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The Lantern Vol. 70, No. 1, Fall 2002

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The Lantern



The Lantern

URSINUS COLLEGE

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Editor's Note:

With another semester in the books, *The Lantern* returns once again to display the creative work of the talented students of Ursinus campus. Cngratulations to all students who were selected to appear in the issue. Congratulations, also, to Susannah Fisher, Sara Napolitan, Keith Truman, and Ella Lazo for their award-winning work. I would like to thank all of our staff for helping us put together another fine issue. I would especially like to thank our advisor, Prof. Martinez, and especially my assistant editor, John Ramsey, for all his hard work. I am proud to put my name on such a quality magazine.

Christopher Tereshko

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JUDGES' NOTES

Poetry Winners—"tuesday" and "Public Transportation"

"tuesday" is a rather magical poem that fully trusts its own geography and logic, and its center-justified format works perfectly with the dream texture of the piece. "tuesday came in the dark/when I was not sleeping"—wow! It floats. It's a wonderful poem.

"Public Transportation" is a fascinating, gritty piece—the voice embodies the sway and forward movement of the busses and trains. I can feel it. And smell it. It pulls together fragments of sensory perception in their contexts without ever giving in to the dread generalities and blanket statements so frequent in the historic past tense; it's hard left margin holds the poem firm on the page. Really lovely work.

—Renée Ashley is the author of three volumes of poetry: **Salt** (University of Wisconsin Press, winner of the Brittingham Prize in Poetry), **The Various Reasons of Light** (Avocet Press), and **The Revisionist's Dream** (Avocet Press). Her novel, **Someplace Like This**, will be published in July 2003. She has received creative writing fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the NEA. She is on the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University's M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program.

Prose Winner—"Running the Ridge"

How can I resist a story with an epigraph from Pink Floyd? It was the language of "Running the Ridge" that put it far above the play and other stories I considered. The telephone dialogue between Artemus and Charity, though phone dialogues are more or less taboo in fiction, is hilarious. And the line, "They didn't have a garden, they had a 'Gardens,'" pretty much says it about Charity's house in Vorhees, New Jersey. So it turns out a little predictable. But I don't care. It does so in a clever way. And that's good writing.

—Dr. Robbie Clipper Sethi is a professor of English, Russian, and Creative Writing at Rider University in Lawrenceville, NJ. Her novel in stories, **The Bride Wore Red** was a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers selection. She has won fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Her stories have appeared in *Atlantic*, *Mademoiselle*, and many literary magazines and anthologies. A second novel in stories, **Fifty-Fifty**, will be published by Silicon Press in November, 2002.

Alison Shaffer

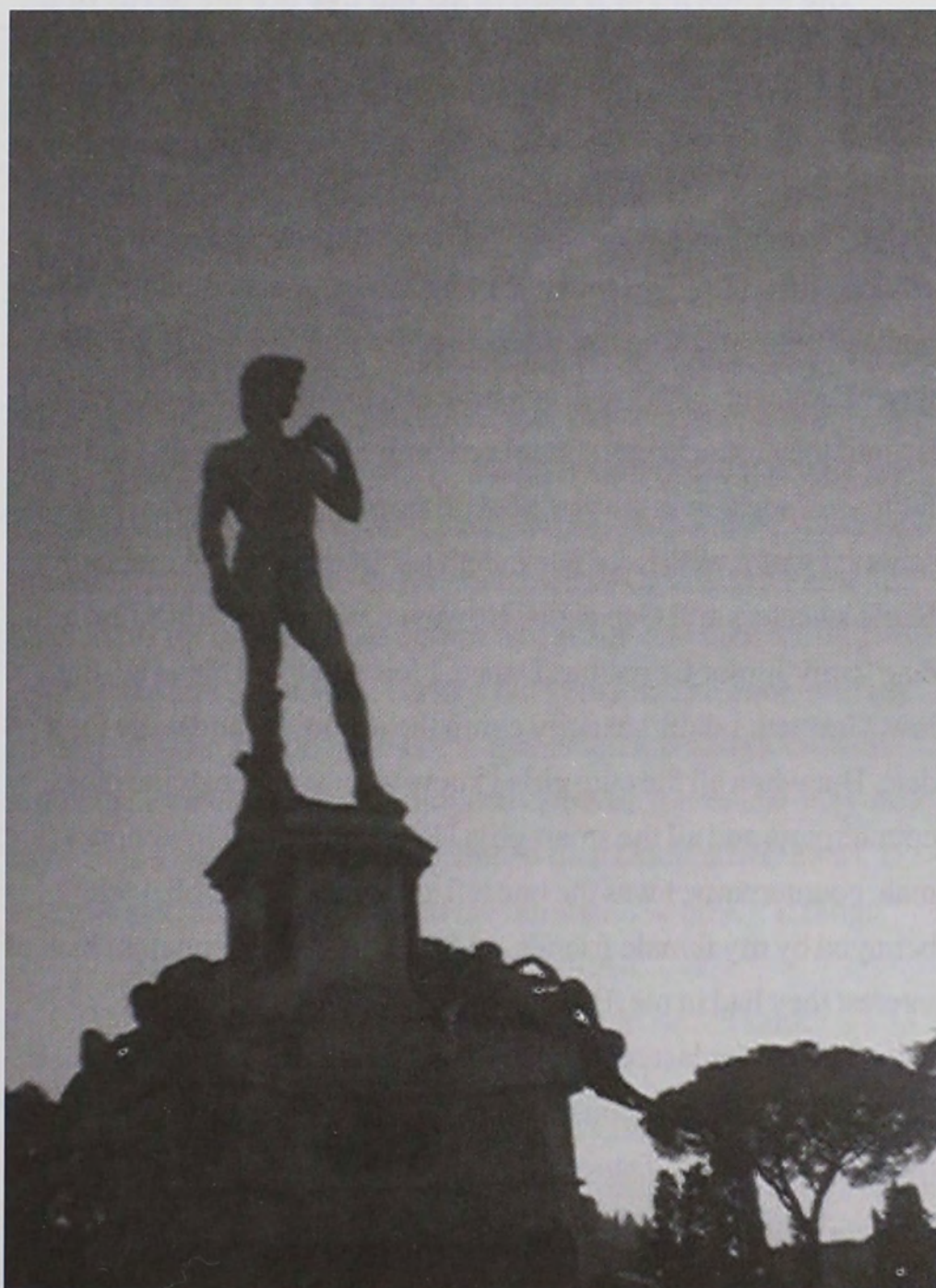
and he asked me wouldn't it be absolutely perfect diving to the bottom, to sink into a pool of hot wine water and wash away the cold-snow-skin in flakes from your hard body, to melt it down, let it mix with the ruby bathwater seeping into your skin (intoxication) then slide out again to dripdry by a blazing fire, no towel, no bathrobe, only rolling naked on the white carpet, belly-back-belly-back, until you're both wine-dyed and soft, to fall asleep in each others' arms and chests and legs all tangled up like one creature with two many pieces of itself all trying to be in the same place at once—wouldn't it be just perfect and what you wanted to wake up to the next morning: alone in your wine-dryed, flame-licked nudity, missing half of your extremities?

and i said no.

and the world stopped spinning.

Imitation

Amy Scarantino



Running the Ridge

Keith Truman

“The memories of a man in his old age are the deeds of a man in his prime.”

-Pink Floyd, “Free Four”

Nearly three years had gone by during my stint at Point Ridge High School, and what did I have to show for it - slacking grades, still a virgin, a tepid wrestling career, and a reputation as a pothead prankster who had a penchant for fighting. Basically the type of guy who girls loved to hang out with all night at a party; that is, until they found a guy suitable enough to hook up with. I did well for myself socially in the vast pool of superficiality that was high school: I was a well-liked Megadeth t-shirt in a sea of American Eagle sweaters and Gap jeans. However, when I couldn't find a date to my Junior Christmas Dance, I felt as if I had hit an all-time low. Granted, I didn't exactly comb the school far and wide for a date. But when all the cute girls I knew went with their cute male counterparts and all the smart girls I knew went with their dorky male counterparts, I was the one left sitting on his thumb. I felt betrayed by my female friends, and ashamed of the apparent lack of interest they had in me. But, maybe most importantly, I was disturbed by the last resort that I had to undertake to get a date. I had to ask my fireball cousin from Voorhees, Charity, to accompany me to the Christmas Dance.

Until recently, I never would have considering asking Charity as my date, even if she weren't my cousin. She was always a tomboy. Visiting her on weekends was fun as a kid because

everything I did at home like catching frogs, playing video games, and picking fights, I could do there too. Charity lost a tooth in a fight before I did, even though it was two minutes before I did, in the same fight. I even remember my mom getting newspaper clippings in the mail from Charity's mom when they fought the school system because Charity wanted to play on the football team. She could have, too. But in the past couple years, she's really changed. She matured socially and physically, and lost her interest in sports.

I whipped into my driveway around 3:15 on Friday afternoon, forty-some minutes after school was dismissed. I dumped my backpack off of my shoulder and tossed it beside my Adidas shelltops in the foyer. I walked through the foyer and down the hall that emptied into the kitchen, where I grabbed a Pepsi and headed off to my basement bedroom. I wanted to take the edge off with a joint and some Wild Turkey, but I only had an hour until my mom got home so I decided not to risk detection and stuck with smoking another cigarette. I plopped down on the leather lazy-boy my parents had grown tired of, flipped on a Doobie Brothers CD and grabbed the phone. I dialed the number... 1-609... it rang.

"Hello?" a cute female voiced echoed.

"Um, yeah, can I speak to Charity please?" I said.

"This is her, who's this?"

"Oh hey Char, it's me Artemus," I said.

"Hey Artemus, how's your school year going? You guys are coming down for Christmas dinner as usual, right? My boyfriend Brandon will be over again this year, and he said he's looking forward to chillin' with you again. He said you crack his ass up."

Keith Truman

“Oh yeah, I’ll be there. Yeah, Brandon was a trip himself.” I got him stoned as hell is what I did, but being unsure of Charity’s inclination towards drugs, I kept that anecdote to myself. “Listen, I have a question for you. It’s rather awkward for me, so please bear with me.”

“Well, ask me,” Charity said.

“It’s like this. I don’t have a date to my Christmas dance, and I need one. I feel like a total loser for asking you this, but will you come with me? I wouldn’t ask if you weren’t my last resort.”

“Wow Artemus, you even sound desperate,” she said. A moment of silence came through the receiver that I was sure would culminate in ridicule and pity among my family members. I wound the telephone cord around my finger, constricting the first digit on my right index finger until it turned purple. Finally, she spoke. “You know, Brandon doesn’t really let me date other guys.”

A smile came across my face as I exhaled deeply. “Charity, he doesn’t have to know we’re kissin’ cousins.” She laughed, and I returned the favor with a scratchy chuckle.

“Yeah Artemus, I’ll go with you. I like formals anyway, dancing and meeting new people. But anyway, what are you planning on wearing?”

“Well, I have this cool t-shirt that looks just like a tuxedo and—“

“Fucking what?” shouted Charity. “There is no way—“

“I’m kidding. I haven’t really thought of what to wear actually. Let’s see what I have.” I carried the phone over to my closet and began rooting through the melange of concert shirts and jeans for any formal wear I possessed. “I have a... black long

sleeve button down... a silver tie... and some beige pants. How's that sound?"

"Like you weren't kidding about wearing the tuxedo shirt. And the beige pants Artemus, they call them khakis. Listen, you know what you're doing tonight? You're driving your ass over here and we are picking you out some clothes."

"Well, okay, that sounds fine. How much money should I bring? I only have like fifty bucks," I said.

"Don't worry about money, just get over here a.s.a.p. I expect to see you here in about an hour. See you then." Charity's parents were loaded. They didn't have a garden, they had a "Gardens." I was relieved that these clothes weren't going to dent my pocket. I made my way upstairs, hopped back in the caddy, and tore out of my driveway.

I arrived at Charity's palatial estate near 5:00. I rang the bell, whereupon Jeeves or Chumley allowed me to enter the house, eyeing my "Metal Up Yer Ass" t-shirt down the bridge of his nose. Soon after, Charity made her way downstairs.

"Hey baby," she said as she wrapped her arms around me, giggling a little as she leaned back and looked me over. "It looks like I'm got my claws in you in the nick of time." She pinched my t-shirt, pulling it out to get a better look at the picture of a hand holding a bayonet thrusting upward out of a toilet. She released it, letting it ripple like rings in a pond back onto my chest. Charity was a beautiful girl. Her long, satiny dark brown hair descended in spirals to a few inches below her shoulders. Her olive skin in the middle of the winter was a hint that she benefited from her Italian heritage far better than I. Emerald green eyes, a toothy smile, quite

a set of— stop, she’s your cousin. A second cousin, but a cousin nonetheless. I gave my head a slight jostle that I hoped wasn’t visible and cleared my throat.

“Wha, what, you don’t like my style?” I said as I smiled.

“I’d dislike it if you had any,” she smirked. She grabbed at my thick brown hair that extended to the tip of my nose. “You do have nice hair though. Maybe I can turn you into a stud.”

“I already am a stud!” I said in playful defiance.

“I meant the kind that doesn’t reside in a pasture. Come on Artemus, we have to go.”

“Want me to drive?” I offered.

“No, that’s cool Artemus, I’m going to take the Benz. I can’t say I dig your Death-Mobile out there.” She patted my cheek and turned my shoulders in the direction of the door.

Pulling into the mall entrance, I had withstood as much Dave Matthews as any non-lobotomized person could. We got out and entered the mall near J. Crew, a store that had never had the honor of Artemus Thorne stepping through its doors. Charity pulled me through the aisles until she spied a section of clothing relevant to our needs.

“Okay, Artemus, what’s your waist size?” she said.

“Um, thirty-four I think,” I said.

“Really?” She pulled my shirt up and looked at my stomach. I had a gut, but it was pretty hard underneath and I did have a two-pack that at least I was proud of. “Your clothes are too baggy, it makes you look fatter than you are. No wonder you don’t have a date—those Pennsylvania bitches think you’re a porker. Here, put these on. And this. And take this tie—no—I’ll keep the tie out

here.”

I hopped into a fitting room and tossed the gear on, a navy blue button down and a pair of the most comfortable charcoal slacks I had ever worn. I stepped out of the dressing room and was greeted by the mock golf clap of Charity. Charity put my tie on and handed me a jacket that accompanied the slacks. “Throw that over your shoulder Artemus. Oh yeah, I’m good. Turn around, look in the mirror, see what you think!”

I faced myself in the mirror. I always got a kick out of being the tallest male at family events, checking in at just under six feet tall. My new attire exaggerated my features; my hazel eyes took on as much green as they could, my compact body seemed to be slimmed by the tucked in shirt, my neck actually visible thanks to collar and tie. The sleeves of the shirt were a bit too tight for my big arms as were a lot of shirts, but the rest of it fit so perfectly I had to bypass the dilemma. “I actually look decent. Wow, thanks Charity. Hey, you think they’d let me walk out of the store in these?”

“I think it would be criminal if they made you wear that other shit,” she said as she smiled and tossed my shirt and jeans into my cradled arms. “Let’s pay for this stuff.”

We were walking back out to the car when Charity bumped into two of her friends. One was a five-foot-three brunette in a tight purple sweater and the other a tall blonde with infinite legs and an incredibly cute face. They were both hot, girls I considered to be out of my league.

“Hey Tiff! Amyyy! What is *up*?” I think Amy replied.

“Not much. Hey, who is this? Are you running around behind Bran’s back?” The three shared a giggle and then Tiff and

Keith Truman

Amy turned back to face Charity with “Well, are you?” glances.

“This is Artemus, my cousin from north of Philly. I brought him down to hook him up with a new outfit. He’s got a hot date next weekend.” Charity elbowed me in the ribs. I laughed. The two girls gave me the once over and grinned impishly at me.

“No really, who is he?” the girls looked at each other and burst out laughing.

Charity leered at them. “You two are such skanks.”

“No, Charity is telling the truth. Hi I’m Artemus, Art, whatever you like,” I said. The girls extended their hands daintily toward me and I lightly grasped each.

“Nice to meet you Artemus,” said Tiff. She was the tall one. “I like your hair. Guys with long hair are usually like greasy Metallica weirdoes, but you wear yours nicely. Those idiots give long hair a bad name.” As she smiled she touched my hair, letting her hand slide down my neck for just a moment.

“Yeah, they do though, don’t they?” She was hitting on me and insulting me at the same time.

I was beaming when my thoughts were disrupted by Charity’s hand grasping my wrist. “Come along, Daddy Mack, we’ve got to get going.” We said our good-byes and left the mall. When we got back to Charity’s house I thanked her and asked her if she was sure she didn’t want money and she reiterated her prior statement. We settled on a time to meet before the dance, and I swept her up into a bearhug and thanked her yet again for her good deed. I hopped in my Caddy and departed, leaving the state of piss and trash actually anticipating a date with my cousin.

The week preceding the Christmas dance passed quickly.

Keith Truman

The thought of taking a hot chick to a formal had me laughing quietly to myself the entire week. So what if she was my cousin? Nobody was going to know that. All they would know is that Artemus' date is a piece of ass and that he *must* be hooking up with her since that *is* what happens after events like these. Finally, I wouldn't be just be a pothead or a class clown. I'd be recognized as viable dating material. I was having an egocentric rant like this the day before the dance at my locker when a familiar voice sounded off.

"Yo Artemus, how they hangin'?" It was Head. His cobalt eyes peered over the top of my locker door as I knelt before it, gathering and sorting my books. I stood up, my forehead barely parallel to the point on the door where his chin was.

"A tad to the left with a splash of frommunda," I replied. I didn't see Head in school very often my junior year. It seemed that every other year Head and I were severed from one another in classes, though we were both on the same learning track. It wouldn't surprise me if the split-ups were intentional—Head and I were a potent combination for a teacher to handle. I closed my locker as the eighth period bell sounded, telling us we could leave. Head and I started toward the parking lot.

"So, did you buy a Christmas dance ticket yet?" Head asked.

"Yep, got one last week," I said.

"You bought a stag ticket dude? Man, I figured we were gonna do the same ole' same ole' routine." Then it hit me. *Head* is always my date to formals. We split the ticket price for a couple, which saved us both five bucks. Then we would meet under the

bleachers of the football field and smoke pot and drink. How could I forget our pre-game ceremony? Head patted me on the shoulder. “It’s cool dude, I figured you spaced out, so I bought a stag ticket too in case. So wait, what should we drink before the dance? Jack? Captain? I was thinking—

“I didn’t buy a stag ticket,” I interrupted.

“Huh?” said Head.

“I didn’t buy a stag ticket,” I repeated.

“So I wasted fifteen bucks on a stag ticket? How come you never let me know?”

“I have a date dude. I have a date with this chick,” I said.

Head threw a cockeyed look my way. “Who?”

“You don’t know her. Her name is Charity, she’s not from around here.”

“She hot?”

“Pretty damn,” I said.

“That’s cool man, bring her along to the pre-game! The more the merrier. I just got some sticky-ass pot, man, it rocks.” Head took great joy in initiating new people into the ways of the true stoner.

“Actually Head, she doesn’t smoke. She doesn’t even know that I smoke. I can’t pre-game this time. But dude, I’ll see you at the dance.” I looked down, and kicked some gravel toward my car’s tire.

“Dude, why the fuck didn’t you let me know this in advance? You leave me hanging, then sell me out for some bitch. If I had known this, I wouldn’t have even bought a fucking ticket.” Head ran his hand violently through his coarse brown hair and

grunted at me, shuffling off in a fit.

“That kid,” I mumbled to myself as I unlocked the car door and tossed my backpack in the back seat. I felt responsible for his anger, but I didn’t care. I didn’t want to lean against the wall and ridicule the jocks at the dance all night. I didn’t want my only appearance on the dance floor to be when the disc jockey played “Enter Sandman” or “Crazy Train.” I watched Head tear out of the parking lot as I put my key in the ignition.

The following evening Charity rolled in my driveway precisely when she said she would. She looked radiant. Her dress was revealing yet tasteful: silver spaghetti straps that revealed her petite and tanned shoulders, a black gown that offered a more than giving bustline and flowed smoothly to her ankles with a knee-high slit. I should have felt strange pinning the corsage on Charity, but rather, it made me feel like a pimp. My mother wanted to take pictures of us together, but I had to coerce her out of doing so for reasons of embarrassment prevention. Charity swallowed down a helping of familial rhetoric before we were able to escape to the Christmas dance.

After waiting in the cold December air for ten minutes in order to get our tickets verified, we entered the gymnasium. Cafeteria tables had been adorned with lace tablecloths and placed to the right of the gym, with some being used for refreshments and others for sitting. Dead center of the gym and all the way back was the DJ and his sound system, where a few students had begun to congregate. To the left was the barren wall that people used to either abscond off to when they wanted to make out or lean against all night, torturing themselves by going to an event where they didn’t

fit in. Minimal decorations were scattered about; white, silver and blue was the color combination chosen by student council this year, seen in ribbons, confetti, and construction paper. It still looked like a gym. But now it looked like a fire hazard too. I searched the crowd near the DJ for people I knew, and found a smattering of friends next to the one of the left-hand subwoofers. I offered my elbow to Charity, and she accepted. We held our heads high with the first few steps we took, imitating nobility.

“Let the charade begin,” said Charity.

I grinned and projected my voice in a stuffy British accent. “Shall we, M’lady?” We continued toward the group, and as we grew closer my friends started greeting me with bellows and waves.

“Hey guys,” I said, slapping hands and hugging the girls that I knew. “This is Charity. She’s from Jersey.” It was easy to notice the looks on guys’ faces when a new girl was around. Andrew and Mike, two of my other best friends, were trying to give me nods and thumbs up without our dates noticing. Charity and my friends all exchanged pleasantries, and within a few minutes, it seemed as if she was a permanent fixture in the group. Charity was an amiable girl, and her beauty didn’t hinder her when trying to make friends either. As we all mingled, a tall figure moved toward Charity and me through the crowd. It was Tim Fritz, a kid I had known since the sixth grade. Tim was overly jockish, which was funny because he was only a marginal athlete. Nevertheless, he was tall and dark, which in high school made you handsome by default. Apparently something near me caught his eye, and I doubted it was my new shirt.

“Hey Thorne,” said Tim. He took time for the token

Keith Truman

handshake before he turned to Charity. "Who's your friend?"

"Charity, I'd like you to meet Tim. He and I go way back." Charity offered her hand to him. He held it, and rather than leaving it at that, kissed my date's hand. I didn't know how to react. If she weren't my cousin, I'd be asserting my sentiments by now. But she was my cousin, and something inside kept me from becoming the aggressor.

Tim slapped me on the shoulder. "She's a keeper Thorne. You *really* lucked out." Tim turned and returned to his position among our group. Charity pulled my head close to her lips.

"He's cute, Artemus. Real cute. You hang out with him a lot?"

"Often times, yes, we are in the same place. But no, Charity, I never consider myself *with* him. He's a prick."

"A cute prick." Charity looked over at him, then back at me, raising one eyebrow casually. "Charity may have found a hookup for herself tonight."

It was my turn to raise an eyebrow. "Hookup? What about Brandon? You know Brandon, starts with a b, as does buh-buh-boyfriend?"

"Eh, he's cheated on me before. I don't go out of my way to find ways to get back at him. Usually, they go out of their way to find me."

"I see..." I was dumbfounded by this bit of knowledge, but before further interrogation could happen, the DJ started earning his pay with the first dance song of the night. The group of friends, previously a muddled pool of couples, suddenly burst into an ionized wave, each person exerting an electromagnetic wave

particular to his or her mate. Charity swept me up in the same fashion as we began moving to “Whoomp! There it is.”

She pulled me close to her, pulsating her hips and butt rhythmically to the music. Her ass nearing closer to my crotch every second, Charity seemed to have forgot that she was trying to grind on her cousin. For every movement she made closer toward me, I countered with defensive gestures, keeping an imaginary force field around my pelvis intact. I kept my hands on her hips so that I could keep her at a safe distance. After all, Charity didn't need to feel my boner pushing into her. This comical mambo continued for the next hour and a half, until Mr. Elephant Balls made another appearance.

Charity and I had taken a song off so we could rest - so I could rest. During the down time, Tim again made his way toward us. Again he slapped my shoulder.

“What's wrong Thorne, is the lady tiring you out?” Tim cast a hungry glance toward Charity, then turned back to me. “I'm just bustin' your balls man. You can actually keep up on the dance floor, Thorne, it's surprising.” He focused his attention on Charity. Standing close to the sound system, it was impossible for me to decipher what Tim whispered in her ear during Journey's “Faithfully,” but she nodded and approached me.

“Hey Artie, think it would be alright if I hung out with Tim a little bit? I've been the devoted date all night.”

“Yeah, I don't care. I'm just pissed that that bone smuggler has the balls to hit on you in front of me.”

“Artemus, I told him.” Charity squinted her eyes as she awaited my response.

“Oh, you didn't.” My stomach sank and my eyes rolled

back into my head involuntarily. “Of all the random people to tell, you had to tell Tim Fritz. Thanks, Charity, that about wraps up my social life until graduation.”

Charity smiled and kissed my cheek. “I made him promise not to tell.” Charity brought her lips to within centimeters of mine. “And I have ways of making promises stick.” With that, she pirouetted and went off into the crowd to find Tim.

Talk about utterly lost in the masses. It was slow dance time, and my date, who was my cousin to begin with, had ditched me for a tool. I began to skulk to the bathroom when out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Head leaning against the loser wall. As I grew closer, I could see he was laughing. He was laughing at me. Watching Head mock me as we had mocked others times before left me standing silently. His laugh turned to a sneer, as he turned his back to me and made his way from the loser wall to the exit. If I were to be showered in pig’s blood, now would be the opportune moment. Wanting to leave but having to stay and wait for Charity, I slowly made my way toward the loser wall. I was tired and needed to lean on something. As I loosened my tie and started to unbutton a few top buttons, a soft voice called my name.

“Where you goin’ Artemus?” I turned a shoulder back to see Andrea Lelli, my favorite Point Ridge cheerleader. Auburn hair, creamy skin, and a body that even Charity would envy. Her sea foam eyes identically matched her dress, and they were currently focused on my sorry face.

“I was going, nowhere? I wasn’t going anywhere. You know, just chillin’.” I took a deep breath and put a smile on for Andrea.

Keith Truman

“You looked like you were going over to the wall. I’ve been compelled to do that a few times tonight.” Scrutinizing her beautiful face, it looked like Andrea was putting on a smile for me as well.

“Well, I make a motion to scrap the rest of the dance, all two songs of it, and go lean on the wall.” She smiled a real smile, and followed me over to the wall.

“So why has your night sucked?” I asked.

“Nick. He got drunk early this afternoon and he and Big Worm decided to go to South Street before they came here. He promised he’d be here. That asshole. Where are the good guys at, Artemus?” Even less light was available on this side of the gym. The contrast of Andrea’s milky complexion with the darkness gave her the visage of a gorgeous apparition, as if her presence was imaginary, fantasized.

“Are you kidding me Andrea? Who asks that question? Nice guys are everywhere, my dear, you just need to stop chasing the prettyboy shitheads.”

“Settle down Artemus, it was a rhetorical question. I know where the nice guys are when I want to find them.” She fluttered her eyes playfully at me. “So who was that girl you came in with tonight?”

“Oh Charity? She’s a friend from Jersey. Ditched me for Fritz.”

“Really?”

“Yep.”

“You poor thing, I thought I had it rough.” She petted my head, even though I don’t think I looked like I need consoling. She pushed herself off of the wall and faced me, clasping her fingers

Keith Truman

around my neck. "Kara Markley is having a party after the dance. Maybe you could come with. I'm not exactly sure where her house is. You could help me find it, we could talk some more." Her gaze never left mine.

"Yeah, talk," I said, thoroughly lost in her. She laughed at my sentence fragment, and I smiled at the sight of her enjoying herself. Our heads bowed toward one another, and we kissed. My hands stayed stationary, wrapped around her thin waist. What seemed like hours of embrace came to an end as people began walking past us in herds, as Robert Plant moaned "...and she's buyyying a stairway, to hea-ven." I held Andrea close for a few more moments, until I heard a sarcastic clearing of the throat. It was Charity, standing a few feet behind Andrea's sculpted figure, arms folded. She still had a smile on her face, though it wasn't the haughty smirk I was accustomed to seeing.

"Hey lovebirds," said Charity, circumventing the obstacle of Andrea to plant a kiss on my cheek. Catching a whiff of her breath, I deduced that Tim had smuggled a flask into the dance. Charity threw her arms around Andrea and me. "Hope I'm not disturbing anything," she cooed.

I took pleasure in seeing my strait-laced cousin drunk. "Nothing at all, Charity." I looked down at Andrea and kissed her forehead. "Where's Tim at?"

"Well, it turns out you were right, Artie. Tim was a prick. After the third or fourth time he told me I looked pretty and mentioned that he played sports, I had to excuse myself. I looked around for you for a while. I couldn't find you, so I was going to wait out in the car for you." She ended this sentence with her index

finger extended like ET.

“But then, I found this guy,” she motioned to a tall silhouette behind her, “And he had just the stuff to cheer me up. He said he knows you, too. Come here, Joey.” She swiveled around awkwardly, and grabbed the silhouette’s hand. When pulled into my eyesight, the silhouette manifested into Head. Presented with my cousin and my best friend, both stoned and drunk, I had little rebuttal. Head approached and offered me an underbite grin.

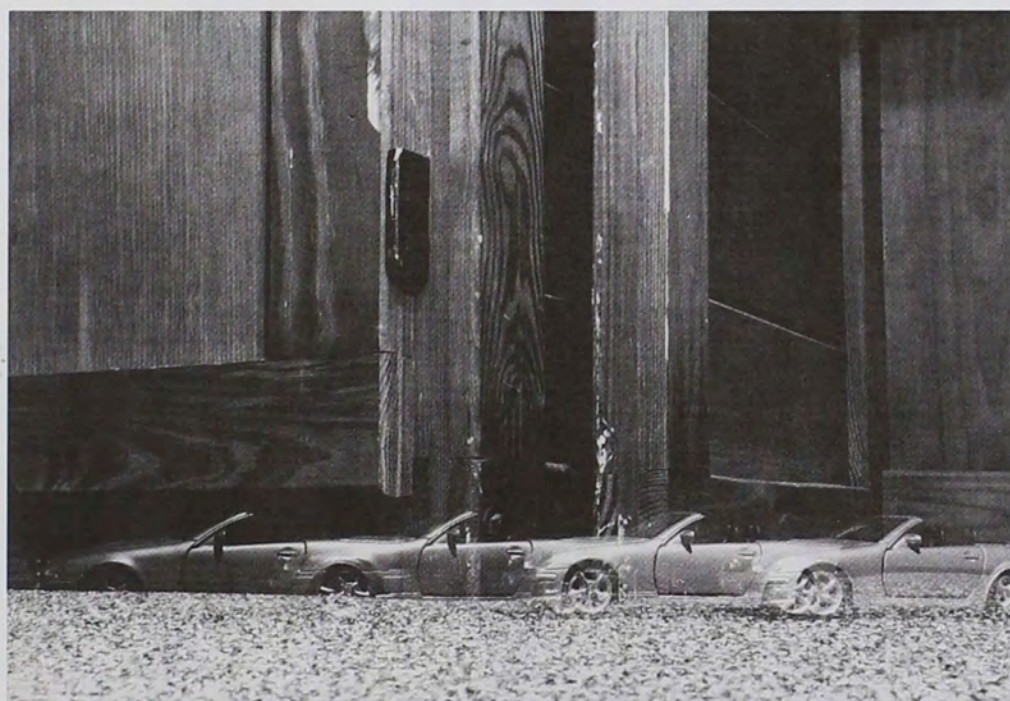
“No Head, I can’t pre-game, my date doesn’t smoke!” said Head in a mimicking tone. Head and Charity shared a hearty guffaw at my expense, but I didn’t care. Head’s eyes lit up. “So Artemus, are we going to Kara’s or what!?” Head’s laughter was consistent, as if he had just been let in on quite an amusing joke. The four of us began the walk to our cars. Head was still laughing. “Hhhey, Artemus, can I be your date at Christmas dinner this year? I hear Charity’s house is a blast!”

I grinned, and quietly nodded, taking the playful ribbing from Head. I removed one arm from my grip on Andrea to smack Charity in the back of the head.

“Did you have to tell him too?” I said.

Silver Car

Rachael Keller



Little Sister*Katy Diana*

Someday I'll take you back
to our summer days of carnival survival:
the cathartic ice cream screams
and those tight lights
that loosened when they hit the sky.

Don't forget our driveway races
when I stumbled like a leggy moose on loose pebbles
watching, at eye-level, tinier feet stomping past.
Later that night my cooking skills were wasted
because you wouldn't eat anything
but cheese and peas.

And what about those luring summer hums?
Always, that under-buzz beneath the humidity.
Later, chickadees and peepers collaborated
for the night crescendo.
No one missed the thunder.

Last summer, you were the Trampoline Queen
and I was the Jester,
bouncing you and your laughter
higher and brighter
'til you surpassed sunshine.

Raindrops

Heather Morris



Like a Sunflower*Jen Brink*

I always had a problem with the fine line between what got you in to Heaven and what didn't. Actually, I had a problem with most of what the educators at Saint Philip's would tell me. I remember being in second grade and being told that God was disappointed with me because I didn't go to Church every Sunday and that I should try to get my non-Catholic father to take me to mass because the Catholic Church welcomes everyone to participate in their masses. Well, up until communion they do, but then non-Catholics are asked and thanked for not taking part in the sacrament, courtesy of the Bishop via the hymnal book. Catholics are all about looking good. It's all for show. Their mass is a production, their beliefs all contradictory. But I guess I never really thought about it until now.

Suicides don't go to Heaven. Suicides don't get Christian burials. They're not to be laid in consecrated ground. So, what happens? Accidents happen. So anything that happens accidentally obviously isn't intentional. Therefore, suicides can be justified and thus given proper burials. Like Ophelia in *Hamlet*. She drowned herself, everyone knew it, but she was still buried on sacred ground. It's all bullshit if you ask me. I mean, not just the church thing, but suicides in general. Death is scary shit. Why would you even want to mess with that? Anyway, I'd had enough of people dying. Christ, I was only fifteen and I'd already lost three people close to me. Three people my age, nonetheless, and that's not right. But this one I just wasn't ready for.

Betsy, or should I say Liz since that's what she decided she'd be called starting in high school, was my best friend throughout our elementary years. We grew apart once we started high school. She went on with the Catholic school thing, and I her boyfriend broke up with her. She said she was going to kill herself, but he didn't think she was serious. He tried calling her later and she didn't answer, so he called her mom. And her mom tried to get into her room, but, you know, the door was locked. She called 911 and banged in the door, but it was too late. Her mom wants you to read at the funeral. It's on Friday."

I drove to the church early Friday morning. I sat outside on the playground we'd romped around on for nine years of our lives. It was very weird to me. To walk around and be able to remember very poignant images of things that happened in certain spots. I remembered the time in sixth grade when she accidentally kicked me in the face and I didn't talk to her for half a school year. I remembered how we used to be the only two girls playing football with the boys in the rectory parking lot. I remembered how we used to run across the football field and hop the fence at the bottom of the hill when we were trying to escape from alter-server rehearsal. How we'd fight over who got to own England on the map painted across the driveway. I stood under the maple tree we used to meet at when we'd walk to each others' houses. Standing there, I watched as the cars started rolling into the parking lot, and waited for my mother to come.

As I waited, I thought more about what I was actually about to do. I was buying into the bullshit. I was about to read a prayer about finding Eternal Life. My mother arrived and walked

me up the stairs to the church entrance.

“Mom, I can’t do this. We as Catholics aren’t supposed to believe that suicides go to Heaven, right? So what is all this for? Why should we mourn over someone who basically told us all to fuck off? She doesn’t care about us, and she’s rotting in Hell. That’s what this religion has taught me.”

“Jessica, if you don’t want to do the reading, I’m sure they can find someone else to do it, but you’ll have to tell them now. And you will regret it. You will.”

My mother and I entered the church and waited in line to view the body and greet the family. I looked around the church and saw most of the graduated class of 1996, which brought some comfort to me. When we reached the casket we genuflected and blessed ourselves. I stared at her for a long time. They had cut and permed her hair. Her nails were done. She looked beautiful. They left her with as little make-up as possible, which was odd because as of late that’s the one thing you could rely on her wearing. Her clothes were feminine, which was strangely comforting, since her styles had recently taken a turn for the freakish. It had been a long time since I’d seen her looking that innocent and prim. The last conversation I’d had with her she was asking for all the details from my sex life, telling me about her new gothic lesbian entourage, and how she was out to screw the world the way it had screwed her. She didn’t look like anything bothered her anymore. There was nothing left for her to rebel against. She was, dare I say it, happy.

I said a quick prayer and moved on to speak to her parents. Her mother said nothing, but genuinely looked glad or relieved, I’m not sure which, to see me. I reached out and squeezed

her hand, and smiled. She feebly attempted one in return. I moved over then to her father, who for the first time ever in his life was showing signs of owning emotion.

He hugged me tightly and whispered, "She really liked you. You were her best friend. I know you guys grew apart when you started high school, but she still talked about you. She still cared very much about you."

It was then that I completely broke down for the first time. My mom saw me and rushed over. She grabbed me by the arm and escorted me to my seat in the front pew. I sat and waited for my turn to get up on the altar and deliver my farewell.

Following the first gospel I rose from my seat and walked slowly to the podium. I looked around the church at all the teary eyes. Just as I opened my mouth to begin, the back door of the church swung open and Katrina walked in, followed by several other girls clad in black fishnet stockings and leather skirts. I suppose no occasion is too significant for them to ruin. Everyone in the church turned to stare. They stood in silence hovering in the back of the church. I bit my lip to keep from screaming how much I hated them for ruining my friend. I stared at them in their barbarity for what seemed like an eternity, and after a long silence began reading the Prayer of Saint Francis.

"O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is discord, harmony; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope..." I stopped reading and looked up at the congregation. Her parents looked so tired and worn out. Her grandfather sat murmuring about how no parent should bury their

child, let alone a grandchild. “Hope,” I whispered, “Hope for what?” I froze on the altar. Father Kelly walked over to me, and put his hand on my shoulder. He motioned for me to return to my seat. I sat down with even more contemptuous thoughts about the ridiculousness of the entire situation before me.

As the service concluded and Father Kelly blessed “Elizabeth’s union with God,” I wondered why, since I’m sure he’d known how she died. I wondered how he could still bless her knowing that she’d done this to herself. And why was he a priest in the Catholic Church? Whether or not it was determined that her death was an accidental overdose, or if she’d had it planned from the beginning, I wondered if I’d been home if she would’ve talked to me and if I could have helped. My mom told me once when I was very young that if someone has it in their mind that they’re going to commit suicide, or rather, end their own life, then they’ll do it no matter who tries to stop them. No matter who tries talking to them. “That’s why no one could’ve helped Uncle Randy,” she said. But still, I wondered.

I drove to the cemetery alone. Most of the other young people decided that it was too heavy for them to attend, so they all went out to brunch together. I followed behind her family. My mother offered to go with me, but I respectfully declined her company. She understood my want and need for time alone. I didn’t watch the interment ceremony, but rather listened from a distance. I hated cemeteries and had horrible recollections from Matt’s burial when the groundskeepers thought everyone had left and started tossing dirt back on top of his coffin. His best friend, James, totally flipped out and rampaged through the cemetery. I

wish I had the courage to go off like that.

Betsy's burial was very different. Her coffin was white and had pink roses entwined in rosary beads across the top. Her parents sat very near to the casket, along with her grandfather. They each placed a single pink carnation on the lid of the casket and walked slowly, sobbing, back to the waiting limousine. Once everyone else had left the burial site I went and sat beside the casket. Father Kelly handed me a carnation, and said he'd leave me alone with my thoughts. I sat and stared at the flower in my hand for what seemed like an eternity. How long it was I'm really not sure, but it was long enough for me to recall every joke, every smile, every tear and every moment that she and I shared together.

"You okay over there?"

"Umm, yeah," I answered as I turned around only to come face to face with the last person I expected or wanted to see. I knew black was a color of mourning but her attire seemed mocking of the seriousness of the situation. Her sheer form-fitting shirt, black mini skirt, hand-cuffs as a belt; the more I looked at her the more I hated her. I felt like all the blood in my body had rushed to my face, and I kept my fists clenched tightly at my sides. I tried to swallow my anger towards her, Liz, the Church, the situation, and everything, but it exploded from my mouth despite my attempt. "You know I buried my friend because of you? You know that don't you?"

Katrina had taken a seat on the ground next to the casket, and held three sunflowers in her hand. "Jess, listen, I know we aren't friends anymore, but can we at least be civil? Don't we at least owe her, and each other, that much? I mean, this isn't the place, really."

Jen Brink

“Oh, and what are you, the voice of reason? I don’t owe you anything. And I don’t owe her anything anymore either. And, as far as this not being the place, well, you’re right. It’s not. She shouldn’t even be here. She shouldn’t have even gotten that Mass we had. Suicides don’t get buried on blessed ground. You at least learned that from your Catholic school education, didn’t you?”

Katrina stared at the ground. “You’re right, you know. But this whole burial thing, and the mass, they really don’t matter. I mean, they obviously don’t matter to her. She’s dead. I doubt they really matter to God. He’s got enough other shit on His plate. The only reason why we even have them is to give the families and friends some closure or whatever. It makes them feel better to know their kid is under some grass that a priest dumped some Holy Water on.”

Her words hit me like a force of nature. She was right. All the show was supposed to be making me feel better. It was supposed to give me closure. Hypocritical or not, I was reading too much into things. For the first time in nearly a year I didn’t hate Katrina. I sat down beside her and started plucking the petals from the carnation. Betsy always hated pink anyway. I tossed the stem into the grave, and propped my head against the side of the casket.

“I can’t really believe that I’m sitting in a cemetery with my head resting against the side of a fucking coffin,” I said.

“Ahh, the things you’ll do for a friend.” Katrina smiled as she turned the sunflowers over in her hand.

“Hey, Katie, remember when the three of us were in choir and we all wanted to be in the harmony section but only Liz got it and we didn’t?” I asked.

“Yeah, I fucking hated you for that!” She said as she pointed to the casket. “We had to stick to the shitty melody part.”

“But do you remember the first song we learned to harmonize on? It was that sunflower song. You remember, right? ‘Like a sunflower that follows every movement of the sun. So I turn towards you to follow you, my God.’”

“Hells yeah, Jessie! I remember, we would sing ‘In simplicity, honesty, I follow’, and then she’d sing real high ‘I follow!’ We were such dorks!”

“Did you just call me Jessie?” I laughed. “No one has called me that since like sixth grade.”

“It’s only fair. You called me Katie,” she said as she handed me one of the sunflowers, and together we placed all three on top of the casket.

Lost Tears

Preethy Eddy



Eulogy to her son, dead at 22*Christopher Tereshko*

I was the only woman
able to tolerate your vanity
for more than a month
I watched your self collapse
helpless.

I bore you when I was twenty-two—
laboring with your heavy heart
became happy.

I remember
the time we
stayed up all night
after the prom.
the hands
that we shared.
your oft hidden smile.
how you would make me cry.

I kissed your high school crush
after two years of cold feet.

You laughed at my driving
even on the way home from the hospital.

I knew how to make your bed
so that in sleep you could escape your demons.

You kicked and screamed
when we disappointed each other.

I locked you in your crib
but you snuck out at night.

You nursed from grandma's gin.

You lived in the shadow
of our family's ghosts
to the point that they possessed you.

You didn't want to nurse from my breasts

when you caught me getting out of the shower.
I saw you, too,
but as a child
no longer.
I was the only woman
you ever hit.
I'll be great, you said
but I never got to dance.
I was the woman
that looked at you for support
if dinner was overcooked.
the day the tree fell on the house.
when your father left his gun unlocked.
but you could only support your habits.
The photo album of your life is
naked pictures in the tub.
crowded birthdays.
colorful
of wasted potential.
missing the last few years.
not your fault.

I was the only woman

Snooze

Kate Chapman

She woke up. It was like she got hit with a frying pan in her been-broken-once-before nose (which happened to be the direct connection to her kept-out-of-the-trenches-thus-far heart). Putting it past her yet again, she suddenly remembered how the kids in her elementary school used to compare zipper manufacturers as they lined up for recess. The kid whose coat zipper read anything besides YKK was doomed to perish in the dodge ball court.

She woke up. This time it was the brick-of-reality that so suddenly greeted her been-through-so-much-already nose. After sitting and thinking on it for a moment, she placed the brick under her bed, so it would be there later, and went back to her dreaming. She thought of how she wished people could understand people as dogs do. With those knowing eyes when one must leave, allowing departure to be easy, while the return is expected and forgiving.

She couldn't figure out why these things met her nose with such indomitable force, but she somehow knew it was necessary. Kind of like when you hear the buzz of a cicada: you can pinpoint what tree he is in, but can't quite guess on which branch he rests.

She woke up. Her face bombarded with the first half of a full set of encyclopedias. After regaining consciousness she looked through the books. A-M. Holding the encyclopedia that housed the infamous letter L, she wondered...no...what could a book, written

by humans, have to say about something humans find so horribly confusing, almost unnatural? (Unless that's just her.) Moving the books to her closet, she dreamt on.

She woke up. N-Z, plus index. Her now-oh-so-crooked nose swollen and purple, but serving as an almost believable blockade to her still-in-one-piece heart. These volumes meaningless to her, she threw them from her second-story window. Watching the pages flap, attempting flight, then fall. Someone down there will want them.

Why these objects had something against her never-bothered-anyone-on-purpose face, she did not know. What day it was, when she had last eaten, she was even less aware of. Looking at the clock she found all the little red lines bouncing and swirling. Not time yet. Back to her dreams.

She woke up. She ducked in expectance, but her nose remained unharmed this time. She recalled a Tuesday. She had gone to the city at midnight to watch people live, returning for the sunrise at the beach to feel life. Her friend, bored, threw sand, but her eyes watched the orange orb ascend undisturbed. There had been other days so separate from reality, but this one had been wholly detached, or so she dreamed it to be.

She woke up. Believing the encyclopedia would have information now, she went to her closet. She was hit with Nothing. Love, Alfred Henry: Quaker, American Pacifist; love-apple: see tomato; lovebird;

Kate Chapman

Love Canal; love-in-a-mist: annual garden plant, buttercup family; then names (Lovejoy, Lovelace, Lovell). Nothing. Dictionary? **love** (luv) *n.* 1. Warm liking or affection for a person, affectionate devotion. With that definition, she'll be fine. Her swollen-but-healing nose could handle being without "warm liking." Though, to prevent being faced with an anvil the following morning, she ignored **love•less** (luv-lis) *adj.*, **love•lorn** (luv-lorn) *adj.*, **love•sick** (luv-sik) *adj.* She freed the remaining encyclopedias, along with the dictionary. They will be happy to reunite with the others. And on again with the dreaming, not needing to be awoken this time.

A Shrine to Tea

John Grebe



Match

Laura Phillips

All of Sheila's underwear is red, black, or blue. She hangs it on her wash line arranged by color. Next to that, she hangs her bras—some matching, some not. Sheila is 29 years old, a Libra, and likes carrots, but not peas. Sheila is my husband's ex-wife.

Pat and Sheila met in college over a Bunsen burner. They had one of those "I saw her from across the lab" romances that whirled into a full-blown relationship that allowed Pat to see the limited color range of Sheila's intimate collection. By senior year, there was a ring on her finger, a tiny sparkler that ate up Pat's wages for 2 years. Soon after, a wedding band was snug against it, wrapping her perfect finger in gold. They had children, summers at the shore, holiday dinners with the family, and a messy divorce. In the end, the kids went to Pat permanently. I got Pat and my fascination with Sheila.

Every time I ask him about her, I get the same response. "I don't want to talk about her, Charlotte. This is our life now. She's not a part of it." The story of their college romance and eventual marriage is all he tells, and then, only the nice side. I found her address in a black leather address book that Pat keeps under his side of the mattress. I found Sheila in Westbridge, in her white stucco house with green doors.

Westbridge is surprisingly close to our home—only about 45 minutes away. The one time that I was able to get Pat to tell me where she lived, you would have thought she lived on Neptune. She actually lives near the mall I took Sandra and Jase to last Christmas

when they wanted to see Santa. The kids came out, sticky with their own peppermint-tinged saliva, squealing over some coloring books that Santa's elves gave them. I thought of Sheila that day, wondering what she would think of me carting her kids to the mall at Christmas in her place.

In her college yearbook pictures, she looks gorgeous. In a picture from her freshman year, she stands squinting in the sun, her thick blonde hair tied back into a ponytail. Pat is next to her, a freckled junior in football gear. "Braxton's Golden Couple," it says under their picture. Pat keeps all of their college stuff in a big box in the attic. I accidentally came across it one day when I was hiding some of Jason's Christmas presents. All of the yearbooks are there, 20 pictures of Sheila in the 4 books combined. Their engagement video is in there, too. I had to wait for Pat to go on a business trip to watch it. In the video, Pat was suiting up to play his final college football game and Sheila was beaming from the stands. Right as the team was getting called onto the field, the announcer called Sheila's name and Pat stepped out from the line of players. Kneeling in the middle of the football field with Sheila in front of him, her cheeks whipped pink from the cold, Pat asked her to be his wife. She put her hand to her face, giggled, and nodded vigorously as the crowd screamed in joy. After a triumphant embrace, Pat played the final game of his collegiate career. It was, of course, an enormous victory.

After I watched the tape I had to bury it in the attic again. Pat would kill me if he knew I was watching it. I don't understand why he is so ashamed of her. Sheila was a lovely girl.

There was no phone number next to her name. I don't

Laura Phillips

think I would have had the nerve to call it even if there was one. Her address was there, though, and I was free to find her. But how do I do that? I couldn't just drive to her house and knock on the door. "Hello. My name is Charlotte Mackenzie and I'm married to your ex-husband." Sure that would have worked. She'd slam the door on my face, too good for me, too good for the life she left behind.

The day I found the address book, I copied Sheila's address into my checkbook. Pat would never look at the old calendars in the back of it. He's given up on forcing me to balance the checkbook. I remember when we first started dating. Pat would finish up work at 7:00 on the dot, pick me up and race over to his little apartment. In the beginning, we could barely make it to the door before things heated up. But after the first few weeks I saw the other side: the man who got up immediately after sex and started banging away at his keyboard or organizing his bills. I looked at him one night while he balanced his checkbook. He was so studious, so meticulous, I almost didn't want to breathe for fear it would disturb him. When we got married, he expected I would have a similar dedication to those monthly checks and balances. When I didn't, there were fights. He finally decided to just give me a sort of allowance, so I wouldn't have a chance of messing up his account.

It took me about a week to get up the courage to go see Sheila, and it took me another three days to come up with a good story to get me out of the house. That night, I had dinner ready as soon as Pat came through the door. We had grilled cheese and tomato soup. It's the perfect dinner, because I can keep the kids

busy while I'm making it. They are always getting into trouble. They just seem to drift away for a few moments and the next thing I know, there is a crash and a new mess to clean up. Sandra is old enough to stir the soup now. She stands on a chair and stirs the pot with a wooden spoon very carefully. She is generally a very neat child. I wonder if she gets that from Sheila. Jase butters the bread for us, using the dulllest butter knife in the drawer. He's only 4, so his buttering is a little messy, but he loves to help.

The children were already eating their dinner when Pat came home. I was flipping his sandwich. After he sat down and began eating, I quickly made myself a sandwich and wolfed it down. "I need to get a present for Veronica," I told him. I twisted sweaty hands behind my back, rotating my wedding band. "Her birthday is on Tuesday." Nice choice, Char. He hates Veronica. I could get her a pack of gum for all he cares.

"Alright," he said. "Just please don't take too long."

My stomach tied itself in more knots than an Indian yogamaster on the 45-minute ride to Sheila's. What will I do if she catches me? I couldn't just drive past her house over and over again. Would she be outside? Would the house be big or small? Would she be someone I saw before? Surely I would have recognized her, but then again....

Her house sat back from the street by about 50 feet. It was small, probably only one floor, and done in white stucco with a green door. Her porch had a little roof over it, with a wooden porch swing under it. Where the porch ended was an impressive flowerbed overflowing with red and yellow tulips. Her yard and porch were immaculate. Just my luck, Pat's ex has to be the

Martha Stuart of Westbridge. I parked my car in front of a house two doors down and decided to go for a little walk. Maybe I'm getting a little too brave, I thought. No. As long as I keep an eye on the time, I'll be fine.

The lights were off at her house. There's no harm in having a little look if she isn't home. Of course I can't get too close, but at least she won't see me. I peeked around the side of the house. On one side was a tiny carport, also immaculate. Who ever heard of an immaculate carport? On the other side was an adorable little grey birdfeeder with tiny pink rosebuds painted on it. There was a little clothesline strung diagonally, almost leading into the backyard. Her underwear and a crisp pair of khaki pants swung gently in the breeze. Her backyard had a most amazing garden in it, overflowing with crisp peach colored roses. They smelled just like fresh tea...

"Excuse me?" I felt a tiny bony finger on my shoulder and a faint voice in my ear. "Can I help you?"

When I turned around, she was right there, looking every bit the golden girl from the engagement video. Except she wasn't smiling.

"Yes," I stammered. "I work for Avon," I said. "You know, skin care, lipgloss, perfume, etcetera."

"Do you typically make your calls in the backyard?" She looked like she wasn't buying the Avon bit.

"Actually, no, but I got so entranced by your tulips, that I just had to have a peek around back. I was hoping you'd be by soon. As you know, October is breast cancer month. That's right, it's only 2 months away!! So I wanted to talk to you about our special line of charity products."

Laura Philips

Her face began to soften. “My aunt had breast cancer.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I said, hoping it sounded moderately heartfelt.

“Would you care to sit down?” She pointed at a bench near the roses. “I would love to talk about your charity products but first I need a glass of juice. Do you care for cranberry juice?”

“Of course. Thank you so much,” I answered in disbelief. Her attitude had changed so quickly. As she glided out of the room, I remembered one little detail. It’s all well and good that she believes I’m an Avon lady, but what am I going to say when she asks to see the catalog? Avon ladies don’t go out without the catalog!!!

I shook it off just in time to see Sheila arrive with cranberry juice in pink tumblers. There had to be a way out of this one. Small talk, make small talk. “Oh, I am so sorry, I never even told you my name. I’m Mary Gordon,” I lied, with a look of false sincerity in my eyes.

“Sheila. Sheila Washbern,” she blurted with a gregarious extension of her hand.

“You know,” I ventured, “I could swear I know you from somewhere. Do you shop at Westbridge Mall?” Good one. Who wouldn’t with it so close? And I know all about it!!

“Yes!! Yes!!” she said exuberantly. “My favorite store is the candle place...you know, the one next to...”

“The food court? Yeah, I know which one you mean. Waxworks!!”

“Yes. I get candles there all the time. In fact, I have them all over the house. My favorite scent is honeydew.”

“Mine too!!” Wow, she’s making this easy. And I think she’s forgetting the Avon.

“Would you like to come inside? I can light a few, and I just made the nicest banana bread. You can have a piece.”

“Sure,” I said. This was going almost a little too well.

The inside of her house was similar to the outside. She had taken the simple, plain interior, and given it a delicate personal touch. There were wreaths of dried flowers on the eggshell-painted kitchen walls. Her living room was a lovely rose color, with an ordinary, yet cozy-looking, over-stuffed sofa. I plopped down on the edge of it.

“Are you married, Miss Washbern?” I asked carefully.

“Not anymore,” she replied, handing me a basket of homemade banana bread.

“Me, neither,” I said, coming up with a quick point of reference. “It’s kind of nice, though. You know, being free again.”

“Yes, I guess so. It’s nice to have my own house. I don’t get many visitors anymore, though. I miss that.” She took a swig from her tumbler. “And the children. I miss my children.”

Sandra and Jase. “How many do you have?” I asked.

“Two. A girl and a boy. Sandra is six and Jason is four. My husband and that bitch coworker he married have them,” she said with monitored anger.

Bitch coworker? “Who did he marry?” I asked, my hands under my knees to hide the shaking.

“Oh, some office floozy. I think her name was Charlotte. My husband was working long hours, spending the weeknights in the city away from me and the kids. At first I didn’t think anything

of it, but after a couple of months you start to wonder.” She gave me a glance as if awaiting my agreement.

“Of course,” I blurted. My hands were beginning a fine sweat; I could feel my fingers groping for my ring.

“So one Monday I asked my mom to watch the kids. My friend and I drove into the city in her car so he wouldn’t recognize me and waited outside his work. At 7:00 on the dot, he walked through the doors with this woman wearing a load of makeup and a dress that was too small for her.”

I winced.

“We followed them to Pat’s studio,” she continued. “You know, the place he told me he crashed at every night because he was too tired and busy to come home. He and this bimbo walked inside. My friend and I waited in the car for almost an hour hoping they were just getting a file or something for work. But we gave up. We knew what they were doing, and in a week, my husband knew that I knew, too. Then we got a divorce. Somehow he and his fast-talking lawyer got him custody of our kids. On grounds that I was insane or something.”

She suddenly stopped her reverie and looked at me as if she’d forgotten I was there, like she had been caught talking to herself. “Well,” she said finally, “I’m sure you have lots of Avon to sell. I can’t buy any today.” Her hazel eyes sparkled with tears as she smiled weakly. “I’m meeting a friend for a movie in twenty minutes.”

“That sounds lovely, ma’am,” I said artificially. “You have a good time. Thank you so much inviting me into your home. I’ll come back in a couple of months. Before breast cancer awareness

month.”

“That’s right,” she replied half-heartedly. “Only 2 months until breast cancer awareness month.”

I closed the door behind me and used every bit of restraint in my body to keep from running to my car and slamming the door shut. I had been at her house for over an hour. Pat would be wondering where I was. I drove around a little, killing a little time. I was already late anyway. I might as well take as much time as I want. A half-hour after leaving Sheila’s house, I drove by it again, wondering if she’d really left for the movies. Her car was still parked in the driveway. I could see the eerie glow of television coming through her living room window. Braver this time, I pulled up to the curb in front of her house and ran a hand through my hair. She opened her door almost as soon as I knocked. Her face was a mixture of shock and happiness when she saw it was me. “Hello, my name is Charlotte Mackenzie,” I said. “I am married to your ex-husband.”

tuesday*susannah fisher*

tuesday came in the dark
when i was not sleeping.

tuesday came
because no one could stop it.

i wanted to grab tuesday by the toes
and swing it 'round and 'round.
i wanted to laugh
i wanted to cry
because tuesday had come.

tuesday would have none of it.
tuesday whispered, "hush, hush little girl".
i sat down in the middle of the floor
and watched in the mirror
as tuesday braided my hair.
my scalp so relaxed, melted like butter
under tuesday's touch.

when all was finished
tuesday kissed my forehead
and sent me to bed.

as my eyes fluttered shut
i could see tuesday beginning to glow
outside my window.

Flare

Shane Borer



7 Couplets for Drawing Genevieve

Drew Petersen

A soul cannons another soul
Like time sprinkling mini kisses on squinting eye endings,

You might draw a picture of her.
Freezing the mindful heart's development in a darkroom,

Here you go down the avenue with dimension
Imaging your subject in soft number 2 cross-hatching.

Your sketching encapsulates her symmetry and anatomy
But turn Genevieve 90 degrees and she's gone.

A soul will cannon another soul anywhere
From cherubic castles to seraphic easels

And another soul will meet you
Like a walking autumn wind through leaning oak and evergreen.

Beautiful pictures make beautiful colors
And magic of others make beautiful mixtures.

Diner Reflection

Klaus Yoder

You shook my hand:
mine naked, yours gloved
and you left me standing at the restaurant booth
with only a crisp menu and a harsh napkin to grip my hand.

I stepped to the window and watched you go
after our waitress sloshed that glass of water on the table.
You clutched that camel hair jacket to your thin body
the one you bought yourself for Christmas.
A wool cap masked your face, but for only a second
until it was pulled back up to that line on your forehead.

Your hand is probably trembling a little as you walk in wind blown
strides
there's a red stitched tattoo on it, under that smooth leather glove
now.

I recall the summer you got it
needles electrically humming in that parlor on Main Street, the one
under the steeples' shadow.
You're too old to let anyone see it now and I wish I could forget it
like you forgot me.
It's a red devil's face, pitchfork on the thumb. Sometimes you'd
flash that one at the pool.
We were all impressed, like kids at Little League games.

It's so cold out there, a slash of breeze blows you down the
sidewalk, past a stop sign.
Your scarf waves back. Its master never turns back, never glances
to the restaurant.
It's probably better for me at least, with you leaving.
It's easy because it is familiar, old acquaintance.

Leopard

Heather Morris



**Behavioral Correctional Facility of Santa Fe
or, What You Would Rather Not
(a three-act disturbance)**

Dennis Kearney

“Infirmity, that decays the wise, doth ever make the better fool.”

–Malvolio, Twelfth Night

[Intro Scene: Two men are sleeping in plain metal cots. The bed linens are nailed down to prevent suicides. One man, unfortunately named Calvin Coolidge- fat, porcine, apologetically white. His gut bulges over the top of the sheets like a pimple about to erupt. The other is thin, of mixed descent, probably illegitimate. The thin man, Malvolio Perez, stinks of suspicion even when clean and freshly shaven. He is clenching and unclenching his fists on the edges of the sheets. The fat man whines in his sleep from time to time. The analog clock reads two-thirty. There being no windows, it is unclear whether it is one in the afternoon or one at night. The thin man turns over in his bed to look at the fat man. The bed squeaks loudly, enough to wake the fat man. He wakes with a nasal groan, beginning the same conversation they have spoken for the past three years.]

Calvin Coolidge: Whaaat?

Malvolio: You know why they nail down the sheets, Jack?

Calvin [exasperated]: My name’s Calvin.

Malvolio: So you can’t wrap em around the fixtures and kill your

fat self. Ha! Ha! [*laughs like shotgun blasts*]

Calvin: I'm not fat. The food here has too much sodium in it. My body can't me... *metabolize* it. [*Calvin leans on the m, not stuttering, more of a lingering.*]

Malvolio: Your body can't do a lot of things. Push-ups, for example. Ha! I'm surprised they let you into the regular-sized prisons, bub. You look like a half-empty tube of toothpaste in that bed there, bout to bust the cap right off.

Calvin: Shut up.

Malvolio [*not skipping a beat*]: What are you in here for, anyway? I bet you fucked somebody's little baby boy. Hogtied him with duct tape neat and pretty. You like 'em young, you slimy rascal?

Calvin: NNNNo! I didn't do anything! I'm not a pervert! I'm married! Are you a pervert? [*suddenly frightened*] Are you going to... to pound me in the ass when I fall asleep?

Malvolio: Not unless you want me to. I ain't cheap, though. You got any cigarettes on you? Booze? Pictures of naked little fat kids?

Silent Cal: NO- No. no. ...no.

Malvolio [*clenching and unclenching fists like a boxer*]: Me, I'm here for Grand Larceny. Sounds nice, don't it? A bottle of scotch convinced me into borrowing a few necessary *utilities* from Sam Parker, if you get my meaning. My meaning being I *borrowed* his *lawn tractor*, and my necessity being I *needed* to drive it into the ravine. Show that fucker a thing or two.

Mr. Coolidge: That's not it at all... [*suddenly pedantic*] intoxication isn't grounds for larceny because you lack the necessary intent. It's only larceny if you do not intend to return the

borrowed property once sober. In addition, a lawn tractor is a vehicle under Michigan statutes, and that's not larceny, it's-

[A metal door punches open, and two large men wearing tight white T-shirts and slacks enter the room.]

Guard: Time for personal meetings. Get up.

“Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong.” – Calvin Coolidge, 30th President of the United States

ACT TWO

[The guards help the men out of bed and escort them to a room separated down the middle by three-inch thick plate glass, with telephones on both sides. There are two empty seats, one for each of them. Calvin sits across from an equally large woman with a blue floral print dress who is about to burst into tears. He picks up the telephone, leans in close, and they begin whining confidentially to each other. Malvolio's visitor sports a shabby brown suit, sunglasses and a two-day beard. Malvolio flashes teeth and raises a quick hand in greeting then squeezes the phone repeatedly as he speaks.]

Malvolio: Hey Mac, everything's going great? Yeah? Great. Bet a thousand on Grey Lucy to place in the third, I'm feeling she's a real banker.

Mac *[bemused smile, almost patronizing, with a heavy Boston accent]*
Dennis Kearney

Irish accent]: Sure you don't want Flashy Sir? He's placed in six of his past seven runs.

Malvolio: Naw, you horselicker, that dog's luck is all tuckered out. Lucy's a maiden, but she just got forced out the past few. She's got a new breeder, and I can smell money floating offa that guy like bread fresh from the oven.

Mac: Sure, sure, whatever you say, it's your money.

[During the slight lull in the conversation, Malvolio glances over to Calvin's visitor. His grimace slides off his face and smears the wall with exaggerated disgust; he whispers something to Mac. Mac turns to the woman, his greasy face betraying concern.]

Mac [*very politely*]: Excuse me, Miss? Are you pregnant, or just a fatty?

Mrs. Coolidge: Oh my god! OH MY GOD! [*finally bursts into tears*] I'M SO FAT! CALVIN EVERYBODY HATES ME! MY STOMACH IS A BALLOON, SOMEBODY POP ME!

[Malvolio whispers into the telephone again. Calvin notices this time, and his eyebrows widen, instigating an avalanche of skin on his forehead.]

Mac: Certainly, ma'am. You'd be doing the rest of humanity a favor. Do you happen to have a rusty coathanger on you?

[Calvin, furious, lunges for Malvolio. Mrs. Coolidge collapses

into the booth, spreading out like a triple banana split in the microwave. The guards have been only half-paying attention, rousing themselves only to stop Calvin from assaulting the other inmate. A few brutal armlocks later, the Coolidges are gone.]

Malvolio: Thanks Mac, that was great. Seriously. Quality stuff. I'll see ya next week.

“Why have you suffer'd me to be imprison'd, / Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest, / And made the most notorious geck and gull / That e'er invention play'd on? Tell me, why?” –Malvolio,

Twelfth Night

ACT 3

[The clock reads ten-twelve. The two men are back in bed. Calvin's tear-streaked blush is receding to blotches underneath the faint remains of his hairline, mingling with the liver spots; Malvolio is daydreaming out loud.]

Fourteen: So... you married *that*?

Thirtieth: Yes.

Fourteen: Huh. Well, I bet you and her make a perfect fit. A woman like that'd crush me like a caterpillar. I don't hump more'n a hundred pounds outta my weight class.

Thirtieth: She's very kind.

Fourteen: I bet. You two ever think of getting joint liposuction?

Dennis Kearney

You could use the leftovers for lube.

Thirtieth: SHUT. UP. [*smug*] At least I'm in love. Nobody could love you.

Fourteen: Wrong again, doughboy. There was this girl. Linda. Tits like the Caribbean Sea, warm and expensive. She said she loved me, but she didn't really.

Thirtieth [*astonished that someone other than him spoke to Malvolio*]: What the... how did you know she didn't?

Fourteen: We played the knife game. You each take a switchblade and stab each other in the hand. If you pull the knife out before the other person does, it's no good. You both have to pass out at the same time, or it's not true love.

Thirtieth: She pulled the knife out first?

Fourteen: Naw. She called the cops, threw on a shirt, and ran out on me. Haven't seen her since.

Thirtieth: I think I'm gonna puke.

[Silence reigns for the next few hours; Calvin eventually gets over it and begins to whine in his sleep. Malvolio hums tunelessly to himself. He begins to sweat, though it's near freezing. He repetitively clenches and unclenches his fists, white-knuckled to match the sheets.]

Malvolio: Calvin? Wake up. Wake UP!

[Calvin is unconscious from the lithium. The door opens again, quietly yet somehow more menacing. Its cold steel frame slips into the room quietly, like a thief. The guards are

black monoliths, paper cutouts pasted against a harsh white background.]

Guard [*hard whisper*]: Get the fuck up, gringo. Harriman wants his bitch for some ass therapy. Heh. Heh. [*laughs like baseball bats to the head. The guards move in, clapping a thick hand over his mouth and dragging him out by the arms of his straitjacket. Malvolio's fingernails peel upwards like pencil shavings as they find then lose purchase on the steel door. Offstage, his rhythmic staccato exclamations of pain rise and resonate through the institution. They fall on silent ears. The symphony of naked flesh slapping naked flesh seeps into the cinder blocks, burying themselves in hallways and history. A whimper, then silence.*]

[*Exit.*]

64

Reflection

Rachael Keller



We swam. We made sand castles.

John Ramsey

Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

Her perfumed dress: I digress, I digress!
Gentle caress, the thin press
encumbered by loose lips, pellucid kiss.
It seems no purple passages
catch her engulfed heart;
all stupendous schemes called off,
and meet insipidly with
indecisions, her half choices—
sotto voices—

In mute dispute, my often rueful Questions
plague, besot, worry, deny emotion;
yet why to the void do I forgo all thought?
Why fear when Lethe endures the obsidian tomb?
Why fear when Flesh's voice contorts
and drunk, under pretence,
I name beauty with a smothering scent,
which from Hell consents ascent?

You were never a brazen, nor a redden belle,
though like Beelzebub
your kiss is libel, luring and much like hell.
Your beauty is neither black, nor fair;
just the inked eloquence of
wine-dark surrealism—
reflecting, refracting snot-green
in my hazeled eyes.
And all but quietly you deceive.

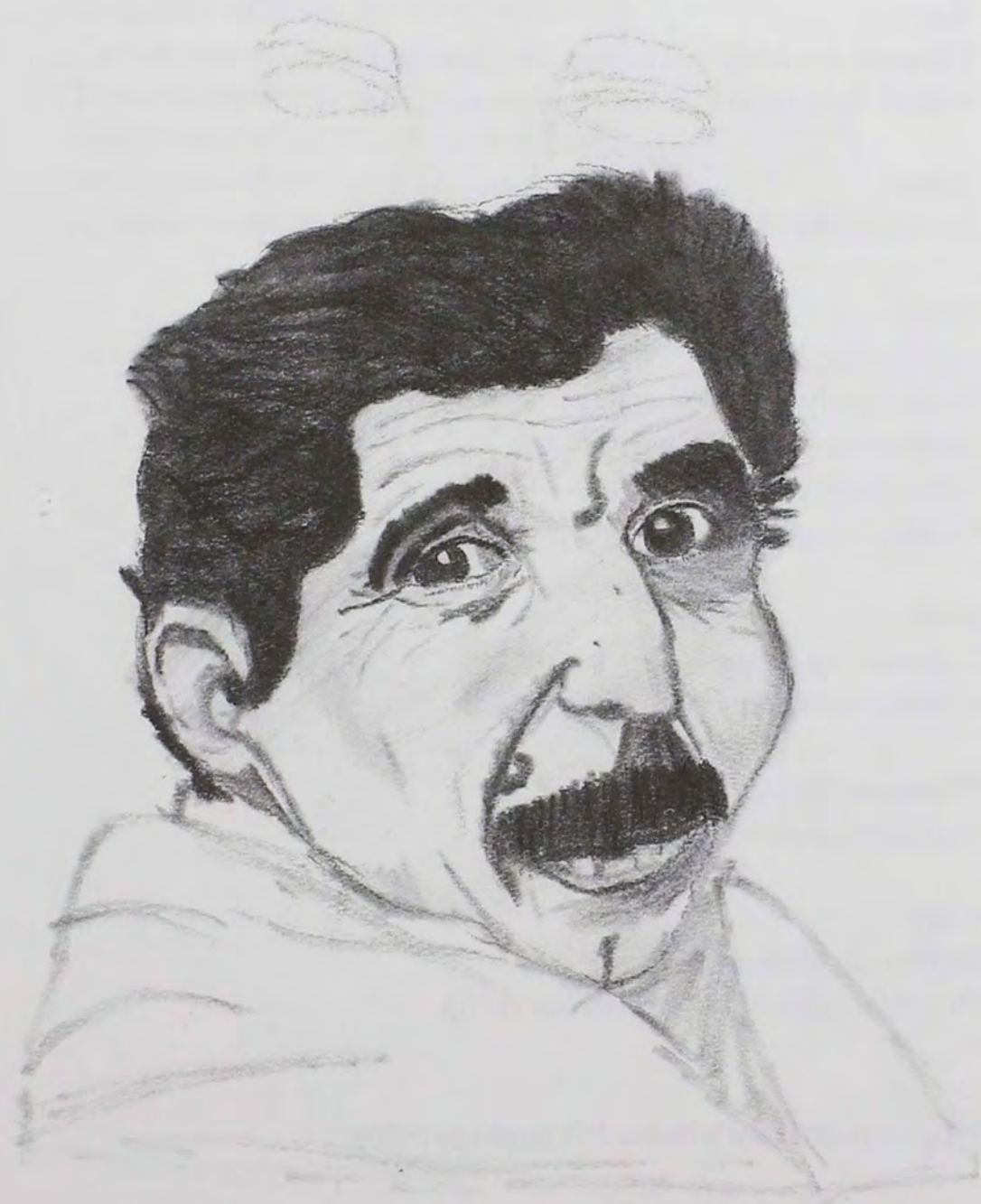
Beauty is your lips: the glistening glitter of saliva as you speak.
 Beauty is your eyes: lucid pools of black.
 I to sweets and beauties sacrifice
 all summer's splendid gifts received
 while under covers you deceived.

To be held to your breast
 I detest, I detest!
 Weakened I offer not protest,
 but my aging failure, and depressed equivocation whisper,
 “How nice! How nice!”

No golden tune,
 no thoughtful chauvinism
 may from these depths deliver
 anything but broken slivers.
 What was your feign kiss, but sullen tryst,
 and your “missing you’s” and “holding you’s”
 just fake construes?
 And that EVENING, upon the velvet hour
 where I chewed my lip
 and you sat, neck adorned with a ring of flowers;
 night descending quietly, her purple legions, calmly—
 talk of God, and fireflies.

What of then?

The old maid, I the croon,
 set upon a darken stage to dance my purple maudlins
 and burden the murmuring call of a balled universe—
 To all: tell all, tell all.

Macondo*Nicole Borocci*

His Lips Were Figure Fitting*Sarah Kauffman*

Betty:

The man, smoking two to soak his paperback,
Walked me around fountains flushed and flirty.

Walter:

I followed the stars on her collarbone.

Betty:

Opened the doors of 1203 19th and I spread jewel struck.
Lucky lovely love lapping up my legs,
Grape juice flowed down my back,
While he chewed ice cubes
Cutting watery diamonds with his teeth.

Walter:

I chewed ice cubes
Cutting watery diamonds with my teeth.

Walter and Betty:

An engagement between our mouths.

Betty:

Held under his tongue
Beauty was his lower lip cool and damp.

Walter:

Finger printed pearls hooked through my pillow

Betty:

Thinking vines and love poems dangled from my ears.

...

Sunlight spotted his left shoulder early,
I pulled cobwebs out of my shoes
Heel clicks softening dusty with distance.
The next day without enough of a body
To touch his sunned shoulder.
Only enough of me to lie in his orange slices and cigarettes.
Smoke smooth and I soaked him in my smell after two of me.
Addicted to me without knowing his lips were figure fitting.

70

Known Destination

Melissa Tucker



Public Transportation

Sarah Napolitan

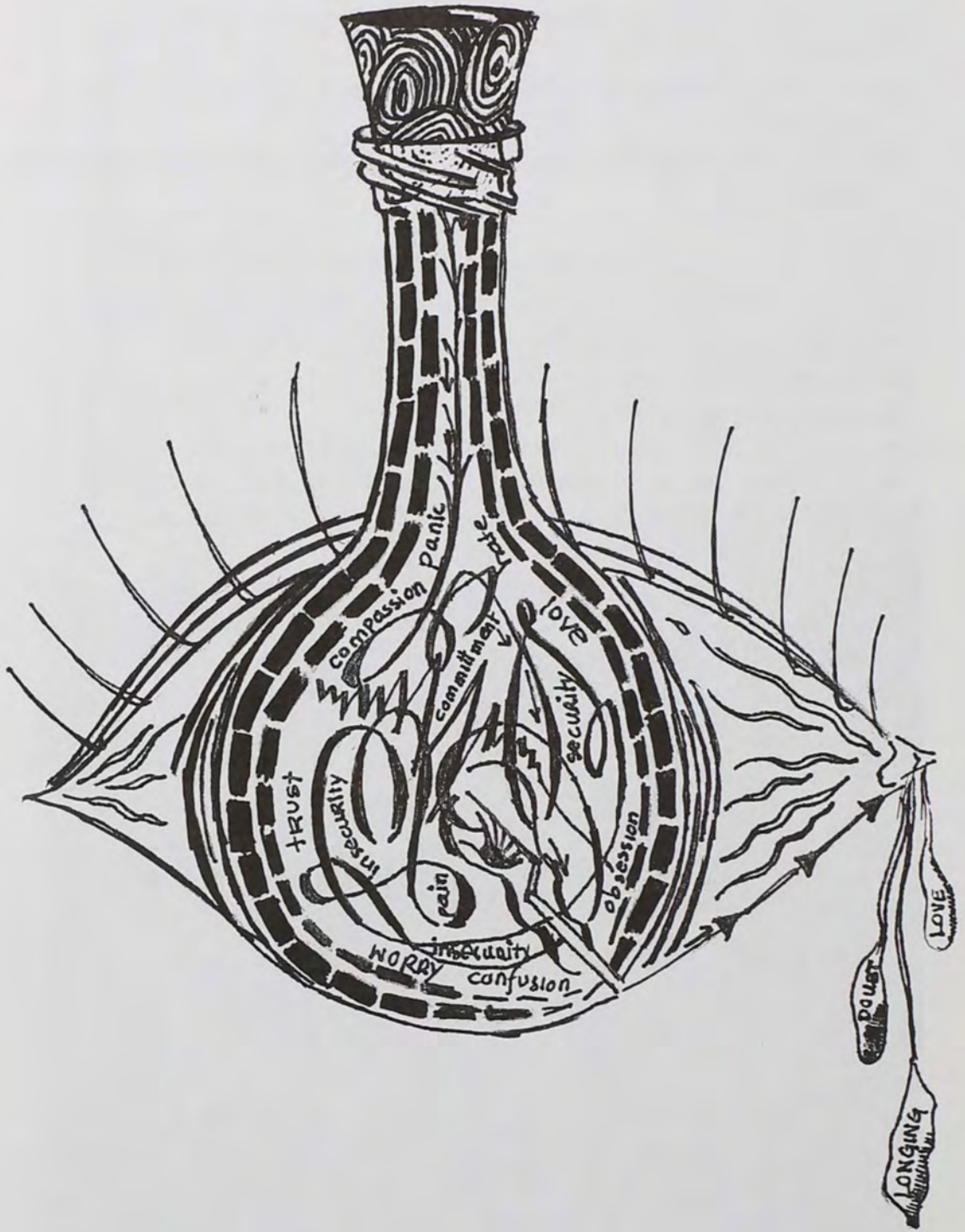
Soon I will be going to Paris, I am growing my armpit hair just for this—
To hold up my arms and pose for a picture outside the Eiffel tower
And if you or I were so small that we could ride each and every bus in
Europe
we would see so many drunken people professing drunken love to bus
windows,
you or I would whisper ee cummings softly to the foreheads pressed against
the glass.

Soon I am going to Barcelona and I will ride the train for 17 hours
with my face pressed to the glass, armpit hair tickling my shirt
the lyrical sway of languages wafting through each car,
floating on the motion of the track,
remembering drunken evenings where the bus seemed cold and empty,
remembering drunken evenings when the bus seemed full and hot,
remembering drunken evenings when the driver called my name
and whispered ee cummings in my ear

Now I am living in Florence and stray dogs walk behind me
I name them and they dart between the wheels of the bus
Ancient are the buildings, ancient is the smell of people
when they stand too close to one another,
swaying with the motion of language, drunken foreheads, hairy arms,
posing for a picture
And if you or I were so small we could see this picture,
And take it while floating on the train, pressing against the bus
Drunkenly swaying against each other

Expression of Bottled-up Emotions

Preethy Eddy



The Cellar

Cara Nageli

Andrea passed the Turkey Hill Quik-Mart and the run-down brick building that used to be Joe's Deli, signaling that she had entered Graysford, Pennsylvania. Nothing had changed. Nothing would ever change. The same three middle-aged men sat on the bench on the corner of Main Street and Maple Drive. Dressed in dirty jeans and white undershirts that barely covered their beer guts, they would reminisce about the Graysford High School football championship they won back in 1968 and make comments to every girl that passed by who was over the age of thirteen. High school kids sat on the steps of St. John's church, wasting away their childhoods with bottles of soda and occasional yells at cars and pedestrians. Two years later, and everything was a mirror image of the scene she had left. This had been her life. This is what she escaped.

She made the right hand turn onto Madison Avenue, passed the ramp for Interstate 81, went under the bridge with the railroad tracks, and then there it was: The Cellar. The symbol of adolescence traveling fast in the wrong direction. She had considered taking a different route home, the longer route that followed Main Street along the edge of the entire town so she wouldn't have to face that place, but for some strange reason she wanted to see it. The Cellar was a tiny, gray cement bar wedged in between a dirty, abandoned gas station and an automotive shop. There was only one small window in the front, cluttered with bright neon signs boasting various beer brands such as Coors Light and

Rolling Rock. The entrance was hidden in the back, down a flight of steps and through a screen door that creaked when it opened and closed. A new sign in front had bright blue letters and the exterior had been painted with a brighter shade of gray, but it was still the same tiny building that you wouldn't notice unless you were looking for it. It had more significance to Andrea than a typical shady bar. It had been her whole social life back in high school, back when she used to spend at least four nights a week drinking until she would stumble back to her house around two or three in the morning. That bar brought back so many memories that she would rather keep buried wherever she had kept them buried for the past two years. She chose to face it though, and there it was.

Before Andrea's sophomore year of high school she had been one of the "good girls." Her grades were exemplary, she never misbehaved, and she spent every night doing her homework and getting to bed as soon as the 10 o'clock news ended. Her parents had a strong influence on her behavior. Her father's way of telling her not to misbehave was, "You shouldn't embarrass us." She was angered by this choice of discipline—she would rather be yelled at than told that she was an "embarrassment"—but she was young, fearful of authority, and unaware of the bigger world outside.

She met Tim during her sophomore year, and he introduced her to every aspect of that bigger world. She fell in love fast—way too fast—and soon the sinful identity that came along with being his girlfriend took over her good girl persona. Tim's brother was a bartender at The Cellar, so he let Tim, Andrea, and a good number of their underage friends into the bar and also hooked them up with free beers.

The first time Andrea drank, she was talking to every person in the bar after about two bottles and finding any comment hysterically funny. Maybe it was a delayed reaction to the bitter fights her parents had been having for years, maybe it was a rebellion against an entire life of playing the “good girl,” or maybe it was the powerful influence Tim had over her, but, whatever it was, her morals plunged downward that night and she drowned many of her nights afterward in alcohol.

Soon after Tim introduced her to alcohol he introduced her to sex. At first it was awkward and strange—she was far from ready for that kind of experience—but she was in love and people in love have sex. Many times it happened in a bathroom at The Cellar, a quick drunken encounter behind a locked stall door. Other times it was at Tim’s house because his parents were rarely there. Sex made Andrea vulnerable; she didn’t realize it at the time, but she feared losing Tim, which was why she kept doing it. Little did she know she would lose him anyway, that one fateful night at The Cellar when she had gotten way too drunk and had lost track of Tim. She found him when she stumbled into the bathroom to throw up and heard a strange noise coming from one of the stalls—their stall—from which she saw two pairs of feet, Tim’s beat up combat boots with bright orange laces and a pair of black women’s platforms.

“Stop it!” Andrea yelled at herself out loud. Why was she letting herself think about Tim again? All the confusion, anger, and pain she had felt when he betrayed her came flooding back. The night he cheated on her was the night before her high school graduation. An hour after she stepped off the stage of her high

school auditorium as a graduate, she packed her bags and headed to Philadelphia, first to stay with an old friend from high school and then to make it on her own. She had managed to put the memories of Tim and The Cellar behind her for two years. She knew she shouldn't have come back to Graysford.

She arrived at her house late in the afternoon as the adults were returning home in their old Buicks and Pontiacs after a long day of work. Her mom seemed happy enough to see her. They exchanged hugs and all the formalities that anyone would exchange after a long time apart. Andrea could never tell what her mother was thinking about her. She and her parents had merely been housemates when she had lived there. Her parents' attempts to impose rules and curfew failed, as she never got home before 2AM. When they grounded her, she snuck out of her bedroom window after they fell asleep. The culmination of their anger was when her mom found a condom in Andrea's purse. From then on they just avoided each other. A thick silence would fill a room that they were in together, and that was a rare occurrence in itself, since they mostly just lived their separate lives.

Now they were trying to be more than acquaintances. Both of Andrea's parents made the three-hour drive to visit her in Philadelphia. Her high-rise apartment was right near Center City across from Franklin Field. The city was such a change from Graysford. She recently decided to change apartments and was planning to move to a bigger one near South Street. Her parents offered to help her move into her new apartment if she would come home for the week between when her old lease ran out and the new

one began. Since she had nowhere else to stay, she accepted the offer, put her stuff in storage, and came back to the place she had never wanted to return to.

“Missy called,” her mother said as she moved Andrea’s overnight bag off the kitchen table. Andrea noticed that her mother looked old—the few strands of hair that framed her face were turning gray and she had dark circles under her eyes. She knew her mother was worn out from everything their relationship had been through.

“Missy?” Andrea hadn’t thought about her in a long time. “How does she know I’m here?”

“I saw her mother at the supermarket, and I told her you were coming to visit. She said Missy’s been upset that you never returned her calls and letters. I don’t understand why you don’t talk to her anymore”.

Andrea shrugged. She opened the refrigerator, stared into it for a second, and then closed it again. “I don’t know.”

“Tim called you, too.”

Andrea didn’t answer at first. She studied the plate of powdered sugar donuts on the kitchen table. “What?”

“I know,” her mother said. “I just thought I should tell you.”

“Shit.” Andrea kicked the leg of the kitchen table in sudden anger. Why was he doing this to her again? “OK,” she said as she walked out of the room, tears of the past pushing their way into her eyes. “Thanks for the message.”

She checked her cell phone—Aaron had called twice and left a message, probably to cheer her up since he knew she dreaded her return to Graysford. She smiled, thinking about how cute he

was with his short blond hair held neatly in place with gel and his bright blue eyes. She loved how he put his finger to his lip in concentration when he was reading. He always stuck his tongue out, just a little, at the corner of his mouth as he sat back in his recliner with a notebook and pen and scribbled random thoughts in his notebook that turned into poetry. He let Andrea read his poetry. “I usually never let anyone read it,” he told her, “but I trust that you’ll really see the meaning in it.” They had only been dating for a month, but he already saw a deeper meaning in her—he found the intelligence and depth underneath an exterior that had transformed in so many ways that it had gotten lost. He saw the person Andrea had wanted to become the day she left Graysford and started her new life. Of course, she could never tell Aaron about her former life or her experience with Tim. For all of Aaron’s amazing qualities, one fault was that he could not see the other side. He saw his academic, moral world—a life of heavy partying and drunken sex was wrong in his worldview. He knew she dreaded going back to Graysford, but he could never understand why.

Aaron, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania, already had a job set up after graduation. His internship at a small weekly magazine company would turn into a full-time writing position as soon as he graduated in two months. It was, as he called it, a “stepping stone” job, but Andrea saw it as a real career. Not a tedious job, like her waitressing job, serving college kids with the drunken munchies at the Starlight Diner until 2AM. He was going somewhere. She was hoping he could take her with him.

She called Missy and ended up on the phone for over an hour. She regretted losing touch with her, but knew she probably

would again when she returned to Philadelphia. Even though she had wanted to avoid all past memories, she agreed to meet Missy and some other friends at Missy's house that night. She didn't call Tim, but she was still thinking about him when she approached Missy's house later that night. Stupid asshole for making her think about him again.

They got together during her freshman year. She was shy, awkward, and unpopular. He was a football player, which, at Graysford High School, destined you for instant popularity. He was also two years older than her, which could make a normally-unnoticed freshman seem important. He was not extremely good looking, but something about him captured her attention when he approached her at the Homecoming dance.

She had been standing with Missy next to the entrance of the gym when he grabbed her by the arm and pulled her out onto the dance floor. Andrea wasn't used to boys asking her to dance, and she shook with fear as to what she would say to him. A faded blue baseball cap covered his black curly hair, although a few curls had escaped in the front, and he was wearing an old tee-shirt, ripped jeans, and those combat boots with the orange laces.

"You're cute," he whispered to her as they slow-danced to Boys II Men's "End of the Road." His breath reeked of beer, but she didn't mind the smell. Even when his deep brown eyes were half-closed in a drunken stupor, something about them held her gaze and wouldn't let her look away.

At the end of the dance, he handed her the black bracelet he had been wearing around his wrist. "Wear this," he said, "so when you go home later tonight and get ready for bed, you'll

remember that you danced with me. And maybe you'll think I'm cute, or you could just think I'm really ugly, but maybe you'll think that you'd like me to take you out sometime."

"Almost three stupid years," she muttered to herself as she climbed Missy's steps and rang the doorbell. "I can't believe I was so stupid."

When Andrea entered Missy's room, she was met by a group of her friends from high school, all bursting into squeals and hugs the moment she opened the door. She was surprised and pleased by the friendly welcome, but then, as if her eyes were powerless to some kind of outside force, they focused right on Tim standing in the back of the room. He was resting his back against the wall, arms folded across his chest, glaring at her with that powerful, overconfident look that he always exuded in uncomfortable situations. Andrea tried to pretend she didn't see him. She hugged her friends, told them she was doing well, and made excuses for why she didn't keep in touch. All the while she felt his glare on her.

"I'm sorry he's here," Missy whispered to her as they hugged. "Leslie told him you were coming over and he just showed up."

"I can't talk to him," Andrea whispered back.

But he would make her talk to him—it was crazy of her to think that he wouldn't. The moment she seated herself on the carpet next to Missy, he removed himself from the wall and sat down beside her. Andrea turned her back to him and started an arbitrary conversation with Missy. His arm was lightly touching her back—a touch that had once been so comfortable now repulsed

her.

“So, are you ever gonna talk to me?” His voice made her cringe with anger.

All of her built up hatred returned in full force. She wanted to scream but she kept silent.

“Come on, Andie, say something,” he persisted. “I haven’t seen you in two years.”

“What are you doing here?” She wouldn’t let herself look at him. Those eyes would be too much, and she still felt them fixed on her.

“Don’t be like that,” he said. He touched her back, which made her shudder. “I don’t want us to never speak to each other again. I know you hate me, but can’t we, like, talk about it or something?”

“No. You shouldn’t be here right now.”

“I’m here because I want to see you.” He was whispering but it was loud enough for others to hear. “We never ended anything—you just picked up and moved away after all that shit went down between us, and that was it. You were out of my life. You never let me explain anything.”

Andrea spun around angrily, glaring back at him but then looking away before his eyes could weaken her. “Don’t for one second make it seem like I was wrong. You were the one who cheated on me. I’m shocked enough about that, and then I find out that you were cheating on me the whole three years we were together.” She paused to keep the past from coming back in. “I don’t get it, Tim. I don’t at all. For you to come here and wonder why I won’t talk to you? What the fuck do you expect me to do?”

Cara Nageli

All their friends had stopped their conversations and were looking at Tim and Andrea. Missy grabbed Andrea's hand but she rejected it. "I should probably go," Andrea told Missy. "It was nice to see all you guys." She left the room without looking back.

As she stormed out of the house, that horrible feeling rose up in her throat. She almost cried, but it subsided when she reminded herself that she was out of the past. She was not Tim's girlfriend anymore and refused to let him hurt her. She thought about Aaron, so cute and so intelligent. So much more than Tim would ever be. It was silly for her to feel anything for Tim when Aaron was waiting for her back in Philadelphia. She just had to get through this week and she would be fine.

For some reason, Andrea thought her outburst at Missy's house would keep Tim away. It didn't. The very next day he showed up at her front door, holding a bouquet of sunflowers, her favorite flower.

"What are you doing here?" she asked. She just looked at him from behind the screen door, unable to turn the knob and let him in. "I said everything I needed to say to you yesterday, probably even more than I needed to say to you." Her voice was cold, and she surprised herself by how different it sounded.

"Just give me five minutes to explain myself. Then decide whether or not to hate me."

Andrea sighed. "Well, I'll probably still hate you but go ahead. I'm listening".

"Can you let me in?"

She hesitated but then turned the knob. She didn't hold the door for him—she just turned and let him follow her into the living

room. She sat in the chair in the far corner of the room, avoiding the couch because she didn't want him to sit next to her. He sat on the couch but turned so he was facing her and placed the sunflowers on the coffee table. *Don't let him in*, she told herself over and over again. *Remember everything he put you through.*

"OK," he began, folding his arms across his chest. "I understand that you hate me. I deserve it. I screwed up. But I've been trying to talk to you these past few days because I want to prove to you that I've changed. I'm so different now, Andie. I got this job as an auto mechanic down on Spruce Street. I'm really good at it and I'm making some pretty decent money. Everyone in Graysford takes their cars there, so I get tons of business. I've really straightened myself out, too. I want to settle down now."

He looked at her for a response and then continued when she only looked back at him with a cold expression.

"I was not cheating on you the entire three years we were together. I'll admit I made a few huge mistakes"—

"How many?" she demanded.

He looked down at his arms. "Three—they were all during that same year. If I could do anything to take them back I would. I was so stupid—I didn't think about how much it would hurt you and when I saw how hurt you were it killed me. I loved you, Andie. I still love you".

That word made Andrea shudder. The confusion she felt left her emotionless. After all of the things she had said to him in her head, now that she was faced with him she had nothing to say. "I don't think I believe in love anymore. So I can't believe that."

He nodded and they were silent for a few minutes. She

wanted him to leave because she felt the force of his presence might eventually make her not want him to leave. She had gotten so far in the two years she spent on her own, and now a few minutes with him was sending her back to where she was before.

“I miss you so much, Andie,” he finally said. “You may not believe me, but I think about you all the time. And now that you’re here, I feel like I need to tell you everything I’ve been thinking, because I may not get this chance again. I don’t want you to leave again”.

“I will leave again. I have a great life now.”

“Do you ever think about me?”

She shrugged. “No, not really. Actually, I’m seeing someone now”.

“Oh.” He looked devastated. “Who is he?”

“His name is Aaron. I really like him a lot.”

“Oh.” He nodded and was silent for a moment. “So how do you know this guy?”

“Actually I met him at the library.”

“The library?” He laughed. “What were you doing at the library? Stealing books about sex like we used to?”

She gave him an annoyed look. “No. I was reading. It’s relaxing to go there on the weekends and sit in a corner and read.”

He nodded and was silent for a second before he said, “That’s really great, though, about that guy. I’m happy for you.”

“Thanks.” He wasn’t looking at her now, so Andrea let herself glance at him for a minute. He was staring at the floor with a lost, sad expression on his face, and she almost regretted that she told him about Aaron.

“Well, can we just be friends again?” Tim finally asked. “I would hate to think that all the good times we had together are over. Remember all those nights down at The Cellar? Come on, it was awesome.”

“Yeah, it was a lot of fun,” she agreed, “but that’s not me anymore. I’ve changed a lot since I was in high school—really straightened my life out. When I left I decided I was sick of going out and getting wasted all the time and screwing up my life, so I got a job. I’ve saved up enough money that I can start classes at a community college next semester. I want to get a good job now and make something out of my life.”

Tim shrugged. “That’s cool. Go make something of yourself—you were always smart, you could definitely do it.”

Andrea stood up from her seat, hoping it would be a signal for Tim to leave, but it only made him say, “Just let me take you out to dinner tomorrow—just as friends. If you still think I’m an asshole or if you decide that you never want to see me again, that’s fine. But at least give me a chance. Let me make everything up to you.”

She looked at the floor. She shouldn’t say yes. If she said yes she would go against everything she had promised herself after he hurt her. “OK,” she said.

If you say OK to Tim for one thing, you say OK to everything. Andrea stepped into his car that day assuring herself she would have a terrible time and never want to see him again, but they had the best conversation over dinner. He proceeded to show up at her house every day that week, either helping himself to a bowl of Frosted Flakes and milk or resting on her couch as he flipped back

and forth between football games on TV. Andrea knew that she should've been furious, but she didn't mind. For some reason, she wanted him there, and she got angry at herself every time she laughed when he mimicked one of the players' touchdown dances.

"Tomorrow night is your last night," he announced during a commercial break in the Giants game, "so I have a great idea. Let's go to The Cellar."

"I don't know," she replied. "I don't think so."

"Oh, come on." He turned and gave her a sly smile. "We can get Missy and them to come with us. We don't really hang out there anymore so it'll be like old times." He moved down the couch closer to the chair she was sitting in and poked her in the arm.

"Come on. It's your last night. You have to."

"Maybe," she said. "I'll think about it."

Tim tried to grab her hand as they walked into The Cellar the next night, but she pulled away. She gazed around at the dark, smoky bar where they had spent so many nights looking at the surroundings with blurred vision and a feeling that they were having the best night of their lives. Missy and the others were behind them, saying things like, "I can't believe we're back here again." Andrea noticed the same patrons perched on their barstools. Tim's brother stood behind the counter, shaking his head when he noticed them. She was in high school all over again.

"Yo, Mike, get me a Miller Lite," Tim yelled to his brother across the bar. Then he turned and gave her a wink. "What do you want?"

"Diet Coke."

He gave her a look but then just shrugged and yelled back to his brother to get a Diet Coke. Their friends all ordered their drinks and they stood around talking for awhile. Andrea was scared of how comfortable she felt in the bar. Even though she was much different from the seventeen-year-old girl who chugged beers so she could get drunk faster, the atmosphere of the bar brought her back to that girl's persona. She knew that she needed to get out of the bar.

Later in the night, their friends decided they wanted to dance. They all started out in a large group in the middle of the dance floor, but eventually Tim and Andrea broke off from the others and were dancing by themselves. They had danced like that many times in high school.

He held the Miller Lite out for her but she shook her head. "Take it," he said. "I don't want anymore. I'm just gonna throw it out."

She accepted the beer and took a sip. She tried to keep her distance from Tim as they danced, but he kept moving closer.

"This brings back so many memories," he said. He was gazing deep into her eyes, studying them, trying to dig some kind of feeling out of them.

"Yeah." She shifted her focus to a couple dancing behind them. A tall, muscular guy was dancing with a younger girl. The girl was staring back at him with this silly grin on her face like he was the only person on that dance floor.

"It was great, wasn't it?" He brushed a piece of hair out of Andrea's face to make her look back at him.

"It was a long time ago."

“I know.” He put his hands on her waist. “I think about it all the time, though. I miss it so much.”

She knew it was coming. She should’ve pushed his hands away. He grabbed the back of her head and kissed her. It was forceful. She couldn’t resist. The music was suddenly louder, booming in her ears. She couldn’t think. She couldn’t react. He kept kissing her. The music got louder. Her head was spinning. She was falling back into it.

“Stop!” Her voice was louder than the music. She was breathing heavily, wanting to go back and erase what had just happened. Tim just stood there staring back at her. She wasn’t sure if he was surprised or annoyed. “I’m not doing this, Tim.”

She turned and escaped through the screen door of the bar. Her mistake was much clearer to her when she was out of the smoky atmosphere of the pub. When she reached the parking lot, she sensed someone behind her. At first she thought it was Missy or one of her other friends coming to see if she was OK, but the heavy steps on the pavement made her realize it was Tim. She kept walking faster and faster, like she was being pursued by an evil villain. As she reached for the door of her car he grabbed her arm and pulled her back toward him.

“Just leave me alone!” Andrea burst out. “I told you I can’t do this. All this talk about being friends was just an excuse for you to get me back. It’s not gonna work this time.”

He didn’t say anything and just looked back at her, a look of pain on his face. They were silent for awhile, just standing there looking at each other.

“I can’t let you leave again,” he said quietly in a voice unlike

his own. The parking lot lights illuminated his face so he was the only figure Andrea could see in the darkness. “Please, Andie, don’t leave. I need you to stay”.

She couldn’t stay. She thought about her new life—she was making money on her own and saving up to give herself an education. She had just done it—just gotten enough money to start school, which had been her goal from the moment she left Graysford. She thought about Aaron—

“Come on, Andie, please stay.”

—About how he looked like such an intellectual in his wire-framed glasses. He quoted Shakespeare, listened to classical music, and carried around a little notepad in case he got a story idea. He knew so much about everything. That academic life was becoming so intriguing.

“Andie, say something”.

She began to cry. Nothing triggered it, but all of a sudden tears were flowing from her eyes and she was shaking. Tim put his arms around her and rubbed her back.

“Tim, I can’t do this,” she kept saying between sobs. “I can’t do this.”

He held her tighter. “It’s OK,” he whispered in her ear. “Just stay.”

She couldn’t speak because her cries were choking her. She kept crying while she looked at him and nodded her head.

Tim was still sleeping when she woke up next to him in his apartment the next morning. He had his hand on the pillow next to his face—the way he always slept—and he almost looked like a

child sucking his thumb. She noticed the black grime surrounding his cuticles. It was probably permanent after days of changing carburetors and performing oil changes.

Andrea quietly reached to the floor on the side of the bed and retrieved her clothes. She tried not to wake him as she got dressed and snuck out the door. She didn't leave a note—she just left. She had to leave before he woke up, because if he opened his eyes and looked at her she knew that she would stay with him in Graysford.

pop culture*Rachel Jessica Daniel*

glossy magazines

say:

that when you are seventeen

you are perfect you are thin you are

beautiful and

if you're fat you still have nice hair.

who told

(them) wrong?

i'd like to know.

i am seventeen.

(needless to say, life sucks)

because : —

my idunnos have reached

an ultimate stage of

utter indecisiveness?

and...

like i don't (smack.smack.

purple

bubble gum.) like say like and

... i dunno... (leave ellipses like

camel dung lining

the red raw
 desert. (dry))

and...

I don't twirl my (nappy) hair.
 (not silky. not blonde. oops...

didn't match with

already tanned skin.)

I could not strut on MTV already

naked.

am too flabby potbelly existent
 yes, am seventeen. Still trying to

find
 that courage—that pull?/or push?, whichever one—
 to maybe (can i do it)

abuse my self by blowing orange

chunks into

a white toilet bowl (just cleaned, sorry.)

and i'm SORRY i

don't have a fast metabolism,
wear Prada flipflops

and don't raise

devil
horns into
the air when I watch NSYNC (televised concerts!
yes!)

but I shop at the Gap and everytime I
bendover u will be able to see my Vic.
Secret underwear, tantalizing even though
I stick to cotton, and my mom slaps me because
I cannot find a cheap belt.

does that count?

Contributors

Shane Borer...is tired of trying. But, if he hasn't tried, then he hasn't lived. Who knows? Lightning could strike...

Nicole Borocci...is a sophomore communications major and future game show host who can be seen "carted" around campus in a grocery bag. She'd like to thank her crazy suitemates and even crazier bf for all the support and inspiration in the world!

Jen Brink...is a Junior English major currently searching for a cure for laziness. Her professors greatly encourage her efforts with their awe inspiring grades. In her "spare" time she's an Old Navy veteran employee, writes for the Grizzly and collects the best friends sarcasm can buy.

Kate Chapman...is a Jim Henson creation brought to you by Industrial Light and Magic, and the letter Q.

Preethy Eddy...thank you and poke it; FO ever prelis

Susannah fisher...sophomore english major. likes to pretend she's an insomniac.

John Grebe...senior computer science major preparing to pull the plug on computer science and attend seminary.

Sarah Kauffman...This is for outdoor lunchbreaks in D.C. This is for the man I named and the past I invented. This is the intrigue of two cigarettes.

Dennis Kearney...is diagnosed as a major sophomoric with philosophical tendencies. There is currently no known cure.

Rachael Keller...a freshman at Ursinus, intended biology major with a passion for photography. She took a year of photography in high school and loves it, and would gladly show anyone her work.

Ella Lazo...is a biology major, French and Art minor who doesn't

know what to do with all her studies. Any suggestions?

Heather Morris...can “art stuff”

Sarah Napolitan...is a frizz head. She is currently studying abroad elsewhere but has been absent from her mind for quite some time, she likes it that way.

Cara Nageli...is baffled by the little things in life, like purple m & m's and green ketchup.

Drew Petersen...“so what else do you need to know?”

Laura Phillips...and her creative genius are being enslaved by a ruthless dictator. Run Laura, run!

John Ramsey...misses the snow, and can't remember the last time he kissed a Villa Girl.

Amy Scarantino...We have no bananas today. ** If anyone wants to send me to Italy again, that'd be nice.

Alison Shaffer...plans to open a cafe when she graduates in order to employ all of her friends with worthless degrees (such as those in philosophy, religion and creative writing). Please get in touch with her if you would like an application.

Christopher Tereshko...looks forward to resuming his habits next semester. “The only problem I have is that there isn't enough alcohol.” He'll always be salty.

Keith Truman...is a senior Politics major... a Zetan who rarely leaves the murky confines of 944.

melissa tucker...says to say what you want about the school's cafeteria, but they have the best damn tater tots money can buy. She also wishes that air hockey was an Olympic event because she would kick some serious ass.

Klaus Yoder...is freshman from Kutztown, Pennsylvania. “... *Wild Cat* was written in... an obsolete vernacular.” - Eli Cash
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