In fact, when the horsemen caught up to me, shouting in Arabic "Shwai! Shwai! Slow down! Slow down!" and my noble steed acquiesced to their control, I felt it almost ended too quickly. I couldn't stop grinning. I didn't want to get off. "COOL," I spoke aloud to no one in particular, eliciting strange looks from the surrounding old American tourists in safari hats, cargo pants and white button downs — the most typical visitors to Petra. When I got to the bus and joined everyone who walked back from the Nabatean ruins, I was once again overexcited Polina, babbling on about some kind of crazy horseback riding experience that nobody else could understand. This was the first day I fell off the chart.

It was atop a dune on the edge of the Sahara that a few friends and I decided to write a communal poem to bury in the sand forever. "Life is beautiful," Cami said. "We bow to the sands of time," Meghan recited. "If you say something gay, I'm gonna throw up," Sydni told her boyfriend. The note was written and buried, the sun rose, and we tumbled down. All I wanted was to scream and laugh and do a cartwheel and run into the place where the crimson sun kisses land and meditate and make sand angels and take all my clothes off, and I did everything but the last one. Petty concerns dissolved. Whatever shoes I brought with me, or forgot to bring with me, didn't matter anymore. Freedom from the physical. Oneness with the desert.

We sped through the Saharan night in a dusty Jeep, kicking up sand behind the

tires, clutching the windows, hair blowing everywhere. Laughter. Heart pumping. I've never been so off road — my life has never been so off road. We barreled towards the full moon, toward the taunting lights in the distance — appearing and disappearing by the second. The desert is simple, as is Lahsan, the jolly driver, racing the other cars, jolting us up and down. Sharp turn here, 360 here. We went on as if forever, plunging further into the middle of nowhere, into whatever constitutes the opposite of civilization. "I'm untraceable," I thought.

We danced in a Berber village to the shrill, perfectly imperfect unison of women's voices piercing my ears, the high pitched "AYAYAYAYEEEE" and the drums beating through my body like a second heartbeat. The music pulsing through my every cell, the earthy, real smell of fire and ash swirling around the crisp air, and I was moving my body and laughing like I could die now and be happy forever. I threw my head back, gazing up at the stars in the pitch black sky, entranced in a state of nirvana, on another earth, in another life... time meant nothing. I had fallen backwards into a swimming pool of hedonistic abandon, eyes closed and arms outstretched.

We slept on a Jerusalem hostel rooftop to get away from our parents during break. Nighttime meant dancing, drumming, wandering narrow streets, floating through crowds of loud, drunk Israelis, trying not to get hit by the light rail. Morning meant waking up huddled under mountains of blankets, limbs intertwined to a position of perfect warmth. Above us, birds scattered across a pale blue sky. Bliss.

We wrote on the Lennon wall in Prague, singing "Across the Universe," reading snippets from the palimpsest of paint and pen marks and Beatles quotes that had gathered, written by youth in peaceful protest against Soviet regime, lasting over the decades, still changing day to day. The flux and flow of humanity and history suddenly overwhelmed me. What might my friends be doing right now? Checking instagram photos during a particularly boring lecture? The only true stability in the world, I thought, is raw human connection and self-understanding. I wrote it on the wall, but the next day it was already painted over. So it goes.

We floated down the Ganges, bearing witness to the circle of life. Bathing, swimming, washing, excreting, cremating... A river to us, a mother to them. Ma Ganga

loves and cares and calmly ripples, beckoning in her children, old and young. The stench hits first, then come the bare, calloused feet and bindi'ed foreheads and beautiful Saris of all colors- no two are identical. "India — where even the homeless people are chic," I crudely thought to myself. That night, we waited for the train out of Varanasi for four hours, marinating in our sweat and holding in our pee. An emaciated cow ate fresh vomit out of the garbage bin. Monkeys and cockroaches skittered across the platform. A mummified corpse lay peacefully on the other side of the tracks. My friends deliberated the body.

"Why would someone just LEAVE it there?"

"It's not like it's gonna go anywhere..."

Space here is an internal phenomenon, I realize, and it lacks compartmentalization. The outdoors is a bathroom, a living room, a bedroom, a concert venue, a waste basket, a holy place. My mother, however, goes into cardiac arrest when the table isn't immediately cleared of dirty dishes.

We navigated Israel alone, and when the buses stopped on Saturdays, we hitch hiked. One day, we trekked for hours on the cliffs by the sea. Gradually stripping off layers of clothes as the heat swelled, we went on along the unmarked paths, up steep rocks, down to cool water, trying to find the paragliding site, our final destination. The relief of arrival was followed promptly by flight. Feeling my legs running on land, then suddenly on air, then dangling in space. I digested a huge gust of wind and looked down. For fifteen minutes, I had a great view of the nude beach below.

We hiked all night through the Negev. At the top of a plateau, the group sat down and soaked in the silence of the night, waiting patiently for our Israeli guide to say something. Finally, standing erect in the center of the circle, he spoke.

"Mah osim bechaim?" What do we do in life?

"Holchim mi eyruah le eyruah," he said. We wander — from event to event. I thought of my life. My high school, my gap year, college, marriage, grad school, family, career, retirement. The end.

"Mah yesh yoter bechaim?" He asked: What is there more of in life?

"Eyruim, o zman she bein eyruim?" The events, or the moments in between the

events?

He picked up a rock, and turned it in his hand for a long moment. “We walk over so many of them,” he said. “So many rocks that are speaking, calling to us. Pressing on us. Do we even notice them?”

“Hamidbar Medaber. The desert is speaking. Try to listen.”

The more I listen — the more world I see and the more people I meet — the less I know. I have yet to see a sliver of the life that earth contains, and it cripples me, and humbles me, and makes me crave more all at once. I know nothing, really. I merely sing the praises of electric sunsets, snow-capped peaks, warm, crisp bread, a shoulder to rest your head on during long bus rides, an especially wonderful Zumba class. All the small rocks beneath our feet. My spirit is forever on a crazy horse ride, forever riding full throttle through the night in a little black Jeep — but the naked desert, quiet and motionless in her subtle grace, has pierced my heart. Little beauties slip past the senses so quickly — but here I am, in my own body, my soul having been turned inside out and wrung and laid flat to soak in the sun anew.

I fell off the chart this year. I didn't get back on. I don't think I ever will.

Logan Gardner

THE MEDITATIONS OF A WRITER NEAR DEATH BY AUGUST ROSE

The title was on the page. She became very attached to her titles. They came to her suddenly and rarely changed. She named her works like she would've named her children. She looked for a few words that told the whole story. Overall, she thought this title was fairly good. It was probably the last title she would ever write, so she was glad of this. It was her story: its final chapter.

August Rose had never been particularly fond of her name. She'd never known what to call herself. August didn't strike her as a first name. August was a signifier of time: a month, or an age. She'd always hated "Auggie" as well.

Some of her most emphatic tantrums occurred when somebody called her that. Her stepchildren and husband used to tease her by telling her that they were going to put Auggie on her tombstone. She swore that she would haunt them forever if they tried.

August's husband, Timothy Carver, had insisted that she not take his name when they married. By this time, August had already published two novels, under her real name. She remembered sitting at the kitchen table in his one-bedroom apartment, having the debate.

"August Rose is your name, honey, and if you stuck a Carver on the end then I don't think anybody would ever take it seriously," Tim had told her. She could still remember the exact placement of his palm on the aged wood, and which light bulbs in their chandelier had been flickering. The gentle curve of his jawline, tempered by shadow and a barely visible stubble, the soft laughter present in his brown eyes. She

could smell dinner cooking on the stove next to them: chicken pesto. Tim loved to cook dinner. He delighted in what he saw as a role-reversal in their relationship. He liked to think of himself as progressive.

I know that, for most people, memories tend to disappear with age, August wrote. I've found that for me it's quite the opposite. It's as if my brain knows that, because it will be dead soon, there is no reason for it to worry about the emotional pain that its recollections might cause me. Maybe it just isn't so scared of the pain anymore.

She sighed. The first paragraph was done. It hadn't been as hard as she'd expected it to be.

My entire life, I have hidden behind another name, inside another body. My duty has been to my characters and so I have tried not to muddle them with too much of myself. But now, dear reader, I'd like you to know me. I'd like you to hear what I hear, see what I see, feel what I feel, in my final hour.

It started out as a cough. It didn't bother her too much at first. Then she woke up one morning and found that it was, for a short period of time, almost impossible to swallow. She went to see her family's physician in his office, which was a fifteen-minute cab ride from her house in Brooklyn, and he ran a few tests. He didn't find anything much; it was probably just a virus, but if it didn't get better in the next week or so she should go to the hospital and have them see if they could find anything else.

Her household doctor's confidence was inspiring to her. But it became less inspiring as her cough became more persistent, her throat became more sore, and she began to eat less and became slightly thinner, despite being waiflike to begin with. After two and a half weeks of symptoms, she decided that she could wait no longer and went to the hospital.

August never understood why people hated hospitals until she'd been told she was going to die in one. There were lights in the lobby that changed color periodically, from green to purple to red to blue and then back again. There was a gift shop that sold candles and teddy bears. All the attendants smiled at her. She went to general care and described her symptoms. They sent her to a doctor in another part of the building. They needed to run some tests. She waited for hours. She enjoyed being there. She wrote in

the cafeteria, which she thought served food and coffee that was, overall, not half bad.

When she returned to the office, nobody was smiling at her anymore. There were two men sitting in the room. One was white, one was Indian. She didn't think the white one ever introduced himself, or maybe the introduction had been erased from her mind by what had followed. There was a silence that she was unable to confront. Finally, the white one said,

"Ms. Rose, this is Dr. Ganesh from our radiology department," he said.

And that's it. This is the only day I specifically can't remember. They explained my options, they allowed me to take a tour of their facilities, they ran more tests. And I can't remember any of it. My brain was stuck on the colored lights in the lobby, green to purple to red to blue, and then back again.

August Rose was diagnosed with extensive stage small-cell lung cancer at age 74. Her tumor had been in metastasis for weeks. Cells had broken off of it, entered her lymph system, and were rampant in her body. Her tumor was inoperable. Her projected life expectancy was eight months with treatment, three months without.

August's career as a writer began at age twenty-three when she was published in *The New Yorker*. Her story, "Love For A Weary Toy Soldier," was published, and rapidly became one of the most well-known stories in the magazine's history. It was the first step in her career, and a promising one.

People have been asking me the same question my entire life, she continued. August, what are you going to do next? What I've realized is that I've spent all my time asking myself the same question. And now I finally know the answer: die.

It didn't feel good to put it on the page. The page always forced her to confront what was real and what wasn't. Now that the words were there, there was no longer denying that death was real, and coming.

She exhaled heavily. She had just acknowledged for the first time that she was going to die. It was time for a cup of tea. She stood up and left her computer, which was in her office with a view of the front yard. She went through her dining room and into the kitchen, filled the kettle with water, and set it on the stove. She turned it up to high.

Tim had always brought her tea when she was writing. Sometimes he made Chai stirred with milk and sugar, sometimes Chamomile with just the sugar, occasionally orange blossom with neither. He never asked her which she would prefer. He picked one, and brought it to her.

Since he died, there was nothing that August found more difficult than choosing a teabag. She realized, to her dismay, that she didn't want to choose for herself. She'd loved having the choice made for her.

These days, August spent a lot of time wandering her own home. Since her diagnosis, it had steadily begun to feel like a museum. Everyone who used to make use of the space now rarely did; August didn't have children of her own, although the twins Tim had brought into their marriage felt like they were hers.

Their rooms, the master bedroom, and the entire upstairs were now unused. August hadn't slept in the master bed since her last night with her husband. She'd taken to sleeping on the couch in the family room. She would either watch TV on the flat screen Tim had bought to watch sports, or toss and turn until she could form words in her mind to type onto her computer. It was harder for her to keep up with her stories now, but she did it because she was going to be dead soon and that meant all her characters were going to die with her.

When she heard the teapot start to whistle, she returned to the kitchen and made her tea. She went with Chamomile, because it was the most comforting.

She sat down, took a sip from her cup, and then continued to write, *I know it's not a comforting thought, that I lived my entire life just to die in the end. But it's worth bringing up. Sometimes, I needed to think like that just to survive. But I worry that, in all the time I spent surviving, I wasn't even really alive.*

Small cell lung cancer is less common than non-small, and spreads more quickly. August sometimes wondered what had made the cancer choose the small cells of her lung tissue. It was hard for her not to personify the cluster of strangers inside her. She saw them not as weak or evil, but bored. They were cells that were tired of doing their jobs. Instead of conforming to the whole, they had decided to rebel against it. And now she was paying for their mistakes.

Sometimes she had a hard time admitting that the best times of her life had happened before she'd met her husband. After her first book became a bestseller, she decided she was going to follow in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway and James Baldwin and all the other sordid, drinking geniuses of America that have grown tired of the new and become infatuated with the old.

For a young writer, there is no better city in the world than Paris. She was trapped in a reverie, no longer conscious of the difference between what she saw in her mind and the words that flew onto the page as fast as she could will them there.

The entire city feels like a work of art. Anytime I sat in the café and drank a cup of coffee, or wandered into a museum, or a bar late at night, or even a deserted alleyway, I was possessed by the strange and wonderful feeling that I would walk onto a canvas by mistake and be stuck there, never to move or feel anything again. In Paris, my cheeks were always rosy and my eyes were always wide and the world was so very, very big. It was in Paris that I began to die.

August remembered it well. She'd been in Montmartre, a district known for its white marble-domed Basilica and its chic nightclubs. It had been a moony, wine-drinking night spent with a few of her friends and a beautiful artist named Adrien Cru. She'd been talking to Adrien all night. He was too beautiful for her, she knew it, but he didn't seem quite so far off after a night of wine and conversation.

He grew closer to her slowly, warmer. They were separated from the rest of their party, and he'd taken her to sit on the steps of the Basilica and talked about the nature of love, the desire for something simple and clean.

He'd pulled out a pack of cigarettes without breaking eye contact, slid one gently between her lips and held a light to it. It was an odd thing for him to do, August thought when she looked back. But, in the heat of a Parisian summer's night, it had felt like the most intimate, sacred gesture of love that one human could make to another. She didn't even cough, she was so transfixed by him. They'd kissed after they each smoked one, and then they walked arm-in-arm back to his spacious apartment in Ile Saint-Louis.

Her relationship with Adrien Cru had lasted as long as her notion of being an expatriate. She'd grown weary of the romantic and the fanciful, and again was in

search of something truthful, something she thought she'd find in America. She broke Adrien's heart, in the end, which was something that still surprised her to this day.

Adrien had left his mark though. For the rest of her life, the taste of burning tobacco on her tongue would remind her of Paris, of art, of the feeling of Adrien's skin against hers. She needed to remember, she told herself. If she stopped smoking, then there was nothing left of her youth but a bunch of words. She smoked on and off for more than three decades before she finally managed to kick the habit for good. It was enough time.

Her cough had become a violent hacking sound that wracked her entire body. Her lungs, riddled with cancerous cells, were struggling now to produce enough oxygen to keep her sustained. Things were moving very fast inside her, so fast she could practically feel it.

Death, at a certain distance, casts an unflattering light. I look back, and I can see every little pitfall that got me. Most of them seem so plain to me now, so easily avoided. If I'd been just a little wiser, then maybe I could've lived forever. But it's too late now. It's too late.

She was typing so loudly at this point that her "s" key came loose. August always attacked her keyboard mercilessly when she wrote, and the "s" key had most heavily paid the price. Late in his life, Tim admitted that he'd sometimes sit outside her door and listen to her hammer on it. Like everything he'd done and not done, it haunted her.

Of all the pitfalls I fell into, the one that I never could've avoided was love. When I look back, there is nothing that I find more difficult to explain or more indispensable. We are born to love, and we die to love. Such is the burden of human existence.

August sobbed and laughed at the same time when she was alone. This made it very hard to type, she found.

Early in her marriage to Tim, August picked up the habit of smoking in the bathroom when she was upset with him. They'd have a fight, and she would feel terrible. She'd want to get back at him somehow, because she would be angry. She knew he hated it when she smoked, especially when she did it in the house. She'd go to great lengths to ensure he never found out. She'd lean out the window, and keep a towel under the door, and light a candle. She even did it once or twice after she'd quit. It felt

to her like the only punishment that fit the crime, whatever it was.

Tim got run off the road and into a tree by a semi on the highway at age sixty-nine. August had admitted her vice to him in the final fifteen minutes of his conscious life, sobbing and begging for forgiveness while she clutched his hand desperately. He'd laughed at her,

"Of course I forgive you. I'm over here dying, and you're worried about a few packs of cigarettes in the bathroom. You still are something, August Rose."

She hated when most people laughed at her, but with Tim it had been different. When he laughed at her, it was out of sheer amazement. She never rebuked him for it; she was glad for that.

At first, August hadn't believed that life was worth living without him. When she was healthy, she still wished she was dead on a lot of days. She was lost, without purpose. Cancer changed that.

Once I got past the shock of realizing death was imminent, I discovered something that I really knew all along. Life is wonderful. Rain clouds, lost parking spots, forgotten commitments, all now feel so insignificant in the light of a new day. I no longer become irritated with people. I see three hundred small blessings every day that I didn't notice before my diagnosis. And about two hundred of them are wrapped up in things that used to annoy me.

She was set upon by a fit of coughing then that left her with her head on the desk, tears forming in the corners of her eyes. August decided to get up and go for a walk. She closed her laptop, put it in a bag, and walked out her front door. She and Tim had chosen to settle in Brooklyn because Tim wanted to send the twins to a private school nearby and August had always had romantic notions about New York City and its tall dreams girded with steel.

They'd bought a pleasant little colonial near Prospect Park for a large sum. August's books were selling well, and Tim wasn't doing so bad himself as an advertising executive, so they hadn't been very worried about money. The first night they'd spent there, the twins had gotten scared by the rattling of the water heater and crawled into their bed. Aaron had kicked her in the hip on accident, and then kissed it to make it better.

August had always felt strongly about living with green space nearby. She liked to know it was there, like the suicide net under the Eiffel Tower. She loved trees, especially the ones with hollows and knobs that looked like faces. With these, she would sometimes try to casually converse. She wasn't sure if they could hear her, but if they could she thought they'd very much appreciate the company.

Her favorite tree in Prospect Park was a sprawling willow which she could disappear under if she ever didn't want to be found. Its limbs were sheltering, and offered an emerald screen from reality when one so desired it. It had an enormous, yawning mouth with a single whorl above that reminded her of a half-closed eye. It was grandiose but slothful, solitary but content. It was for this tree she that she headed to continue her address.

She didn't bother to brush aside the dewy leaves as she ducked beneath the canopy. She didn't wipe away the droplets they left on her cheeks, either. This way, the willow cried for her. And if it didn't, then it was still good to feel anyway.

She crossed her legs and sat down beneath it, saying the words aloud for the tree's benefit:

I've taken life the best way I know how. I've attempted to let everything pass over me and through me, so that I could turn it into good fiction later. Hemingway once said something like, "Writing is easy. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." Although this strikes me as somewhat melodramatic, I see his point.

All I have ever done is attempted to leave my soul on the page. I have tried to be honest with myself about what I've found there, even when I've found things that are ugly. It was painful sometimes, but at the end of the day I can't say I regret it.

August loved all her characters, but her favorite character ever was the subject of her first short story: a somber, thoughtful man named Mr. Hale. Mr. Hale lost his lover in a car accident, and God decided to give him a series of temptations. After he resisted all of them, God appeared to him and said,

"I've come to offer you one last choice, Mr. Hale. First, I'll ask you to name your price. I'll put you wherever you want to be: a throne or a stage or a desert island, anywhere. I'll hand you a blank check, with my name on the dotted line. You can start

fresh, and you can start better. You can make your own destiny.” It was the first and only time God would ever make anyone that offer.

“What’s the other option?” Mr. Hale asked.

“I’ll give you a coin toss. You call it right, and you can have her back. Call it wrong, and you walk out of here with nothing.”

“Heads,” Mr. Hale said without a moment’s hesitation. And the story ended with the coin in the air. She loved Mr. Hale because he’d been willing to put it all on the line. She loved that he’d known the odds, known the most logical decision, and then been able to ignore it all for the sake of his heart. It was this ability, the ability to choose to ignore simple logic, that August found to be the most compelling thing about people.

I’ve spent a lifetime worrying about what’s going to happen after I die. Now I find that I don’t much care. Maybe I’m going up, maybe I’m going down, maybe I’m gone for good, maybe I’m coming back around. It all seems equally plausible at this point. But I know that, whatever’s coming next, I’m not ready for it, and I probably never really will be. I’m sure there are people who are more ready than I am, but it isn’t all that relevant. Time’s passing, whether you’re ready or not.

Now I’m talking to you. The stranger passing by, the one who has never seen me by day. This life, the one you’re living while you read this silly last address, is the best thing that you’re ever going to be guaranteed. The time you’ve been given is something that every corpse in every grave in every cemetery in the history of time would do anything for. And it’s going to go fast.

August breathed in. The breaths were coming more and more shallowly now. She looked up at the willow tree, and wondered not for the first time how old it was. She hoped nobody ever found out. There was a feeling she got when she knew the end was coming. It was a feeling that opened her up inside, expanded the membranes of her lungs and left a hollowness in her belly. She’d realized long ago that the end was at worst a relief and, at best, bittersweet.

Now I know it’s frightening. I’ve spent seven and a half decades being scared, and believe me I still am. I don’t know how to make the most out of the time you’ve been given. But I do know when I make the most out of mine.

When I look back, and I see everything that I’ve done, the things that I’m most proud of are the

things that I was able to leave behind. The things that I've carried with me: possessions, memories, beliefs, flesh, are all going to be useless when the lights go out.

My only hope for you now is that you can learn how to give away as much of yourself as possible. The things that I've given away, they're the things that matter the most to me now, so close to the end. Because they are the things that get to carry on.

And now the only thing left to say is thank you. Thank you for sharing in my words, because my words are all that is left of my soul. I wish you small wonders in quiet places, and the serenity to find life beautiful even in times of trouble.

Occasionally other things, but always your friend,

August Rose.

She hit the save button and closed her laptop. She put the computer back in her bag, ran a gentle hand along the bark of the willow, and then departed from Prospect Park. She returned home and opened the front door, which she'd left unlocked. She sat down at her desk, opened her computer again, sent her agent an email with her last document attached, with a little note of thanks in the body. She turned off her computer, and walked laboriously up the stairs. She went to the master bedroom at the end of the hall.

The bed had been neatly made for months. She pulled back the covers, and slid in on her side of the bed, the side closest to the bathroom. She threw her own pillow on the ground and reached across the bed and grasped her husband's and pulled it towards her. She put her face in the pillow and breathed in his scent, which was still perfectly preserved after years and years of contact. The memory of him no longer felt so far away. It came in through her bronchial tubes and reached her lungs, and she realized that they didn't hurt any longer.

Matthew Lee

THE TAILOR IN DHARAVI

Pairs of wary eyes watched the man in the pressed khaki uniform walk across the filthy, trash-strewn ground. He seemed to gleam from head to toe: the pomade in his hair, the brass badges on his chest, and the polished black boots on his feet stood in stark contrast to the rusted tin walls surrounding him. He strode with a familiar ease, deftly sidestepping oily puddles and dripping structures. Two little children playing in the street stopped and stared curiously at him, only to be scolded and quickly rushed inside by their nearby mother. The man unhesitatingly turned left through a narrow alleyway, then another, walking down a path so congested he had to shimmy sideways for a brief stretch. His boots were now covered with grime, but he didn't mind. He didn't mind for the first twenty years of his life.

The man stopped in front of a shack, indistinguishable from the countless others to an outsider. A dirty tarpaulin curtain hanging down from a bamboo pole served as a doorway. The man tapped a boot on the shack front, gently rattling the corrugated metal. Two beggars smoking nearby glanced over at him and began talking rapidly. The man impatiently continued tapping his boot and pretended not to notice. He spoke in an exasperated tone.

“Arrey, I can hear you in there. I’m coming in.”

A tall, bearded man of around forty emerged shirtless from the shack with a tape measurer hanging jauntily around his neck. He wore a look of wide-eyed surprise on his browned face.

“Madjid. What brings you back to our Dharavi?”

The two men embraced each other fondly. Madjid fixed the man with a tired smile.

“Vedant, it’s a bit of a story. Do you have time to talk?”

“We better step inside. People will get curious about what a policeman is doing in the heart of our slum, nah?”

Vedant drew back the plastic curtain, stooping beneath the low doorframe. He hastily tidied the cramped space, shifting about piles of cloth. The inside of his shack, aside from smatterings of inevitable rust from Mumbai’s humid heat, was neat and orderly. The floor looked regularly swept and his furniture- a wooden chair, a plastic table, and a metal rack stuffed with strangers’ clothing- regularly dusted. A lovingly maintained sewing machine sat on the tabletop alongside multicolored spools of thread. Vedant dragged out a propane stove and a blackened kettle from the corner, busying himself with making a pot of chai. He opened his mouth to speak, but stopped when he glanced at the grave expression on Madjid’s face. He decided to let Madjid speak first.

Madjid decided to start with polite inquiries. “How is your tailoring business doing?”

“It’s been very well, very well indeed, I’ve been getting many referrals. If all goes well in the coming year, I’m hoping to get a larger space.”

“Certainly better than collecting cans and bottles, no?”

Vedant chuckled nostalgically. “We were damned rascals back then.”

The two men sat in brief silence while the water started to boil. Madjid’s voice cut tentatively through the sound of bubbling liquid.

“You probably know I didn’t just come here to catch up.”

“Yes, you said you had a story to tell me? You look like you’ve seen your grandmother’s ghost. Spit it out, man.”

“I just found this out a couple days ago- in one month, the city government is going to try and demolish part of Dharavi. They are going to come in with bulldozers and the police force and level everything.”

“Psht, this is what you come to tell me? They will come and knock down a few shacks, make a show, but then they will give up after we pay them some baksheesh. We can rebuild in a matter of hours.”

“They are serious this time. The government has signed a multimillion rupee deal

with the property developers. They are not going to demolish all of Dharavi, but a sizeable chunk. Definitely this neighborhood because it's near the financial district."

The kettle started boiling over, drops of hot water dotting the dusty ground. Vedant poured the scalding tea into two glasses, and steam rose up, thickening the already sweltering air with the smell of cardamom and cloves.

"We police are authorized to use force if there is any resistance. It won't be safe here for you if you stay."

Vedant snorted derisively. "What, you expect me to just leave? Where the fuck will I go? What about my business, hmm? Next thing you'll tell me is that there's an open spot at the Colaba station."

"If you leave now, you'll have enough time to start over. Enough time to move your things, find a new place, tell your customers where you're going."

"Bah. You think it's so easy? You don't remember what it's like, you with your uniform and polished boots. I'll be struggling to survive again."

"Listen, I can lend you some mon—"

Vedant looked offended. "Nonsense. I will stay, you will do what you need to do, life will go on. I can't afford to leave my home."

Madjid lingered over his chai, contemplating what to say. He saw the steely determination in his friend's intelligent black eyes, and knew that he was not going anywhere.

The two men finished their glasses. Madjid lit a thickly rolled cigarette and passed one to Vedant.

"I'm sorry that I can't offer more help."

Vedant stared into his glass. "You're just doing your bloody job, they command you to help them demolish Dharavi, what can you do? You don't want to end up back here."

"In a different life we would be fighting together."

Vedant exhaled, expertly blowing a succession of smoke rings.

"Maybe, maybe not. Who cares to speculate on such things?"

One month later

The blood-red sun rose, silhouetting the wild cluster of plywood, plastic, and metal a million residents called home. The clank of heavy machinery and the collective fidgeting of several dozen uniformed men punctuated the peace of early dawn. Something in the distance started to add to the cacophony, slowly building in volume, ascending from a dull chatter to a defiant roar. Madjid crushed his cigarette beneath his boot.

A stream of slum dwellers poured out, ringing the street entrance to the slum. All the policemen on the perimeter made a reflexive twitch towards their batons. A crackly loudspeaker sounded:

“You are illegally inhabiting government property. Leave now and you will not be harmed.”

A tall, bearded man of about forty spoke calmly from the ring, projecting his voice: “These are our homes. There are families here, businesses, communities. We are staying. You, on the other hand, have no place here.”

The loudspeaker sounded yet again: “This is your final warning. Those who do not cooperate will be arrested.”

The bearded man stood his ground, planting a bamboo pole he carried firmly onto the ground. Others followed suit.

The police commander lowered his loudspeaker. He turned towards Madjid. “Officer Dalmia. Apprehend that madarchod.”

Madjid did not move. Everyone seemed stunned into silence.

“Officer Dalmia. That was an order. Arrest him!”

Madjid locked eyes with Vedant. He could hear him clearly though neither man moved their lips.

Do what you have to do. We all do what we have to do.

Daphne Li
LIFE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Where the waves lead to
you will find
him there. My brother
who set a fire
to his own heart. It burned
and burned.
He watched the ashes flow
gently in the sea salt breeze,
and float in the stirrings of the edgeless
storm.
My brother who carried a skull
on his back.
His one desire: to burn
and burn until at one he is
with the sea.
Every ghoul wants a piece
of driftwood made
of his soul.
And I,
with a match ready
to take his place.

Nicholas Malin

NIGHT AT THE OPERA

I wish, at times, I were born
A British actress,
Slaloming through the midmorning fog like
A dainty dighted set of Danish dove wings.

O' isn't that lovely,
Howard? I trekked halfway down
The bazaar street, sifting near raucous
Red handkerchiefs and the flailing mud

Covered feet of brown children, and
I discovered a particular
Opulent set of opera glasses with a black
Handle and gold, trimmed around the lenses.

Yes, but operas oft occasion themselves in
Peculiar places, where they were ne'er expected,
And I find I am near as often without a pair of specs.
So it seems, to me at least, they're worth the price of preparation.

Wait a moment! That man there, yes him, simply
Strolling toward the first baseman. Yes, the

One in the white trousers and striped smock
Did not chance to wag his waiflike club. And yet

There he stands, having a charming little chat with
That man there, whose face reminds me of a sassy
Sloth I encountered on our, Howard do you remember
Our trip to the South Atlantic, off the coast of Angola

I fucked Argus O'Hannigan in a bed made from
Crooked whalebones. Each one fractured at the ends
And in the center. A ring of termites danced the jitterbug,
Smacking their cheeks and snorting cocaine.

Come close, I've knit something spectacular in
The small space behind the couch, adjacent to
The pile of slime-slathered brown books.
It's a hat.

Sindhu Sreedhar

ATLANTIS

i'm sure you noticed
how sticky your fingers were between mine
and how the words
you drew in the sand got smashed under our toes.
and no matter how long we stayed,
the sand would always dry
and fall,
and it could never follow me home,
not trapped behind damp kneecaps
or between tiny toes.
there's nothing else to say,
and the painted blush on
my cheeks is chipping like promises.
how could we be
anything but plastic
in this plastic paradise?

Paul Stefanski

WOLF

As the legend goes, the world's most wicked men will always be hunted by a lone wolf.
I met him once.

I sat with my feet above the table, a cup of peach tea cooling in my palms. The room was drab—cement walls, a stark metal table, and a bent two-way mirror kept me company. I didn't mind it. I used the one metal lamp above me to examine the little cracks in the porcelain and try to find floating bits in my drink. There were none. The recipe was spot on, Samantha's recipe, and for once that meant something.

"You were a prisoner for twenty-three years?" the agent asked as he emerged from the maze of bureaucracy beyond the door. He wore a blue suit. I approved of the color, but he could have gotten away with a smaller size. "Your death certificate was filed so long ago, someone at the capitol had to overcome their dust allergy just to open the drawer."

"They still do that with paper?" I chuckled. I sipped my tea.

"And now you appear, days after seven of the world's deadliest men—your alleged captors—turn up dead in northern Mexico." He sat in the metal chair across from me, as if he expected my answer to take more than a few seconds.

"Wolf got them." I nodded.

"A wolf?" The man rubbed his face, perhaps in frustration.

"Just Wolf." I sipped the tea again. It sent warm shivers through my body. "Peter, the wolf, the artist."

* * *

They came in three white Cadillacs, kicking up dust against the cloudless horizon and stopping in a line just beyond my windows. I poured my tea, frothed the bag through the steaming water and added one cube of sugar, stirring as I approached the door. The sweet smell filled my nostrils and tempted me to take a burning sip. I grimaced at the taste—not enough peach, again.

Still, it burned less than the sight of their faces.

“Henry!” They shouted, in their own northern mesh of Spanish accents and Southern English. “Time to collect.”

I sighed, stirred my tea until it made a small whirlpool in the mug, let go to watch the stirrer spin in little circles with the beige liquid. I opened the door to feel the heat and humidity come over me, puddles of sweat forming instantly in my various cavities.

“Tea, gentleman?” I asked, opening my door as they emerged from theirs. They were each the same height, with simple bowl hats and black suits. They stood like statues, eyes shielded by tinted sunglasses and hands crossed at the waist. The man in the middle had a manila envelope with my name scribbled on the back, while the other two casually displayed their chrome firearms.

I tried to hide my shaking hands by forcing a second sip of the molten fluid down my throat. These visits were, by some design I supposed, like chewing rusty nails or getting a tooth drilled without Novocain.

“We are here for the harvest,” he said, extending the envelope. “Nothing more.”

“Yes, of course.” I nodded, sipping my tea again, spilling just a drop on my pressed white shirt. The sip burned the tip of my tongue. I rolled the blistered skin around on the roof of my mouth. “I have it, but I can’t give it to you yet.”

“We have your payment,” the man said, joggling the envelope. “As agreed. As usual. Do you intend to disappoint your boss?”

“No pay this month.” I shook my head and smiled, raising a steadying hand. “I have something else in mind.”

The man retracted the envelope. They stood silently. Their brown faces were

expressionless, not a bead of sweat despite the flogging sun-rays at their backs. My eyelids squinted into the golden light, sweat blurring my view. I blinked furiously.

My vision cleared in time to see the men had moved within inches of my door.

“You think our business is a joke?” he asked. The gentleman on his left holstered his pistol inside his sport coat and grabbed me by the neck. I dropped my tea and watched it soak into the welcome mat.

“This is not the first time we’ve had trouble with you, Henry.” They dragged me into the house and shut the door. My face pressed into the cheap, red embroidered carpet; I could hear the floor creak under their polished shoes as they waltzed around me. “The boss runs a tight ship. Any man who thinks he deserves special consideration better have an excuse that throws him back on his heels, else you get thrown overboard, eh?”

I rolled over and looked up at them, silhouetted above me in a neat triangle, faces and round hats making shadows against the dusty, glass chandelier. To the left was a raised coffee table, a crooked thing made of black, painted wood, a white tablecloth on top. Through the reflection on the chandelier I could just make out a square frame above my head, a redhead smiling from between the wooden cage, her timeless trap. For a second my mind brought me to the day we met, the days after, and the day the same three men took her from me. Her lips always tasted of tea, a semi-sweet concoction with a hint of peaches.

I never did prefer her recipe.

I looked away from the framed photograph, sighed.

“I need a man killed,” I said. “An American.”

About a week before the harvest, I found myself grieving in a pitiful fashion, again. I sat on my stool, slouched, elbows grinding against the scratched wood that had absorbed a coppery color from the booze that had spilled across the surface over the decades. The barman knew me by name. The deep reddish light beat against my aged face and stubble like an angered ocean against a cliffside, dark pupils barely visible be

hind the tired eyelids, and I considered how these days must always be the same. For ten years, on the morning after that stubborn mid-spring date, I would wake up in my bed with no memory of the evening before.

I was not a drinking man. I saved the holy water for those occasions when the scenery needed a bit of a lift. As the drinks settled into my mind, the lights would dance. The reflections of windows would wobble with reds and blues from the neon signs and tacky, torn lampshades that the owner refused to fix. The woman in front of me, a long-legged, catlike creature, clad in little more than a snaky, red-fur scarf that twisted over her chest and a neat, red string between her legs, smiled at me. Sometimes that smile made me forget she had been there since 1956, frozen in the fading frame, smiling since I first saw her, carrying deliveries door to door for three cents a package.

“I would sell my soul to meet a woman like that,” the man in the stool beside me hooted at the poster. He had a thick American accent. I thought him a fool, rambling like a savage, cast out by his own, no doubt— seeking refuge in this cartel-condemned hellhole. His jeans were torn, shirt stretched by gaudy muscles. He had a tattoo on his left shoulder, a white star with a yellow line around it.

Perhaps it was the alcohol, or just the taunting memories of countless times wandering into this bar alone and never saying a word, but I turned to him.

“I met one like her, once,” I said. “Red hair, too, just like that.”

The man looked at me. His left eye struggled to stay open. I assumed it was from the alcohol, even my own senses were fading, but never had I seen such a limpness in a man’s eye.

“Was she a dancer?” he asked.

“A dancer?” I frowned.

“Every man can appreciate a good pair of breasts,” he babbled. “Even a blind man, but few understand the elegance of a woman who can use her body like an instrument, strum at the heart strings with her arms, sing with her legs, beat her hips like a drum. The body can make music, sport, music that you can only hear with your eyes.”

He pointed at his limp eye as he spoke.

“No.” I shrugged, slouching back over the rotting counter. “No, she wasn’t a dancer.”

“A lover?” he asked.

I set my drink down. I watched him silently for a moment. He turned to me.

Orange lights from the street lamps beyond the fogged windows wrestled through the blanket of smoke and dust to shade the left side of his face with a reddish tint — high cheekbones and dirty beard.

“What brings an able-bodied man your age to my side of the border?” I changed the subject. “Surely there are better ways to spend your time than cooped up in this pit.”

“I could ask you the same question, sport.” He patted me on the back, took a swig of stale beer, and rattled the mug against the countertop. “Your skin may be browned from the sun, but I am not too drunk to see that you are not from around here.”

“Touché,” I muttered. “I wish most days I could leave, others I simply accept my fate.”

“You a prisoner?” He frowned.

“Of sorts.” I shrugged and swallowed a gulp of my own. “Have you got a name?”

“Wolf.” He tipped his mug and head back so far I was afraid he would fall backwards. “Or Pete.”

Peter Bentwood packed everything he owned into a standard issue, green army duffle when he was seventeen — a few pounds of handed down jeans and shirts, a superhero comic he’d won in a contest, a fake silver wrist watch, and twenty-three dollars. His father was a drunk, and Peter figured bullets beside brothers suited him better than wrenches and belts every night after supper. In war times, the staff sergeants never looked too closely at the papers of the cadets; Peter’s broad shoulders and scars only affirmed the sergeant’s once-over.

War brought on a shrill serenity Peter never found at home. Every explosion that rattled his ears delivered a ringing silence that froze the world, time, and pain. His senses became like an orchestra, each piece flowing beside the others, a melody that could bring the most powerful men to their knees. The mud and grime coated his

boots as they beat onward. Like poetry, the men moved across the wasted abyss. And when a man fell beside Peter, blood splashed his face and pooled around his soles, a rush would flood his mind like hounds on a hunt in an oil painting. He would cry with vengeance, with guttural instinct, like a song, and cease to think about the world. And when he killed, face to face with a man he had no reason to hate, nothing existed but him, the shaking corpse, and blackness, and to him, this was dance, the art of the body. In this place, Peter was safe.

For three years, war was his life.

Bentwood traveled with a squad of six men. The captain, Clarence Ridge, a Catholic through and through who loved his men like sons and brothers. Peter lost his boots once in knee-deep mud. Without missing a beat, Captain Ridge tossed his tough leather footwear over to him, offering little more than a nod as Peter took the gift in confusion, and watched his officer tread barefoot back to camp.

“Five men, and a wolf,” the commander would joke, watching the boys disappear into the forest with their truck.

Peter earned the name Wolf after his comrades claimed to have seen him bite through the neck of a man when his gun ran out of bullets. Stories like Peter’s spread through the camp faster than gossip at a small-town nail salon. The squad’s call sign was unofficially changed to “Wolf Pack.” They were gods amongst the mortals, and the first story only plowed the path for others. A legend surfaced that they had beaten sixty men and a tank without firing a shot by constructing a thin wall of shrubs and fallen branches on a cliffside and tricking the enemy into diving off the edge, picking off the stragglers with their knives.

On the fourth year of Peter’s tour, nearing the end, his camp was ambushed. It was the dead of night. Peter was in the recreation hall playing cards with the new recruits, who had heard his stories and were too nervous not to fold each time Peter raised the bet. Mortars, dirt, and dust fell like lava from the sky. The impacts rattled the camp as Peter ran through the burning canvas and screams.

He came across his captain just as a mortar fell by his feet. It was a sound Peter could feel in his cheeks, and blood soaked into his clothes. He dove after Ridge, the

soldier's body fused with the ground, like jam on toast, buried in the ditch left behind by the mortar that took his flesh. Peter scrambled through the hole, picking up pieces of flesh and bone, trying to fit them back together like a jigsaw puzzle. Only Clarence's voice could pull Peter out of his trance.

"I'm afraid," he said, grabbing Peter with a bloodied arm. There were places where the flesh was torn so deep Peter could see the bone underneath, yet the arm still gripped him like the body of a snake, and there was little left of his body from the hips down other than the red dust and chunks of flesh that were scrambled amongst the dirt.

"I can't survive this," he whimpered. "Can I?"

Peter shook his head. He looked down at his palms, filled with the bits of flesh and bone he had salvaged. He dropped them with a jump, as if he hadn't realized they were there until that moment. He looked up at Clarence.

"No," Peter said, cold. "No, you can't."

"My Ma always told me that I would see a light," he sobbed. He closed his eyes. "But there is no light. Only blackness."

"I'm not ready," he sobbed.

Peter released his hand. It fell like a sack, limp.

From his waist, Peter drew his knife, but there was no orchestra that night, no dance. He could feel only his heart beating in his mind, and the ring in his ears, and he could not move. He shuddered with each splintering impact as the base slowly burned. It wasn't until morning that they pulled him from the ditch, still clutching the blade in his fist.

Every survivor was honorably discharged. Peter fought the verdict, begged. "If no man could experience this trauma and be suited for war," Peter bellowed. "How could he be suited for the material world to which you force him to return?"

He was loaded on a plane with his brothers from the camp, dead and alive.

Peter never said a word.

* * *

“When I made it back to California, I found a job bagging groceries at a minimart off of eighty-eight,” Peter grumbled. “Well, you wouldn’t know what eighty-eight is.”

“Not exactly a hero’s arrival,” I mumbled.

“The first few months went by like a montage,” he said. “I barely remember them. My mind was still overseas, still in that ditch with Ridge.”

“Aye, I know what that’s like.” I nodded.

“Then the dreams came,” Peter continued. “I woke up screaming, sure my hands were bleeding or my legs were gone. They say fear is the unknown. This is only because they don’t know fear. They don’t cuddle up to it every night like it’s their whore.”

“The drinks keep the memories away then?” I asked.

“The dreams still come,” he cursed. “But the drinks keep me asleep.”

“And the story about the wolf? Is it true?”

“The wolf,” he laughed, a slow, drunken laugh. “If only the world knew the things the wolf has done. They would have me laced up in a white jacket, rocking to the songs in my own head at some nuthouse.

We sat in silence for a few minutes. I stared at the poster of the woman in red.

“Can you still fight?” I asked.

He turned, nodded.

“Mister Bentwood.” I smiled. “You’re going to be a hero again.”

I finished a final shot and muttered with the taste of liquor on my breath, “And I will be free.”

“An American?” the man asked.

“He gave me a hard time at a bar about a week ago,” I grumbled. “Roughed me up, asking a lot of questions about the boss. I think he may be with the American government. Either way, I want the bastard fitted by an undertaker before he wastes too much air.”

The men looked at one another briefly.

“This American.” The man stuffed the manila envelope into his jacket. “Where do

we find him?”

“The Rosa Buena Hotel, I think. He goes by the name Wolf.”

With that, the men slipped from my house, shrunk into their white cars, and drove toward town. I scrambled to my feet and picked up the phone, dialing a number off a napkin beside my spin dial phone. With each twist and click I felt my stomach churn.

“Pick up,” I prayed.

“Hello?” I heard Peter’s voice, awake, hung-over.

“My friend.” I smiled. “They’re coming for you. They will know everything you need. Good hunting, Wolf.”

I stepped from the cab into the frigid Connecticut air. As the wind chipped at my cheeks and stung my flesh with frost, I smiled and spun. In twenty-three years I had never realized how wonderful the cold could be. I stuffed my hands in my coat pockets and walked with some pace I couldn’t distinguish between one of urgency or leisure.

A car passed behind me, picking up muddied drops of slush and rain and spraying them without apology across my ankles. I kicked the water from the fabric of my jeans and continued onward, unfazed.

It was midday, but the street lamps were on, glowing orange through a low-settled fog. The smells brought back memories of a life I lost years before, wood fires and pumpkin pie in the fall, a life I was ready to let go, as I promised her I would, and make what I could of what this world left me.

Just beyond the next street was a pair of iron gates that read “Rose Wood Cemetery” above their rusted frame. I approached and stepped across their threshold without ceremony. In the back lot, a spot that never received the care it should have, were a pair of shin-high obelisks, no religious insignia to be found.

The right one read in chiseled out letters that had filled with ice, “Henry R. Stewart.” I chuckled and pat the head of the stone lightly with my fist. It was chilled, grabbing at my skin with each connection.

“Sit tight,” I said, looking over to the next carving.

“Samantha B. Stewart.” I nodded. I walked with reverence over to the rock. I knelt and rested my hand on the markings. They froze my skin and flesh, deep into the bone, but I didn’t move. For minutes or hours I sat and stared at her name until it was all that existed.

I turned and checked my pockets for the old house key, wondering if it would still work.

“Goodbye.” I nodded, as if answering a question.

A wolf howled in the distance.



Cellik Adams
SAUDADE
35 MM PHOTOGRAPH



Cellik Adams
TEMPTING TRANSCENDENCE
35 MM PHOTOGRAPH



Alix DeGraff
UNTITLED
ACRYLIC



Krysten Dorfman
INVERSION
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH



Haley Fox
MIND'S EYE, 2013
ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR (PEN WITH LAYERED PHOTOGRAPHS)



Kellie Halusbka

SELFIE

WATER-BASED PAINT/FOUND MATERIALS COLLAGE



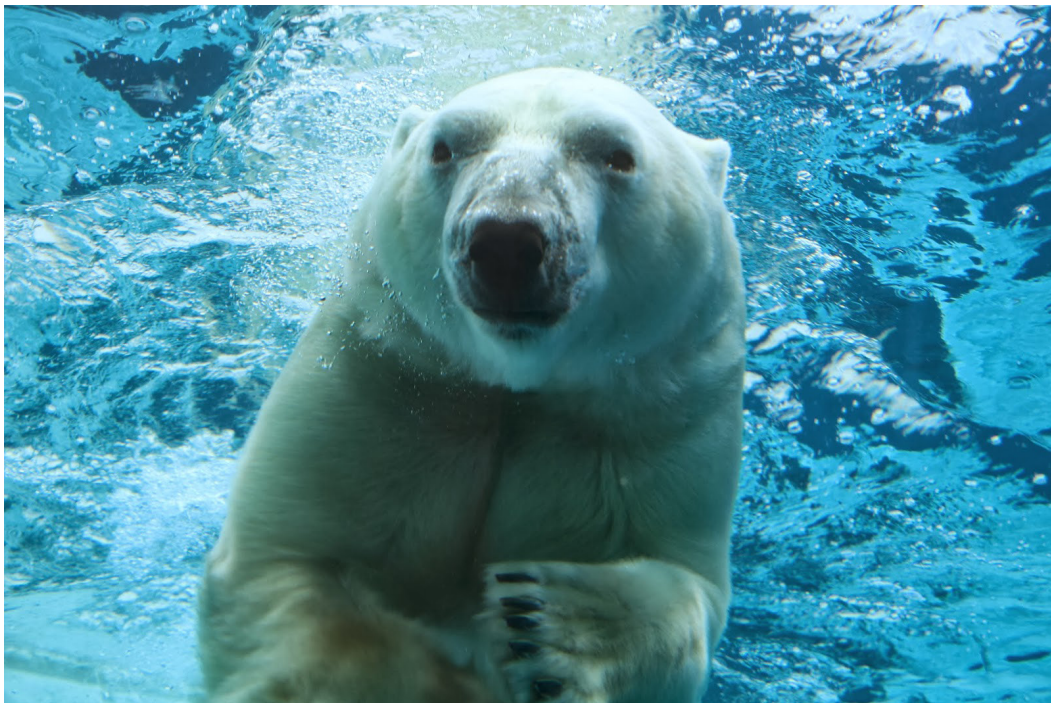
Tiffany Hong
FIRE AND ICE
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

Sonalee Joshi
INSPIRE
COLORED PENCIL





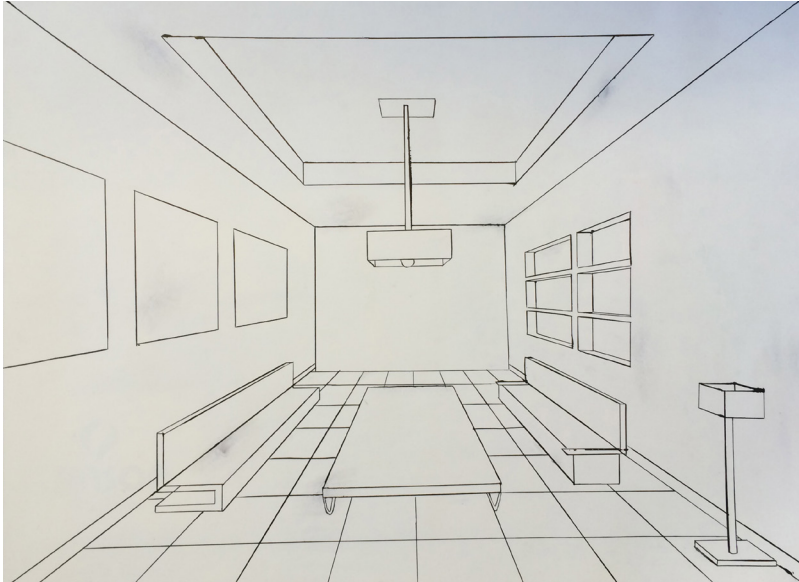
Eva Koester
THE PRESSURE OF PERFECTION
ACRYLIC



Amber Lam
UNTITLED
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH



Rachel Lee
SELF-PORTRAIT
ACRYLIC



Breanna McCarthy
UNTITLED
PEN



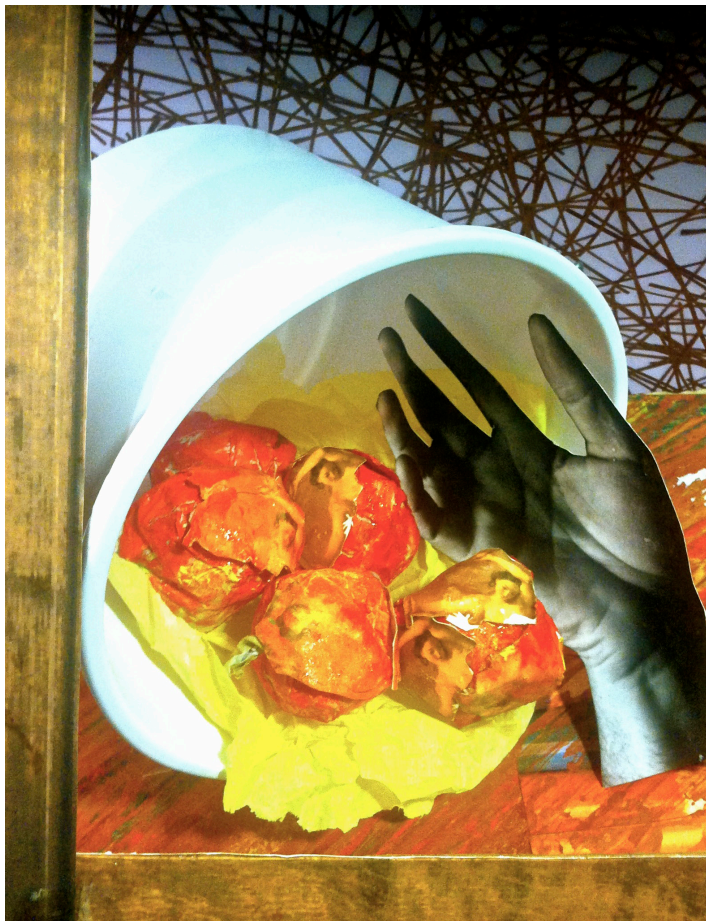
Alexander Moore
THE EUNUCH
PENCIL ON PAPER



Alexander Moore
THE GUGGENHEIM
PENCIL ON PAPER



Cesar O. Ruiz
SELF-PORTRAIT
ACRYLIC



Rebecca Schwartz

APPLES & HAND

DIGITALLY ALTERED PHOTOGRAPH WITH COLLAGE



Nicolas Tata
SELF-PORTRAIT
ACRYLIC



Adriana Zardus
LOUIS ARMSTRONG
SHARPIE, TEA, & WHITE-OUT



Adriana Zardus
STEELY DAN
SHARPIE & WHITE-OUT



Sydney Zelenak
SELF-PORTRAIT
ACRYLIC

Rachel Waddell
WILD RIDE

The auditorium is full of rows of chairs with bars above. There are clear plastic pipes twisting throughout. As the audience is being seated, a man stands on the stage alone. The background is a blue sky. He sings and starts to float. He slowly starts to rotate until he is upside down, five feet above the stage. He waits until everyone has been seated before speaking.

Man: Hello. Welcome. We might as well get this show on the road.

The bars above the seats come down, locking the audience into their chairs like a roller coaster.

Man: I do hope everyone has used the restroom. If not, I am very sorry for those next to you.

He slowly starts to move his legs and walks forward while still upside down.

Man: (reminiscent) Ahh, it was a long time ago when we learned to fly. Peter Pan got it wrong. It wasn't pixie dust. It was *Dixie Cups*. Of course the water came from a special place. It couldn't be normal water. It had to be the bottled water from the Winn-Dixie. One sip and whoosh.

The audiences chairs start to shake and rattle. People scream.

Man: Calm yourself. This isn't for the faint of heart. It is for the conscious of heart.

Or so the saying goes. So, I do hope everyone sampled the water before coming in. Or this will be a short ride.

Off Stage: Don't worry, we have some back here!

Man: Oh, (starts air-walking in circles) it seems that you won't be forced to fall to your deaths because you didn't read the sign that clearly said 'DRINK.' (stops and points at the audience) Go ahead.

The audience is sprayed with water from the roof with Dixie Cups falling all around. The audience should be wet but not drenched completely. Girls will be crying about their precious hair.

Man: Now that we have all properly followed the directions, we are ready to start. (points off stage) HIT IT!

The seats start to move. The plastic pipe is actually coaster rails.

Man: (floating higher until he is almost fifteen feet off the ground) See, there once was a bird named Albert.

A large stuffed puppet of a seagull comes out and flies in front of the seats while they inch along on the rails.

Bird: Mine, mine!

Man: This bird decided to fly around the world one day.

The bird quickly flies in a circle. The audience follows, swinging in a fast loop on the ride.

Man: Then the bird tried to fly as high as he could. He wanted to fly to the moon.

(starts rising again and is now twenty feet off the ground)

The seats start rising quickly and the audience can see a loop coming.

Man: But, he was caught in the high line wire of a famous tightrope walker who carelessly left it out.

The seats stop at the top of the loop and are still. They will be upside down.

Man: So he sat there for a while. (crosses his arms and watches.)

Thirty seconds go by.

Man: And then it falls to the ground.

The coaster falls at a very quick pace, causing lots of screaming. The man also falls. He lies unmoving on the stage.

Curtain falls.

Matthew Yodanis

²(AND THE SNOW WEEPS...)

This is a poem.¹

¹This is not the idea of a poem; this is not my idea of a poem. This is a synthetic compound pressed on chemically treated wood pulp. This is a poem. These are not my thoughts. These are purposeless excitations in a field. These are photons hitting cones in the back of your retina. This is an electric signal setting off chemicals in your brain- chemicals emitted because of a wavelength caused by a wavelength emitted from a synthetic compound on chemically treated wood pulp. Nothing here is meaningful; to be is; but I repeat myself. Stop finding God between the photons. A dozen cherubs -the ones you could find on the head of a pin- do not stuff particles that aren't always particles with meaning and fly serpentine into your eyehole and place meaning on chugga chugga neuron track(axons) shot straight to your consciousness. Do you see an image, a vista? Did a motherfucking Tableau Vivant burst through the page into your brain space?

(Did this line, no this sentence, no this word transfigure that image before your very eye?) No? But, this is a poem. This reveals nothing ineffable, only the effable. It is only the effable. There is no feeling or emotion here. This is your brain performing a function. Stains of ink, like coffee or semen, mapped to sounds. Sounds mapped to ideas. Ideas i.e. Memory. Sound i.e. memory. Images of stains of ink, like coffee or semen i.e. memory. This is you manipulating the past to create a present that is already the past. Remember the sound, the star, the Hendrix Guitar? Can you hear its feedback? How one strum spat from the speaker is overheard by the mic who spits a new sound out of the speaker and this goes on and on and the sounds grow and grow until castles made of sand drift into the sea and fill up the room with complex undulating sound...eventually? Did you think the ? at the end of that sentence kinda-sorta looked like a hook and that scared and aroused you and you pictured a personless hook dangling from a teenager's steaming red station wagon and the Soviet Union with its red and its hammer and hook, no, sickle and this gave you a shiver? But, is this a poem? You're cold, not in the palm-rubbing , fog-breath way, but the goose-pimples way. The there is no blood in your heart and subcutaneous thoughts nibble but you're not sure about what or where way. This is your brain on feedback loops. This isn't exactly a poem. These are your thoughts.²

Matthew Yodanis

THE APARTMENT

The ice was melting in my Captain and Coke as I lit my cigarette. The flame ate half the tobacco before I realized what I was doing. What can I say? I was preoccupied. Marshall and Mayhew wanted me out of the apartment, and their patronizing “subtlety” was doing nothing for my nerves. Let’s just say my drink was shaken, not stirred, and kept sloshing out of the glass. I couldn’t hear myself think over the clinking of the ice cubes and Marshall and Mayhew’s nasally voices.

“Well, if you can’t pay the rent, I’m sorry to say, Jack, you’ll just have to go.” Marshall lectured, snapping his pointer finger at me each time he ejaculated one of the last four syllables. The features of his face were overwhelmed by his hooked nose, like ticks under a hillock of dirt. His disapproving eyes looked down.

“But why are you raising the rent?” I asked. I tore the top off my pack trying to pluck another cigarette out of it.

“Oh, you know the way things are these days, son.” Mayhew patted my shoulder. I was three years older than he was and he called me “son.” I’m pretty sure he would’ve called me “old sport” if that Gatsby movie hadn’t come out so recently. “With this bloody economy in the toilet—”

“It’s on the upswing,” I muttered. He didn’t hear me. Mayhew, who was from a suburb in Rhode Island, appeared to have suffered acute brain damage because now he was spouting his bullshit fake British accent. His fat upper lip revealed his gums when he smiled and he breathed audibly from his nose.

“—And no one will be having a jolly good time soon. We’ve all made sacrifices, you know.” He poured himself a drink with his back to me. I glared at the checkered

pattern on his purple sweater vest.

“It only makes sense for your rent to go up when such circumstances arise,” Marshall continued. He tilted his head and raised both eyebrows to Mayhew to ask for a drink. Mayhew nodded and grabbed another tumbler. Marshall put his hands together and bowed. “And, unless you are completely oblivious, you know you use more electricity and water than the two of us combined.”

I couldn’t refute that. The only electronics M. and M. owned were two Mac-tops they used exclusively at Starbucks, while my room contained half a dozen screens that glowed from morning comedy article perusal to nightly Netflix marathons. There was the laptop, the dual-monitor tower, and the three game consoles attached to separate TVs of various sizes and resolutions. Marshall joked my pale skin was permanently tinted blue from all those glowing screens and blinking LEDs. I was also notorious for my hour-plus showers. Marshall’s banging on the door was part of my personal hygiene routine now.

I tried to inhale some tobacco-filled air, but Mayhew snatched the cigarette from my mouth with three fingers. He put it out in my drink and flicked it into the wastebasket. He handed Marshall his drink. “How many times do we have to tell you, you can’t smoke indoors? State law, you know.” They always waited till I’d lit the damned thing instead of telling me to cut it out when I pulled out the lighter. I don’t know how many packs I’d lost to their flicking. I sighed and tried to ignore their antics.

“But this place is rent controlled,” I said. “And utilities are included.” This gave them pause. They both stared at me. Marshall rubbed the back of his long neck, and Mayhew twisted the handlebars of his mustache.

“Well, chap, that’s neither here nor there,” Mayhew continued. He straightened his thin body. “‘Jack Donahue’ is inked on exactly zero lines of the rental contract. But do you know what names fill those very lines — in beautiful calligraphy, I might add?” Marshall walked rounds around the chic living room, sipping from his tumbler, one hand behind his back. The room was filled with modern leather furniture that preferred straight lines to comfy contours. “Marshall’s name—”

“And Mayhew’s,” Marshall finished. “You’ll have till tomorrow morning to pack up

and leave. A few days at most.”

“Now, if you’ll excuse us,” Mayhew said. He finished his drink, his long, pointed tongue flicking at the last drops of liquor dripping from the ice cubes. “We have a banquet to attend.”

“No, no, Mayhew.” Marshall said. He’d finished his drink and was rinsing the glass in the sink. “Tonight’s the gala. Next week’s the banquet.”

“Right,” Mayhew said. “Well, either way, get packing and do *not* wait up.”

I flinched when the door slammed shut. I poured myself another drink and lit up as I heard the tumblers in the lock click into place. “Well, fuck you two.”

When they left, I decided to drink as much of their alcohol as I could handle. I also resolved to finish what was left of my carton of cigarettes. Their bar covered the right wall of the living room. Illuminated shelves pulled straight from a night club (the pair had bought them from a one-word club that had gone out of business) contained enough alcohol to accommodate a Roman orgy. I swung a stool over the bar and stood on it to grab a few bottles from the top. Variations of grey from the “silver” short-backed couch to the “steel” imitation-silk curtains left the monochrome apartment without a sense of hominess. I started for my room, mouth to mouth with a beautiful Grey Goose.

That afternoon I’d started drinking around 4:30 and the night remains as fuzzy as my old bathroom rug before I vomited on it. I awoke, glasses askew, around three in the morning, the dull black synthetic fibers poking out of a pool of brown. I coughed, and it felt like goose bills piercing through my throat. I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand and wiped the drops of barf off my glasses with my shirt. Still drunk, I gulped down water from the tap in hopes of preventing the looming hangover. Once I’d collapsed into my bed, I grabbed my laptop from my nightstand. I thought maybe a movie or something would let me pass out again and I could sleep through the concrete-shattering hangover. As it often does, my drunkenness had led me to masturbate. Somewhere between the Wild Turkey Rare Breed and the bathroom rug, I’d scoured

the Craigslist personals for some photos to quench my lust. A lot of the Internet tabs I closed proved I'd found plenty of these images; I closed these as fast as I could. Yeah, I'll admit it. I was a little creeped out by my choices. My blackout self wasn't picky about looks or fetishes. There were pages for bondage, Man Seeking Couple, Couple Seeking Farm Animal, and etcetera. Luckily, I must've drunk enough to be intrigued by their photos, but too lazy to contact any of these people. One page didn't have any photos and I couldn't help but read it. It was from the Men Seeking Man section, but the writer hadn't realized this part of Craigslist was for casual sexual encounters and people too cheap to pay for Match.com.

Need Roommate for 3br Cityview Apartment

Hello, fellow stranger. With the loss of our last roommate, Scribney and I are struggling to pay the rent on our loft. Now I will admit, we have been called 'eccentric' by no less than three homeless men, but rent is negotiable and, if you are looking for a different way to live, well, stop by. I'm sure I will enjoy a conversation with you at the very least. See you soon.

Call or Text at 1-123-581-3213 (ext. 4)

Email: TheMandelBro@gmail.com

- cats are OK — purrr
- dogs are OK — woof
- Location: ContactMe
- it's NOT ok to contact this poster with services or other commercial interests

I'm not someone who associates himself with the people who put out Craigslist personals—the chance of getting murdered is too high. But in the next tab over, I'd emailed this person and set up a tour of the apartment for the next day. He was very cordial in his correspondence, though he did chastise my poor spelling. Bewildered as I was by my actions, I passed out trying to send an email to cancel the meet-up. I awoke too late and too hungover to call it off and, seeing that it was my best chance

of finding a home, I decided to go. And I certainly found something. I'm telling you, it must've been fate or kismet or serendipity or some other gorgeous word we use to give coincidence meaning. We even say the stars aligned when people have luck like mine. Though I didn't and still don't believe my life could force exploding balls of hydrogen undergoing nuclear fusion to form a straight line, the phosphenes that danced behind my eyelids had a bit more shape as I lost consciousness one more time before the tour.

The neighborhood lacked pomp; a conglomerate's housing division had repurposed an old industrial area formerly used by its manufacturing division, now outsourced to somewhere in Pune, as an "up-and-coming-neighborhood." The interior had been redesigned, but the exterior retained the look of a ramshackle plant. The brick was blackened in spots, and the occasional one was loose. The original building's façade still read "Joe's Rubber," though chips of paint had flaked off like fresh snowflakes, revealing the stucco behind it. Scribney once described the place as "hipster bait." I thought I was in the wrong place. My head was killing me and I'd thrown up twice on the way over there. The first time I saw the building, I was sure that my murder was imminent. It would've proved my prejudice right had some insane trench-coated cephalopod wielding oct-teen switchblades sliced me into calamari. Instead, a young couple walked out of the building, their daughter clutching a stuffed cuttlefish close to her chest. Reality has a bias towards proving you wrong.

I found the apartment with little effort — "161" was emblazoned on the door, which opened a little more than halfway through the swing of my second knock.

"Hello, there," the man said from behind the half-opened door. Though stocky, he was a foot taller than I was. The warm, painful grip of his handshake leant him the aura of a Lenny. The calculated movements of his brown eyes as he scanned my physique and surroundings, however, suggested an intelligence that required more stimuli than the fur of a rabbit or locks of blonde sausage hair. His colorful t-shirt, which months later I would ask him about, was stitched together from parts of old t-shirts. Each patch of old t-shirt was also shaped like a small t-shirt. "And who might you be,

stranger?"

"I'm Jack. I emailed you last night about the apartment. You said you'd give me a tour?"

"Ah, yes," he said. His deep laugh lines made his smile look parenthetical. His trimmed hair was whorled counterclockwise. "We had a good feeling about you. We'll have to get you a grammar textbook, though." He played with the stubble on his chin.

"Oh, yeah," I said, scratching my head and averting my eyes. "Sorry about that. I was kinda smashed when I typed up that email."

"Well, that's good news," he said. "I can deal with alcoholism. Come on in. My name is Mandel, by the way." He swung the door open and extended his hand back towards the apartment. Golden light from the wall of windows blinded me as I walked in. The bottom floor of the loft was wide open. A few articles of furniture were arranged in circles at various points, and a small kitchen occupied the left corner. A cramped staircase led to the second story, which had been sectioned off into three rooms. "Wow," I said. "This place is beautiful."

"It's great, isn't it?" Mandel responded. He guided me towards a pair of tattered chairs. "We were really lucky to find it. And you might be, too."

"The rent has got to be crazy here, though. You must have lowballed the price. By, like, a lot."

Mandel shook his head. "Rent's not exactly what we need. Scribney, you'll meet him in a bit, has a fellowship at the university for his *solum opus* and I'm an accountant. We've got the rent down, but we forget about something." He leaned forward, I followed.

"What did you forget?"

"Food." Mandel leaned back

"Food?"

He nodded. "Food. In our finite wisdom, we forgot sustenance, opting for a 'shelter only' option. It's not a good long-term plan. Scribney swipes food from the university's cafeteria, and let's just say at my office the box of donuts vanishes a few times a week. I know, I know, you must see us as ignoramuses, but please forgive us — we are usually

not so materialistic, but the market always finds your desire, your weakness. And, like a siren, she called.” He spread his arms out and scanned the loft. “Alas, we had only honey for our tea, no beeswax for our ears. You’ll function as a live-in personal shopper.” It took a few seconds for me to respond. Mandel didn’t seem to mind.

“Well, I think I can afford food for three,” I said. With Marshall and Mayhew, I’d already paid for most of the food while also paying rent. What a deal. “Any other requirements?”

“Nah, not really,” Mandel said. “The other candidates we got from the ad were,” — he paused — “affectionate. But odd as it may seem, very few — actually none — of them were looking for a place to live. A lot of them thought it was code or something.”

“Well, you did put the ad in the personals,” I pointed out.

“Of course I did. A roommate is a very personal relationship. You *live* with this person. You know who else lives together? Couples in love. Children with their mothers. Families. Your roommate will certainly affect your life, if not change its course entirely. How capricious one would have to be to put no thought into such a choice.” Mandel looked out the window, perhaps lost in thought. Maybe empty of it. “Anyway, I just have a few questions for you, maybe just one.”

“All right, shoot.”

“What’s the nature of reality?”

I sighed. Hot vomit burned my esophagus as I got up. This was not what I needed right now. My vision blurred, and there were bright stars in my vision. The door was still open and I stumbled towards it. “Why do you gotta fuck with me, man? If you don’t want me here, just say. Don’t hit me with an unknown like that or —what’s it called — an unfalsifiable?” After M. and M., for someone to screw with me like this hurt like hell. And I liked Mandel. I liked how he’d talked and he seemed kind. I held back tears. My voice rose. “What else are you gonna ask me? What is the meaning of life? How many licks does it take to get to the center of a god-damned Tootsie Pop?” I’m embarrassed to say it, but I was outright bawling at this point. I tasted salt with each choking hiccup. Everything I owned was in boxes I’d lugged into an overpriced storage unit. Mandel grabbed me by the shoulders, turned me around, and hugged me.

“Poor soul,” he said. “You’ve barely survived for so long, haven’t you?” He rubbed my back in circles. I kept crying and returned the hug. “I’m sorry. I should’ve phrased the question ‘What do you *think* is the nature of reality?’ How cruel I must’ve sounded. What am I, some fucking sphinx? Turning you away would be like turning away Mary and Joseph at the manger. You’ve got the room. How about we get you a hot cocoa? Cocoa always makes me feel better. But wait, you’re a drinker. You’d probably prefer some whiskey or something.”

“Kahlua?” I choked out.

“Yes! That’s it. Cocoa and Kahlua,” he exclaimed. “Almost as good as a mother’s kiss. You go sit back down. I’ll make us some. I really want to know what you think, though. But only if you’re up to it.”

“Did you know,” Mandel asked as he swirled the marshmallows in his Kahlua and cocoa with a spoon, “that alcohol’s the byproduct of yeast performing anaerobic fermentation? They munch on sugar in the process of powering themselves in a low-oxygen environment and produce ethanol. We’re drinking yeast shit right now.” He took a sip. “Delicious. And psilocybin mushrooms grow on shit. Well, most mushrooms grow on decomposing plant matter, but I still think it’s funny how much shit has to do with altering our minds. And the language around it is so amusing. ‘That’s good shit.’ ‘You’re fulla shit.’”

“I don’t know,” I said.

“Well, okay. The exclamation ‘sheeeeeeeeeit’ isn’t all that funny.”

“No, not that,” I corrected, staring into my empty mug. The chocolate residue looked like a brain neuron or a galaxy-I wasn’t sure which. I felt better now. The hot liqueur had wriggled down my throat and spread through my veins. “I don’t know what the nature of reality is. I know I’m here and I think you’re here.” Mandel nodded and motioned me to go on. “But you might just be in here,” I said, tapping my head. “Whatever in here is. In fact, I don’t know if in here exists or out there exists and I don’t know whether I exist. And now I don’t know what existence is. Anytime I talk

about this stuff I get confused and tired. So usually I try to forget about the logical inconsistency of my existence and go on. Or fall asleep. Maybe watch some TV. Go to work.”

“You’re exactly right.” Mandel rubbed his chin. “‘I don’t know’ is the only reasonable response to such a question. I don’t know, either. But I have this idea. It doesn’t solve the problem or anything, but, I don’t know, I kind of like it.”

“Go on,” I encouraged him. I rested my arms on top of the couch. “I got time.”

Mandel raised a finger. “Perhaps,” he said and dropped it. “But first, would you like some more?” He tilted his mug towards me, and I nodded. I followed him to the kitchen.

I sat on a stool at the kitchen’s island while Mandel pulled out the pot he used for the first batch of cocoa from the sink. “Do you know what a sine wave is?” he asked, drawing one in the air with his hand. I nodded. He turned the electric stove on and grabbed some milk from the fridge. The fridge was empty save for a few condiment bottles and a tub of margarine. He finished off the carton and tossed it in the garbage under the sink. “Would you agree that it’s one continuous entity? Granted, it goes on forever and repeats itself, but it’s one thing?”

“Sure,” I said. Papers were scattered across the granite countertop. I moved them around with my finger. The formatting led me to believe they were some type of essay or other writing assignment. “It’s the consistent output of a function. I mean, it’s a wavy line with no breaks. What’s this stuff?” I pointed to the papers.

“The university requires that Scribney teach a class as part of his fellowship,” Mandel said. “He gives them one writing assignment for the whole semester. This usually gives him a lot of free time, but once a semester he gets swamped. It’s that time of year.” He pulled out cocoa and sugar from a cabinet to the right of the stove. Mandel continued while scooping cocoa and sugar into the simmering milk. “But you can also go to any position along this wave — I mean any position no matter how infinitesimally different — and have a point. And that point has a unique tangent line that’s itself continuous and a consistent output of another function.”

“I think that’s right.” I nibbled on my knuckle, thinking. “That’s basic calculus.”

“More or less,” Mandel said. “Now, if we agree that this is true, there’s an implication. Well, it’s more of a question: what is a sine wave? Is it this continuous wave that we’ve stated it to be or is it a collection of points? Is this little vibration just a recurring undulation, or is it a collection of moments on millions of different paths that, when pointed out, we see as this wave?”

“Isn’t it both?” I asked.

“Most certainly. Maybe even simultaneously.”

“And can’t we also ask the same question for the tangents of each one of those points that make up the sine wave?”

Mandel laughed. “I knew I’d like you. But that is too much for my monkey brain to handle,” he said. He poured the cocoa into mugs from the pot. We drank greedily. Mandel looked at his watch. “Scribney’s meditation should be over by now. I think you can meet our other roommate.”

Scribney stood in a yoga pose on top of a mound of books. He pressed his palms together in front of his heart and forced his left heel into the top of his right thigh. He wore thin red sweatpants with the waistband rolled up and hems that were frayed. His shirtless physique showed every flawless muscle. They pulsed when he kept balance. His bald head shined. A line of text (of no more than fifteen-point font) starting in the middle of Scribney’s forehead and rotating counterclockwise down his body was tattooed across his face and as far as I could see down his body. I could hardly see his tan complexion behind the lines of text. Text even inked his eyelids.

I nudged Mandel. “What’s with the tattoo?” For some reason, I was whispering.

“It’s his *solum opus*, his sole work.”

“But why is it a tattoo?”

“He is better at explaining it. But let me warn you, he is a little intense.”

The mound of books was shaped like a pyramid and spanned a third of the room. The bottom support layer consisted of massive volumes of *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and multitudes of Greek and Roman texts. The penultimate layer held a Gutenberg Bible

re-creation, the Torah, the Bhagavad Gita and several more religious texts. Shakespeare followed in the next layer. From here, the size of the books shriveled while the number blossomed. Paperbacks replaced the ancient and the hardcover. The final book, the one he stood on, was inches bigger than his foot. Scribney had painted his walls white. A small mat adorned one corner of the room. Otherwise, the room was empty. The air wasn't dead or stagnant. In fact, it was electric. But nothing moved. Mandel said Scribney could beat a statue in a hold your breath contest.

“What is his *solum opus*?”

“It's a story.”

“What's it about?”

I must've asked the right question, because Scribney's eyes burst open. One was sky blue, the other dirt brown. He jumped off the pyramid and landed with his feet crossed. He stumbled, but recovered his ground. He bellowed:

“There's only one story! A stranger comes to town. And we all live it. We are strangers to our own body, our own universe. That's why I write my *solum opus* on my body. Let the vessel and the story coalesce.” His fingertips traced the text from forehead to cheek to chest. “The meaning inscribed on the meaning machine. And my story's about this one story. There are only two certainties in this story: It will begin and it will end. My story, therefore, must be about the middle.

“But what is that? The middle is a series of beginnings and endings,” Scribney said, lifting his sky-pointed palms to head height. “Causes,” he said while lifting his left hand higher, “and effects.” He lifted his right to match the left. “Choices, if you believe in that sort of thing, and consequences. Choice may not be real, but consequence certainly is. So my story must be about the middle of the middle. The fabric of the story that allows for action, the timeless moment in which every action happens. My story is about words.

“Words — where cause is literally separated from effect. Words — scribbles of sounds we meaning machines put together to create synecdoches of existence in tales of excitement and yarns on our day to day drawl. Every sentence is itself a story. What beauty, what power. What consequence words have, though we use them so trivially.

But these words are themselves a means to an end. The Beginning – a scribble, The End – a meaning. My story must be beyond the purpose of words. My story must be purposeless and meaningless. I must write the story that's not a story. If I can write about that state of words – If I can write about words without words, existence without time and space, without cause and effect, and if I merge that with my body, with myself, I shall become causeless and formless and I shall Transcend." He shouted the last syllable and shook his fist at the ceiling.

"I don't know if he answered my question," I said.

"Neither does he," Mandel responded.

Scribney smiled and shuffled towards me. "Welcome, friend." Scribney crushed me in a hug. "My name is Scribney. Who might you be?" Scribney's gorilla hug collapsed a lung, leaving me unable to speak. Mandel interjected with my name.

"Ah, you," Scribney said. He spun me, holding my shoulder at arm's length. He scowled. "We must get you a grammar textbook."

"No, Scribs- he was intoxicated," Mandel said. I was still gasping for breath.

"Oh. Delightful," Scribney said. He let me go and walked out of the room, a smile filling his face.

"Wait," I said. "Where're you going? And what was all that?"

"It's time to eat," Scribney said. "And that was my story."

"Is your story done? Can I read it?"

He shook his head and pulled up his pant leg, revealing blank white skin. "I would let you read it," he said, "But I fear your anticipation for its completion would kill you." His face showed no signs of sarcasm. I'm not sure he understood the concept of lying. "But, someday, I'll finish it, and you can be the second to read it. Mandel's got first dibs."

Scribney did end up finishing his story. You should've seen him that day. He did a lot of the tattooing himself except for his back and other hard to reach spots. With only his legs left, he brought his own needle home. He didn't speak for three weeks before.

We're not sure he moved from his meditation on top of the books for the first two weeks. And we heard the hum of the needle for a good four days. Then, when Mandel and I were in the middle of lunch, he exploded out of his room — broke both hinges — naked and screaming. He ran around the loft, the words on his skin barely keeping up with him. How do you not laugh at that? We couldn't understand a word Scribney said. It was as if he was speaking in tongues or something. He ate all our food. I had just restocked, and after his personal feast, the kitchen was littered with chicken bones and empty almond milk cartons and sprinkled with brown rice and granola. Scribney passed out in the middle of the floor. He slept sprawled on the floor for three days before awaking.

"We must have a showing," Scribney proclaimed. He stared unblinkingly at us. "Here, soon."

"O-okay," Mandel said. "Who should I invite?"

"Everyone," he stated. "Call the university, they'll know." Scribney laughed. "It's done, friends. It is done!"

It was the night of the showing — rather, the reading. We weren't sure what to call it. We cleared the bottom floor of the loft of all furniture, which didn't take long, and re-assembled Scribney's book pyramid downstairs. We even added some layers to it. The university catered the event, repurposing our kitchen's island into an hors d'oeuvre and fondue fountain buffet. They even had grad students going around in suits with serving trays. University professors from around the country had flown in, a few big name publishers sent executives, and even a few well-known artists dotted the crowd. I didn't know who the painters and sculptors were, but a professor assured me they were big names in modern art.

At twelve midnight, with a half-moon illuminating the loft and snowflakes dancing in the wind, Scribney climbed the book pyramid. He wore a red silk robe that covered most of his body. "Greetings, university professionals and other honored guests," Scribney said. "I thank you so much for coming, and I want to thank the university

for giving me such freedom through their fellowship. But let's be succinct here and get right to It." The crowd applauded. "All that I'll say before starting is that things are cyclical, without beginning or end. Well, they aren't really cyclical, but that's the best way to describe it other than 'things *are*.' But we can't view things like that. We are teleological monsters. Our lens isn't appropriate for the subject." He let the red robe fall and told his tale.

I'm sorry about this, but I don't want to tell try to tell you Scribney's story. It was a while back, and I'd only read or heard it a couple of times. I'll butcher the whole thing. What can I say about it? Well, it was pretty good. I remember liking it. It was kinda hard to follow, though. At first, it just seemed like a random series of words. Sometimes they weren't even real words, just sounds he'd made up. But, once you heard the entire piece, everything came together. The best way I can explain it is that it gave you a brief glimpse of the divine reality of the universe. Everything felt perfect, singular and infinite for a moment. You understood his story, and, because of this, you understood everything else. Then you'd forget something he said and lose that feeling. That's why I don't want to try to retell it. If one syllable is off, the whole thing doesn't work. And even if I did recite it perfectly, there is no guarantee you'd get it. The work is hard to grasp, especially if you didn't know the guy. And that was most people's problem. They didn't know Scribney.

When Scribney finished, he was expecting applause. You could see it in his smile. They gave him silence and then shuffled around, muttering. A few "coots" and "loons" were thrown out in the crowd's rustling. Scribney's earlier work was much more typical. He had a collection of short stories and a critically acclaimed novel that had sold poorly. He didn't even consider these works of his anymore. Scribney referred to them as some of his "better writing exercises." The catcalls that he was cuckoo didn't bother him, but then he heard someone mumble "At least this nut'll sell plenty of copies. People love to buy crazy." Scribney's smile snapped. Scribney never intended the story to reach print. He'd never written a letter of it except on his skin. It was only supposed to exist in him and on him. Scribney saw one option that'd save the integrity of his work.

You never understand how self-absorbed people are until the star of the reading

everyone came to see manages to sneak out, siphon a gallon or so of gasoline from the university president's town car, and return without a soul noting his departure. I'm guilty of it, too. Marshall and Mayhew also attended the event, and I argued with them over the quality of Scribney's work. I like to think I smelled the gasoline before Scribney lit himself on fire. I also like to lie to myself. He drenched the books and himself in gasoline, jumped back up on the pyramid, returned to his yoga pose, and swiped his thumb down the wheel of one of my lighters. Scribney and his books erupted into a funeral pyre. A silenced crowd stared. Few mourned.

The whole building burnt down that night. The fire hit a gas line before the sprinklers could drown the flames. Molten bits of glass melted through the snow. Don't worry—everybody got out before the explosion. What I can't get out of my head about that night is the last moment I saw Scribney. While all the attendees were rushing for our narrow door, I turned back to look at the immolated Scribney. Before his skin melted off, forever destroying the *solum opus*, and before his blood began to simmer, I—I could've sworn Scribney was laughing.

Matthew Yodanis
ELECTRIC FOREST

Parked on the shoulder
Off the interstate
Through the jack pine forest
Rheumatic branches criss-crossing
Their path like palm fronds.

Wild huckleberries pulping
Under bare feet. Clad
In a taught tie-dye bandana
Steve, stout, glasses rimmed black, leads

A merry troupe with his bride
His white teeth crunching bitter ecstasy.
She – Molly – says “follow me.”
Their band marching.

Steve held the thyrsus overhead,
Wrapped in caapi, its head
A cone speaker draped in LEDs
He – a raucous Bacchus under stereophonic synth,

In his left hand, the other akimbo.
Molly, more smile than skin,
Escorts the rest
All hand in hand.

The Thyrsus asks:
“Would you stand up and walk out on me?”
Mary looks All Stems,
Carries her Seed

Who responds “with a little help,”
Mary plays with the daffodil
Plucks a petal and hands
It to Seed. “I get by.”

Two brothers hold tight,
Their shirts full of eyes.
One named Jem;
The other Nye.

Jem loves Mary All Stems
(Though Seed’s from another
stamen) and squeezes her hand.
All sing through the forest.

Out of the jack pine maize
Into a new plain: an open field
Of flesh and clay and waving hands
Pro concert stage
Occidental to a hill:

Golgotha. The troupe nails
Hammocks to olive trees
While a man smokes hashish
Contemplating the field of hands.

He inhales through the left side of his mouth.
“Religion is a vat full of tyrants!”
He inhales from his right:
“Religion is crying orphans holding each other

in the rain.” Steve agrees.
Like a spear, he stabs the Thyrsus
Into the sod and snaps the scepter
In two. The speaker wails.

He pulls still sparking circuit boards
From its wound. They place them
On their tongues. Processors
And silicon cut their mouths.

One after one – Swallows.
Blood drips from their lips
Red parenthetical laugh lines.

Jem and Nye lay in their hammocks
Mary and Seed Share and Sway.
Steve and Molly, hands interlocked,
Skip into the field of hands

Raising theirs high
Until they are none.
Tie-dye bandana spun
From Finger to finger.

A man appears on the stage
face carved from a fallen redwood
the stage- an over-sized pile of speakers
Throbbing from his Mic'd breath.

He wears a pearlescent robe
His head is shaved, but his beard grows long
Scarabs scurry in the cloud hairs.

From his Emblazoned guitar
(held in hands furrowed)
Swings a thurible that billows
Blue-grey smoke. Scent: red sandalwood.

The thurible swings on its chain, clanks.
He turns from the field.
Lifts a hand to quiet
And strums.

The Rhythm. The Rhythm. The Rhythm. The Rhythm. The
rhythm; rhythm; rhythm, rhythm, rhythm, rhythm
rhythm-rhythm, Rhythm-rhythm rhythm-rhythm
rhythmthm-rhythmthm-rhythmthm-rhythmthm-rhythmthmthm

Supermassive onyx pupils
Jem can't take the crescendo
Nestles Mary all-stems in his arms
She holding Seed in hers (Matryoshka Pietà).

Nye, Baby-faced, hugged
Himself. Twitching,
Coddled in the hammock.
The olive trees bounced to the beat.

Nye looks down through the hammock
Weave and finds faces in the leaves
Skulls amongst the roots and trees.

In the sky the stars lost focus.
Blurred lines. Shot pulses
Of crimson and jade
Haphazard at the vacuum.

Dried clay, the moon face
Crumbles at the beat of a drum.
Now, an Iron orb in the sky.
Flashing lights, pumping sound.

The arms
In the field of Hands,
Once swaying palm
The ground flat
Erupt together
Flinging off their flesh

One continuous cutaneous mass
Drifting on the night wind.

Hands only blood and tendon and muscle
Claw and thrash each other
Thumping the ground
Meat fists on stone.

Nye sees the Man who smokes Hashish
Full lotus at the top of the hill.
He inhales from the middle of his mouth.
And laughs.

They close their eyes and hear a curious light.
Acid melting the polaroid white.

Matthew Yodhes

THE MOST TERRIBLE THING IN THE WORLD IS HAVING A STORY NOBODY'LL BELIEVE

Never let the last words you read at night be Kafka, lest you awake into a dream where the truth is the first thing disregarded in search for the truth.

– Monet Jocumius

Why are You so cold?

Wheeze the cold air mustard gas
Plastic fistula BreatHE in-
The Raider's ski mask through the sandsnow.
Smokestack cigarette
Coughs ash and powdered sugar.
The baking chocolate, baking chocolate cold
Let me break off a chimney still lit
As Mother snapped off her hickory switch
And in
 hale
(through the slit)
the SweetMilke -two hands to a mug.
Roll the joint 'round the round rim

O' the coffee cup ash tray
Gunshot hit
Electronfusioninthebrain
Supernova

.

..

...

...No.

no.

no Bluejays
don't live in hearts
They'd rattle the ribcage
With their beggar cup beaks,
(Jailbirds)
Squawking surely for the Salt
of fish and the sea shore.

They'd burst Black Velvet bloodvessels,
capsize the pulmonary,
wrinkled cyst baby fists:
Claws

Strum the carotids
Razor maws yanking out
red tissue in strips
ventricle from ventricle
Worms from seaweed.
Let songbirds pluck their bloody harp strings outside
my, my beat-ing· sep-ul-cher n.

Matthew Yodanis

MOTHER MAY I PRACTICE CURSIVE?

Mother may I practice cursive?
Father needs our daily letter.
The army stationery hints his old tobacco
I missed how he blew smoke between the gaps in his teeth,
And the sound of his typewriter tap-dancing
But we both preferred the zip of pen on parchment.

The mat read “Wel” and presented a package hugged in parchment.
From between twines I slipped out army stationery written in colorless cursive
I punctured the wrapping with my pen, opened it — my telltale heart a tap-dancing.
The opened box, a manger, cradled an urn with a gold monogrammed letter
No letter of ours. Hirsute knuckles had vanished. Where were his marble eyes? His
teeth?
There was only ash: a tray of butts and burnt tobacco.

Now I called my dad “The Cookie Jar” and mixed him in with my tobacco
Ripped pages from his field manual and rolled fat cigarettes with The Parchment
I ashed him on my tongue and grinned at the stunned — all burnt gums and ivory
teeth.
Mama scolded, finger wagged and warned. “Our History’s recursive,”
She always says. Then Uncle Sam drafted me a letter
Before I goed, the last girl glowed the night we went slow-dancing.

The way we skirted shrapnel reminded me of dancing
My wife to be sent baby pictures and tins of wet tobacco
Sergeant said I'd survive if I followed directions to the letter.
My salute acute, hair buzzed; my bed as flat as parchment
Sergeant Sir, may I practice cursive?
She writes that my son cries and bleeds the breast; I too have cut my teeth.

He was identified by his teeth
Yesterday, he vaulted across our fire, dancing.
Sergeant inscribed the stationery with colorless cursive.
I pitched a fistful of father — thinking of zipping pens and stale tobacco -
at Sergeant; dad drank ink upon the parchment.
S. blinked till tears — dad made him cry — spit and wrote another letter.

In my arms I bore two jars, discharge papers and his letter
Father shattered when I stumbled; I thought of Kansas and my teeth
Chattered. Cold wind stole his remains, ruffled parchment
They invited me into their home, to the candor of sitars, children dancing
And table-wide laughter. Men blew gaping O's of peach shisha tobacco
His mother grasped the shaking stationery, glared at the Sergeant's cursive

Sounds bled from her mouth, coagulated; she sobbed in chicken scratch, not cursive
And cried that I smelt like her son — musk, earth, tobacco.
And she cradled his urn in her arms, swaying soft, dancing.

Karen Yuan

OUR CHILDHOOD SUBURB SUPERNOVA

Every morning, the sun drew us out of bed as if we were marine creatures in fishing nets. Somerville was infinity for us kids, a haven for popping Coke bottles in the tall twilight grass while sitting on our green knees, listening to a world of cicadas around us. We held on to scooter boards, shrieking as we sped down Magnolia Street, the steepest slope in the neighborhood, wondering which of us would land in a pile of broken bones and red cheeks. The wind lashed at our faces until our eyes shut.

On slow afternoons we unleashed Mentos rockets in the bathtub, climbed the giant oak by Edith's cider mill, hollered after the weaving taillights of a car ghosting through the foliage.

Everywhere was life and life and life. Is that too sentimental? We talked about dreams in the Denny's back lot as the smell of scrambled eggs wafted out, talked about the future on nights atop our parents' car roofs as we grew older. Sometimes, shooting stars did the spaceman cancan above us.

Somerville started fading around the edges then, the trees a little smaller, the sky a little lower, the Coke a little flatter.

We lay down and watched suburban ennui stretch past the horizons and felt the strange ebb of a childhood tide, our hearts caught in-between the illusion of Somerville wilderness and the reality of just another dot on the map. Every single child in Somerville grew up wanting to be an astronaut.

Edith Zhang

THE APPREHENSIVE VAMPIRE

He isn't sure if he wants to take you out for a drink tonight
or take you out for a *drink* tonight.

He needs to make sure you're his type first.

The apprehensive vampire is fearful for a vampire, but he still makes a good man.
He protects you from the creeps-in-the-night
and always offers you his coffin when you sleep over.

I'll sleep on the floor, he says,
I don't mind.

He's neat and clean and hygienic, every night he flosses each tooth twice, combs his
dark hair back in that retro way you say you like
all in front of a mirror.

Then, he takes you out for dinner.
Asks you if you're enjoying your meal like he's been
enjoying your company.

You stare at your rare steak, still red and juicy
tender, running, bloody
and lose your appetite just a little bit.

Later, he finds your pulse on your neck
with surprisingly gentle hands.

He doesn't go for it though;

the best thing about his apprehension is, that he doesn't say: I want to drink your blood
he asks you first.

Edith Zhang
A HIGH SEVEN

I am so fucking
cute
somedays
I wear bows on bows on floral circle skirts
Somedays I dress like a butterfly princess
Today,
I brought my A for Adorable game
and
when I walked towards a group of
'cool boys' from high school

I ignored them

But they said hi to me
so I said hi too
because I'm polite as hell

and then I walked away

as I pass I hear him say
'what would you give her'
and the response was

'a high seven'

Like the people I passed by on the street
I did a double take

excuse me
did you just grade me
like I'm some sort of homework assignment
your teacher handed back to you saying
could have done better
high seven
C+

motherfucker,
I had a 3.9 GPA
that's at least a high nine
so that seven better be on a scale from one to five, bitch

But I couldn't help but wonder if maybe
I just wasn't cute enough

Why do we always count down on ourselves
Think that the problem is me because somebody out there didn't think that I was
worth putting his two hands up for
I felt fine until I was seen as only another number-

The problem here is not mathematical
the problem here is three jerks with too much time on their hands adding to the insecurities that already equal my life and a lifetime of being told to rate myself on a scale

forget you

any seven minutes spent with me are seven minutes in heaven
I don't give high fives,
I give high sevens
because I embody who I am
24/7 I am not ashamed
Because there are seven wonders of the world, and ALL OF THEM ARE ME
My thoughts are deeper than the Grand Canyon
I shine brighter than the northern lights
and shoot higher than Mt. Everest

and I'm sorry that you'll never see that

Why was six afraid of seven
because this high seven is about to raise up five fingers to your face in the form of a fist
because I am not just a number
because I am not cute, hot, sexy, or pretty
because I am not a 10
or even
a high seven
because I am worth
so
much
more.

Edith Zhang
THE INVISIBLE MAN

The invisible man keeps his eyeglasses on his nightstand.

The invisible man drinks eight glasses of water a day.

The invisible man is impeccably neat,
keeps all his
valuables
on shelves, displayed.

The invisible man wakes up with traces of his lover still on the bed:
a displaced pillow,
a soft scent,
an imprint, still warm.

The invisible man holds his hand to a cold window until it leaves a print,
watches as it fades away,
the chill still in his palm.

The invisible man loves to finger paint,
the only time he gets messy.
The invisible man loves to shower afterwards.

The invisible man is a pretty good dancer, because no one's watching.
The invisible man smiles at strangers,
hopes somebody notices.

The invisible man does not like the idea of 'ghosts,'
reassures himself that he cannot walk through walls-
telling him that 'I must be alive.'

Sometimes, he dresses up-
puts on a nice suit,
a bowtie,
a crisp clean button up.

Stares into his own reflection,
says,
Look at you, you handsome fellow,
Look at you.

Edith Zhang
NEW YEARS (新年)

This Chinese New Year,
my mom and I ate bad American food
at the “Asian Legend.”
If we wanted Chinese food,
we should have made it ourselves.

“xin nian kuai le!”
(新年快乐)
means NEW YEAR HAPPY!

When people say
“gong hay fat choi”
I see orange chicken,
fortune cookies, myself,
and other non Chinese
Chinese things.

Besides, I already celebrated the new year
a month ago,
at my friend’s house with her white
dogs and brothers; we drank
sparkling grape juice

in wine glasses.

But my mom did not come with me.
She watched Chinese reality t.v. instead of the ball
drop.

This Chinese New Year,
I spent time with my mom.
My mom says 新年快乐!
I say Thanks mom, you too.

My mom always speaks Chinese to me.
Sometimes, she even speaks Chinese
to my brother's Korean girlfriend.

No matter how many new years pass,
without visiting China,
seeing my grandparents,
living in America,

my mother still calls China home.

CONTRIBUTORS

Cellik Adams is a photographer with the intention to recreate both the sensory and the transcendent human experience through his work. He plans on transferring to art school after his sophomore year with a major in photography and a minor in fashion marketing.

Madison Brow is a rising sophomore with a passion for words and a thing for mango smoothies. Pursuing a degree in Art & Design as well as Computer Science, she enjoys the soul-bond she has with her laptop almost as much as her fluency in pixels.

Claire Bryan is a freshman studying political science and writing. She wrote “Gift Wrapped” as part of Tim Hedges’s “Best Imitation of Myself” LHSP class to challenge herself by experiencing something completely new.

Kennedy Clark is undecided, but planning to pursue the Sweetland Writing Minor and a Creative Writing minor. When she isn’t spending an excessive amount of time caring about Michigan Basketball, she draws, drinks tea, and asks a lot of questions.

Krysten Dorfman is an environment major, part time ice cream artist, and full time optimist. She enjoys green veggies, maps, being organized, and tall glasses of water, preferably half full.

Jack Foster is a junior in LSA studying French & Comparative Literature. He likes the sun and also green things. In addition, broccoli is his favorite food.

Haley Fox is a first-year student planning to get her degree in Communications. Haley likes piña coladas, but does not like getting caught in the rain, is ambivalent about yoga but will always go in for champagne.

Polina Fradkin does NOT appreciate when iOS7 tells her she looks busy tomorrow. An international studies and Russian major, she enjoys traveling (read: getting lost in foreign countries alone without her parents' permission), studying languages, and partaking in all types of wild rumpus. In her spare time, Polina can be found deleting her Google search history or learning Morse code.

Logan Gardner is an aspiring novelist from Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has written a few (as of yet unpublished) novels, the latest of which is a magical road story through the landscape of the American consciousness. As for his major, he is going to use the one he created if the university ever gets around to accepting it (Storytelling). If you want to read something, go to heresabook.com. That's his website.

Kellie Halushka is a member of the LSA class of 2017 majoring in English and Classical Archaeology. She is fascinated by the intersection of writing and visual art.

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Sonalee Joshi intends to major in Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience with a minor in writing. She enjoys developing skills in creative writing, photography, and traditional artwork as well.

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Matthew Lee is a Malaysian citizen and Canadian permanent resident that has lived in four countries around the world. At Michigan, he plans to pursue either Economics or Business (or both!) with the hopes of becoming a management consultant. In his spare time, he likes to draw, read, practice martial arts, and philosophize.

Rachel Lee is a second-year student in LHSP studying communications. She enjoys visual art as well as performance art such as singing, and playing the piano and the cello.

Nicholas Malin grew up in Deer Park, New York. He is an English major and aspires to write something halfway decent one day.

Alexander Moore is a sophomore in the Stamps School of Art & Design. He opted for a BA degree and is planning on applying for a minor at the Ross school.

Cesar O. Ruiz enjoys expressing himself through art and music. He plays drums and his primary painting style is a combined impressionistic realism. He plans to complete a major in economics, and continue in the art industry.

Rebecca Schwartz is an Art and Design Major. She loves art references from popular culture and graphic design, appropriating magazine and art historical images into her own work.

Sindhu Danger Sreedhar can write poetry but apparently she cannot write an “about me.” In her free time, she enjoys eating whole wheat rolls, making stupid puns, and laughing at her own jokes. Her favorite holiday is Halloween.

Paul Stefanski grew up in Northern California, amidst the drought, tech boom, Bush-era politics, and the recession. Many of his early stories touched on these topics related to his everyday life, though now he writes all genres of fiction concerned with any number issues—or none at all. To Paul, a story is not created as much as it is found—similar to the Buddhist philosophy on knowledge. “Wolf” came to him while he was riding in a car in California listening to NPR report on recent Cartel invasions of small farming villages across Mexico.

Matthew Yodhes is a junior studying English and Cognitive Science. He loves both fiction and poetry with deep interests in modern, postmodern and meta works.

Karen Yuan is a rising sophomore who likes words a lot. She writes for *The Michigan Daily*.

As a student leader in the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program, **Adriana Zardus** formed a club that created art out of ordinary materials (like tea or condiments). Some of the greatest forms of creativity come from limitations. Adriana is pursuing a degree in business with a minor in art, and she is currently founding a non-profit called Art for Goodness’ Sake.

Sydney Zelenak is a freshman studying Communication and Media. When she’s not studying, you can probably find her roaming Lloyd with her fuzzy blanket and cup of tea.

Edith Zhang is an Ann Arbor native who enjoys poetry slams, Pokemon, pandas, and multiple other words that start with p. She is considering an English major, but in the year 2014, is an undeclared freshman.

