



Spring 2006

## The Lantern Vol. 73, No. 2, Spring 2006

Christopher Curley  
*Ursinus College*

Patrick Roesle  
*Ursinus College*

Klaus Yoder  
*Ursinus College*

Ashley Higgins  
*Ursinus College*

Phil Repko  
*Ursinus College*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

**[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)**

### Recommended Citation


Curley, Christopher; Roesle, Patrick; Yoder, Klaus; Higgins, Ashley; Repko, Phil; Daniel, Rachel; Smith, Rori; Brienza, Andrew; Celinski, Brett; Dawley, Nathan; Diana, Katy; Julius, Georgia; Solomon, Joshua; Strunk, Trevor; Wynne, Tori; Mingoello, Jennifer; Gentile, Julie; Smith, Brad; Bower, Rachel; Rokaski, Natalie; Jones, Katharine; O'Neill, Ian; Ziskind, Harrison; Wierzbowski, Christopher; Veale, Richard; and McCarthy, Maureen, "The Lantern Vol. 73, No. 2, Spring 2006" (2006). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 166.

<https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/lantern/166>

---

**Authors**

Christopher Curley, Patrick Roesle, Klaus Yoder, Ashley Higgins, Phil Repko, Rachel Daniel, Rori Smith, Andrew Brienza, Brett Celinski, Nathan Dawley, Katy Diana, Georgia Julius, Joshua Solomon, Trevor Strunk, Tori Wynne, Jennifer Mingolello, Julie Gentile, Brad Smith, Rachel Bower, Natalie Rokaski, Katharine Jones, Ian O'Neill, Harrison Ziskind, Christopher Wierzbowski, Richard Veale, and Maureen McCarthy



2014

THE LANTERN



---

# THE LANTERN

Ursinus College  
Volume 73, Issue II  
Spring 2006

<http://webpages.ursinus.edu/lantern>



---

## STAFF

**Co-Editors:** Trevor Strunk and Victoria Wynne

**Assistant Editor:** Katy Diana

**Poetry Editor:** Ashley Higgins

**Fiction Editor:** Kate Prahlad

**Nonfiction Editor:** Georgia Julius

**Visual Arts Editor:** Ivy McDaniels

**Production Editor:** Allison Guerin

**Webpage Editor:** Brandon Brown

**Faculty Advisor:** Jon Volkmer

**Judges:** Jennifer Hetrick and Beth Johnson

**Executive Board:** Natalie Rokaski, Patrick Roesle, Joshua Solomon

**Staff:** Jan Cohen, Amanda Sanborn, Jen Mingoello, Aileen Dalton, Eric Selvas, Alexander Palesek, Candice Esparra, Alex Morris, Elsa Budzowski, Sam Frank, Dani Tatsuno, Rachel Bower, Tim Smith, Kate O'Neill, Bart Brooks, Chris Rosci, Julie Gentile, Ben Allman, and Dominic Terpolilli

**Cover Art:** "Only A Quarter" by Brenden Connor

### Editor's Note:

First off, congratulations to everyone who has been selected for this issue of the *Lantern*. We had an abundance of submissions from many talented writers and artists. The staff and the members of the executive board can attest to the quality of the competition, and we thank them for their discrimination and dedication. It's so good to be home from abroad and back into the literary culture here at Ursinus; a culture that would not be what it is without the advice of Dr. Volkmer and the devotion of everyone involved in this magazine. We have a great issue this semester, which we suggest you enjoy with a frosty mug of Stella Artois or a cool bottle of Sam Adams, or, you know, a cup of coffee; we're not picky.

Love, Trev and Tori

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Poetry

Of the Man	<i>Christopher Curley</i>	7
Beauty in America	<i>Patrick Roesle</i>	19
Kindling	<i>Klaus Yoder</i>	22
Genevieve	<i>Ashley Higgins</i>	25
Bits of Copper	<i>Phil Repko</i>	37
a love song to hip hop	<i>Rachel Daniel</i>	39
From James' Journal	<i>Rori Smith</i>	43
I Want A Woman	<i>Andrew Brienza</i>	45
Peregrine Rain	<i>Brett Celinski</i>	52
Resurge	<i>Nathan Dawley</i>	58
Frustrations	<i>Katy Diana</i>	65
(at least) You Gave Me Something to Write About	<i>Georgia Julius</i>	73
The Fun of Giving Interactive History Lectures as a Summer Job	<i>Joshua Solomon</i>	76
Exigence	<i>Trevor Strunk</i>	81
White Water	<i>Tori Wynne</i>	87

### Creative Non-Fiction

My Summer, with Salt	<i>Jennifer Mingoello</i>	23
The City With Two Faces	<i>Julie Gentile</i>	32
I Dig Your Cello	<i>Brad Smith</i>	48
Life-Filled Ghost Town	<i>Rachel Bower</i>	61

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

Laura, On Happiness	<i>Natalie Rokaski</i>	74
Integration/Assimilation	<i>Katharine Jones</i>	83

### Fiction

Sunny Side Estates	<i>Ian O'Neill</i>	8
Every Night I Shut My Eyes	<i>Harrison Ziskind</i>	27
New England State of Mind	<i>Christopher Wierzbowski</i>	54
Your Body's Weight In Water for Your Soul, Thank You Very Much	<i>Richard Veale</i>	67
A Story That's 10 Percent True	<i>Maureen McCarthy</i>	79

### Visual Arts

Untitled	<i>Dominic Terpolilli</i>	18
Pinhole Sunset	<i>Ivy McDaniels</i>	21
Victorian Bride	<i>Heather Morris</i>	26
Pinhole	<i>Heather Morris</i>	42
Boy On Ball	<i>Dani Tatsuno</i>	47
Window	<i>Erica Kaminski</i>	53
Condemned	<i>Erica Kaminski</i>	57
Jump	<i>Greg Diamond</i>	60
Illuminations I	<i>Daniel Sergeant</i>	66
Ascend	<i>Erica Kaminski</i>	78
Backstage	<i>Brendan Connor</i>	82



---

## JUDGES' NOTES

### Poetry Winner—Of the Man by Christopher Curley

“What a pleasure, and challenge, to choose one winner from among these poems. ‘Of the Man’ shared a deeply felt emotion beautifully and painted a family picture poignantly recognizable to any reader.”

*Jennifer Hetrick, class of '88, was a Lantern staff member and frequent contributor of poetry. Today she is a freelance writer and editor. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband Mark and children, Julia and Christopher.*



---

## JUDGES' NOTES

### Prose Winner—Sunny Side Estates by Ian O'Neill

Vivid images, so concrete they can almost be touched, combined with the author's sly humor to make "Sunny Side Estates" a wickedly pleasurable piece of writing.

*Beth Johnson is a sometime writing teacher and fulltime editor with Townsend Press, a textbook publisher with offices in Voorhees, New Jersey. She is the author of Everyday Heroes and other books.*

## OF THE MAN

I miss: the bright eyes of my grandfather, the full open-mouth laugh and honest smile gripping the edges of the dining room table where we all sat and loved for dessert. We all sat and curled with candlelight, bellies warm and full until cherries soaked in brandy came to the table and we all drank cocktails.

Of course I was too small for drinks, and brandy is just a made-up expression for the peculiar air of alcohol in the orange slices – scent that is – a far better timekeeper than taste or sound. My grandmother cut pound cake in yellow-loaf slabs, making cocoa milk-proper and chiding me with the merits of oatmeal.

Later the men and women would gamble, my grandfather's animated eyes teaching me the delicate science of beating the house.

## SUNNY SIDE ESTATES

*"If all men lead mechanical, un-poetical lives, this is real nihilism, the real undoing of the world."*

*-Reginald Blyth*

*In order to sweep properly, start at the outer rim of the debris and with an arching push draw a J with the broom. Maintain contact with the wall and floor for as long as possible. Draw the debris out into the open away from the wall. Clearing the area where floor and wall meet is the toughest part. It is like herding cattle. The goal is centralization. The finished product should be a single mound of sawdust, cigarette butts, scrap wood, McDonalds wrappers, bent nails, wood screws, and so on.  
Nice Work!*

Room in hand, I Wayne Gretzky a wood block out the hollow front door. I follow the scrap out the doorless entryway. It ricochets sporadically off tire tracks in the mud. The edge reflects off a rock and sends the wooden puck barrel rolling out the vacant lot. One foot right and it would have tattooed a web on the windshield of an approaching van.

Start the day off with scrap hockey. Follow with a quick sweep. Tee off on carpenters disregards and 24oz. Wawa cups. Quick sweep again; doesn't need to be perfect. Nearly top it off with a fistic sunrise.

Its 9am. The Koreans are never late.

Playtime's over.

Three siding crews pull up. Rice white vinyl continues to reverberate after the van comes to a halt. Doors wing open. Koreans flow out. Like Putties ascending on Power Rangers, they endlessly appear from within the two-seated vans. Ladders are up before the last gets out.

Silent. Quick. Meticulous.

A dozen men storm the house's outer walls. They commence fire. There is no lull in the offensive; no variation to strategy.

Up.

Measure. Fit. Hang. Click.

Down.

The click-click of staple guns sounds like crickets. A monotonous



orchestration of friction.

White Noise.

The never ending lullaby of a patient flat-lining.

The hum of clicking accompanies me as I make my way up Lucy Lane towards another lot, and another mess to clean.

This is the routine of a laborer. This is life on standby.

*Inaccurate doorframes require re-framing and delay construction. Avoid the setback with a plumb-bob. The plumb-bob (a copper weight attached to a string) is suspended from the frames crossbeam. The weight must touch the ground perpendicular to the suspension point so that frame and door fit perfectly. Therefore carpenters never ask if a door is level, but rather if it is plumb.*

I had sized up college. It was in Allentown; two blocks from local farmers market, two square miles from the closest bar. The school was an island amidst desolation. It had a reputation for mayhem throughout the nineties. I would have enjoyed that. Today, it repents. Maybe the institution is ashamed. Maybe they feel they have something to prove to their academic equals around the country. Maybe liberal education camouflages their support for National Socialism.

Don't know; don't care.

This I do know.

Leniency of past days has been replaced by an iron fist. The school paper was released every week. Page 6, Section A; a full page blotter of the college tribunal's proceedings (i.e. Allentown Inquisition). They indicted non-conformers, recalcitrant revelers, anyone with a heartbeat. The school witch hunts averaged 25 citations per week. Two close friends were expelled. In a month I was handing in the keys for the vacant lot that used to be my room.

They stifled life; clipped everyone's wings.

Whatever. New beginning. One up myself.

Apparently: I needed discipline; I needed responsibility; I needed to grow up.

I considered the army; the warrior workouts and bodily bulletproofing.

Yet, I don't keep step with rank and file; and am unable to remain motionless or zero-in long enough to stand at attention. Signing up would have been unpatriotic; I'd be unknowingly throwing wrenches in the gears of the American war machine. Why not save the paperwork and burn a flag?



Apparently: I needed a job.

I turn off Lucy Lane. A meteor shower is falling on Lot 124. Rock smut shimmers in the rising sun. The partially completed walls of the E model do little to conceal the earth shattering drumfire of demo hammers (demolition hammers).

Shhhhhhh...Chat!

“What’s up dude?”

Shhhhhhh...Chat! Gabe never glances up. Shhhh...Shhhhhhh... Chat! He might miss a microscopic splinter if his eyes leave the brooms wake.

“Easy day today?” Shhhhhhh...Chat!

The hush and smack of the broom voice Gabe’s desire for pleasantries.

The hush and smack of the broom; emptiness and silence.

Gabe pours sawdust and bent nails into a reinforced Rubbermaid trashcan. Muscle car of trashcans. A portable dumpster.

“No need to dump it. No. No need. Three times the strength, twice as much space. Heavy duty for heavy loads.”

Gabe shivers while speaking. He’s enamored. It says heavy duty for heavy loads on the label.

“The Levia-can! Trash consuming and shit devouring monster bin! God of waste!”

Gabe’s head snaps around; a whiplash flash. His jaw is slack, his eyes glint sadistically.

Sweet, hit a nerve.

Prodding Gabe takes five minutes off my day. It takes five off his life.

*If the job requires precise cuts; it requires carbide. Carbide saw blades are produced from a Cobalt and Tungsten alloy. They will maintain their superior edge and effectiveness ten times longer than the average blade.*

The sun outlines the knots of the vacant window frame. Low 70’s. Cloudless. Stagnant autumn air.

“Why couldn’t it be raining?”

“Because its not.” Gabe responded. He’s still unhinged.

Stormy weather and the site are desolate. Siding can not be hung in wet weather. Water gets behind the vinyl, permeates the wood, and a few years later the walls decay. Rain over-saturates stucco and mortar, stratifies chemical components, and eliminates viscosity, making

masonry impossible. And carpenters are unable to work on the exterior of homes because the wood becomes warped. Rainy days are days off from this forsaken place.

It's 11:40 am, and I want to kill myself.

I pray to Demetra. I'll set aside my next paycheck for a pilgrimage to Mecca. Double check that the 28V Lithium-Ion battery is charged for the DieHard Sawzall; Ahurani demands human sacrifice.

"God, dude, I'll become a born again Christian for a cloudburst baptism."

I begin a rain dance. I'm the eye of the storm circling around the freshly swept emptiness. A dogmatic tempest. I hammer the trash can with a broom handle. I stomp wildly about; a steel toed cyclone. The skeletal framework begins to sway around me; the shuddering clouds the room with saw dust and pink insulation. I prance to the pounding; scream gibberish incantations and prayers of desperation.

Me.

Kokopelli.

Running riot.

A catalyst for a Sunny Side apocalypse. Death by water torture. A demolishing flashflood spewing coffee cups and empty Newport 100 boxes into newly poured foundations. Slats of 2 by 4's will try and prevent the fruition of my rage, but they'll be swept aside, powerless and fated to become water logged in a C model. You'll need an arc to escape my flood. I'm leaving it all behind. Sunny Side Estates will be the new Atlantis.

And I've got 200 hundred finishing nails, a high powered DeWalt, and one hell of a good shot for any white doves.

So long mediocrity. Bon Voyage monotony.

*Artificial stone is highly used in development homes. It is less expensive than actual stone, and has great lifetime expectancy. It is an agglomeration of real stone, cement, and chemicals. It is also lighter than actual stone, requiring only a layer of mortar to secure it firmly to a home.*

Gabe shuffles ten feet ahead. Boots undone. He staggers, nearly tripping over the curb while receding into his minds recesses. He shakes his head at the arguments within it. Second time today I got under his skin. I'm on fire. Maintaining cordial distance from each other, we walk past Big Stan's base of operation, his trailer office.



Almost four months past, when I met Big Stan in his command center trailer, I had no inclination of the lethargic repetition. Playmates covered the walls. Big Stan's wallpaper; he had an eye for classy decor. The lone desk held a single massive calendar. Big Stan's placemat. The remains of ribs, empty cans of Pepsi One, Barbeque smears, and Frito crumbs obscured the last half of August. Big Stan's diet.

"Welcome to my site. I'm Stan, head contractor. Interested in construction, alright. Can always use the help. Pay's ten per hour. Start tomorrow. Be here at nine. I'll have you introduced to Gabe, you'll be working with him. He's our other laborer. He'll show you the ropes. Questions?"

"No."

The tired hinges on the trailer door wail and groan as the door is swung open. Miss February '98 nearly rips off the wall as a gust of wind restores clean air to the little trailer.

"Ah. This is Ed, he works for me also. He's one of my craftsmen."

I shake Ed's paw. His head brushes the ceiling. His white beard hangs to mid chest. Shaggy, Viking like white hair gives him the look of Gerry Garcia on growth hormones. Add flannel and over-alls; two work-belts around the waist, each of which has a massive power tool; and put a Marlboro Red in his mouth.

That's Ed. While straining to encircle his hand, I can feel the scars and sunken knuckles. They contradict his relaxed smile and voice of softly pealing thunder.

Door half open, the ass of Miss February '98 slapping against the wall, Big Stan asks a final question: "You think you'll make it eight months? Longest anyone's worked for."

"Cept for Gabe, he got going on 6 years," Ed rumbles.

"Obviously excepting Gabe, he'll be here after we are. But what do you think, gonna make eight?"

"I hope."

Big Stan reminded me of the guy who's in the strip club spending all his money on his favorite gal. The fluorescent lights and Bon Jovi hits are a second home to him. Ed was a good guy. He got arrested little over three months after I started.

He's been gone three weeks. Who knows how many more he has. Now its down to Gabe and me.

Its 2:48pm. 4 o'clock is evasive, it always is. Reason I don't wear a watch. Knowing the time makes the arrival of 4 o'clock an eternity. No

watch; no known time.

See no evil.

Four months since I started. Four months of Gabe. Four months of crunching dirt and gravel beneath my boots on Lucy Lane.

Lucy is Big Stan's mother.

Big Stan's sister, his daughter, his first girlfriend, and his childhood dog have streets named after them. Sherry, Big Stan's stiletto and silicone favorite, she has a street named after her. The remaining circles, streets, ways, places, lanes, and roads are all named after trees.

Big Stan lacks imagination.

Sunny Side Estate lacks imagination.

It is repetition. It is static. It is dead.

The contracting company, of which Big Stan is the head, makes six different models of homes: A model through F model. There are six exterior styles: style 1 down through style 6. Style 2 for example, has artificial stone on its right and left sides, while its center entranceway is pale stucco. Style 4 is completely stucco, but with a peachier shading than plain stucco. The six models do not change. Nor do the six styles. The styles are interchanged with the models 150 times over.

Big Stan's game-plan.

150 cloned homes. Each different than most while a mirror image of a few. They're cookie cutter.

This he has recorded on the calendar beneath his diet.

*The walls of a home are constructed on the foundation floor before being erected.*

A masonry crew drives by the nearly completed home near Big Stan's trailer. One of their men stands in the flat bed. Hammer drill locked in his arms. Ready to enforce. Looking like a mobster with his Tommy gun. The driver says Gabe needs me.

His crumbling body and hunched posture, cigarette dangling from moving lips, Gabe rapidly sweeps out the foyer of an F model. His beard is a brillo pad. He would make a fantastic member of a Mid-Western suicide cult. I can picture Gabe facedown in endlessly swaying grass, empty paper cup inches from his prone bodies outstretched arm. Remnants of the deadly Cool Aid (fruit punch) slowly sinking into the soil.

I stand silent while the methodical man scours the room. Two men insulating the upstairs walk by smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee.



Gabe never looks up. He never does. He's Big Stan's robot. Never asking questions; never offering complaints.

Curiosity burns time to Gabe. There is too much to accomplish. I learned the first week that leaving anytime before 4 o'clock caused my fellow laborer to snap. The conversations he held with himself would become diatribes. The voices in his head would begin to scream. And his normally placid eyes would become onset by ocular turrets.

Six years of being every worker's bitch has that effect. He is the housekeeping service for an entire housing development. And this was not a pit stop on the way to the top. This is an island. Laborers work was day in day out hell. There was never a promise of something more.

I've always imagined that a laborer was the idyllic vocation for ex-cons. The routines. The caste. Construction's Socialism.

One time Gabe and I were driving around the Estates, him searching for some task to do; me praying we run over rebar, an uncovered manhole, an M15 anti-tank land mine.

"You've been doing this for like 6 years now right?"

"Yeah."

"So, you ever want something more?"

"I don't understand."

"Go to college, or like, try and tag on with a crew. You know. Move up the chain. They all know you. They'd probably hook you up. And if that didn't work out, could always go to school."

"Why would I want to do that?"

"Why not? Dude we're like 5 minutes from Montco. I went to a school up north for a semester. But it was located in the septic tank of the U.S., maybe even North America."

"Oh. Uh-huh."

Pause for question. Nothing. Gabe uninterested.

"Yeah bro, college. What do you have to lose? Like I was stupid you know. Bad choice of school. Controlling. Everything was orderly and by the book. I called some RA's the Gestapo one time. Dude had those black eye contacts. A dick. Me and two of my boys. Having a beer day back from winter break. Final straw dude. Spoke my mind. Later."

"Oh. Huh."

Fuck this. I hate forced conversations. I don't know why I tried.

Gabe has a nervous twitch. He grinds his four fingers together, every finger straight, and while doing so, occasionally stares at them. Maybe

he had chronic poison sumac. Maybe his mind fails to comprehend what his fingers do. Maybe his fingers were controlled by the voices in his head, mental freeloaders.

Maybe I only spoke to him to keep him from doing that.

It was a constant sound. A pencil eraser rubbing at my sanity. It sounded like pigeons when they flapped their wings. Or sand whipping off dunes to bite at ankles and legs; to irritate the skin; to bite at the mind.

“So yo, check it. There are no girls who work here. So... would you be willing to lose two dollars from your paycheck if they could hire a hot laborer chick?”

“Why would we need another laborer?”

“No Gabe, dude, like not that we need one, but there’s all guys here. I would definitely drop down to eight dollars if we got a sexy girl to work with us.”

“Well I wouldn’t!”

Gabe snapped again. He might have bi-polar issues. I’ll just shut up, leave it alone, not bother...

“What about a single dollar?”

“That’s so stupid. I wouldn’t give my money away.”

“But for female company, bro. Let’s think this through. How ‘bout 50 cents?”

“No.”

“Not even... whatever. What if for nothing? Pretty much, would you like to have another laborer if she was a ridiculous hottie? You gonna pass on that? I’m not.”

“But why do we need another laborer?”

Gabe. Fearing life. Miserable. Bringing down those around him.

Six years in this hell.

Maybe he suffers from permanent sexual repression.

*A 2x4's dimensions are not 2" by 4". The actual dimensions are 1"-1/2" by 3"-1/2" in. All stock lumber is initially cut to the designated size, but planing and drying truncate the wood. Thus a 3x6 is truthfully 2"-1/2" by 5"-1/2".*

It’s 3:59 pm. 28 seconds and counting. An insulation installer left his cell phone on the stairs.

I watch Gabe, time bearing down on his shoulders, folding him into himself. There must be a scintillating debate with his demons; he still



has yet to notice me. With feverous speed, and jerky, un-greased movements of a machine, Gabe sweeps the sheet rock excesses.

Flurries of drywall shave cloud the air as Gabe passes through it. Inhaling too much is like swallowing a welding torch.

Gabe frantically disperses it, only to have it drift down around him. He doesn't notice.

I imagine this is what nuclear fallout would resemble.

*If working with drywall, do not use a new knife. Instead make sure the blade is dull. This defies common logic, but when cutting drywall, a sharp blade catches easier and can tear the drywall.*

Gabe glances up once the floor is blank.

Tabula Rasa.

He is bewildered for a moment. I see it in his eyes every time. What has to be done? The fear of completion. Of having to move on.

Laborers are the extras in zombie movies... the ones which head straight to home video. They conceal themselves within their environment, make the status quo camouflage. And the world never sees them. They are chameleons hidden until forgotten. A tragedian Where's Waldo. An *Eye-Spy* with no illusion.

"What are you doing? I told you all that has to get done today. Do it!"

"Done." After Ed went away, Gabe began to act authoritatively. As if the hiatus of a real craftsman left one broom-hand in the command of the other. Sixty-eight months difference determined authority. This was one of the few things that Gabe did where I had trouble restraining myself from unclipping my Dewalt and putting the fuck in his place.

I could throw his burning cigarette into a sheet of insulation. The teddy-bear textured fiber glass would ignite rapidly. The flames would spread out and eventually hit the gas valve. This home would become a blast furnace. F model ignition; a mid-progress wicker-man. It could start a reaction, leaving Lot's 74 and 72 smoldering would-have-beens.

"You're done? I'll check, you know. The Big Guy said for us to go to lot 73. One of the Mexican roofers shit in the basement. So go."

"What?"

"I said go to Lot 73!"

He screeches like someone would the first time they are interlaced within a straight jacket.

"Its 4:05. Five minutes I've been off. I was going to offer to help put shit away. Not to go pick some roofers shit off the basement floor. There is no way I'm doing that. I'm out."

Gabe's transfixed. His visage of authority evaporated.

Out the empty shell of the unfinished home; leaving behind the shell of an unfinished man.

Down Lucy Lane. Through the trailer door; the revolving door of laborers for over half a decade. Right into the command center with all its blueprints, nude women, and scattered remains of take-out.

Sorry Big Stan, I'm giving you my week notice.

Stunned silence. He probably didn't see this coming. Not so soon at least.

"Any chance you'd reconsider? With Ed gone, I could increase your salary another fifty cents."

Exit the trailer. No response. None needed.

Go the wrong way out a one way street. Exit Sunny Side Estates through its entrance. I feel free. Gravity was bearing down upon me, trying to contort and twist me into what Gabe had. Refuse complacency. Look toward the future. This is evolution. This is living.

All this week I'll show up to work 15 minutes late, just as I always have. I'll multiply my lunch break by 2, also the norm. I'll feign sickness a day or two.

And I'm going to enjoy this beautiful weather.

Let Gabe pick up shit from now on.

*Saw blades wobbling and shuddering have lost their efficiency and usefulness. This is known as runout.*



# UNTITLED



## BEAUTY IN AMERICA

(a 21st century love story)

i remember stepping in a brooklyn  
bodega at three a m one friday night  
and finding that the only one inside  
apart from myself and the apathetic drowsy  
foreigner who worked the register  
behind a bulletproof pane of glass  
was a sixfootseven halfcrazed mulatto  
invalid with wild silver hair who held  
within his ragged grip a milk carton  
which he scrutinized puzzled mumbling  
imagining he recognized himself  
within the freckled visage of the fat  
boy's printed face upon the back  
until it dawned on him that *he* was missing  
then was seized by so much overwhelming  
allconsuming desperation for himself  
that he shot howling out into the lonely night  
seeking refuge in garbagestrewn shadows where  
he clawed his temples till they bled  
and wept himself to sleep with spasmolytic sobs  
jostling back to sense a young junkie  
who sat observing with jocastian eyes  
the wounded creature at her timid feet  
and felt compelled to place a pale and  
understanding hand on his  
convinced it was the love of jesus  
she felt pulsing through her overflowing  
like warm milk in her fragile heart  
as she held his heaving body up to hers  
praying to ahura and a thousand buddhas  
that she might never come back



down again this time  
while back inside the placid manager  
muttered and yawned returning my change  
through a creaking drawer of stainless steel  
and i bit my Milky Way and started home  
dragging my feet along the silent street.

## PINHOLE SUNSET





## KINDLING

her morning star burns in the deep  
pulp of his marrows.  
bones grind and spark  
across each wilderness  
pressed between his body and her gaze.

years ago  
pearl eyes clutched him by the riverbank.  
earnest fingers screwed into his shoulder blades.  
her sweat tattooed patterns across his torso.  
broiling lips softened his teeth and caked his veins.

raw and quivering  
he ran to the train tracks  
hungry for distance.

his dead tongue pronounced peace.  
he waded into a current brittle and clear.  
he walked the beds of frozen ponds.  
the cooling never finished.

her star ruptures ribs  
burning for barbed kisses  
indifferent to his fears.  
too old to run  
he thinks to pray  
holding the patchwork of his blistered face.

## MY SUMMER, WITH SALT

*An Excerpt from a Memoir*

With a small journal and a pen in my hand, wearing a skirt and a tee shirt, and very impractical flip flops I walk out of my side door and onto the steps, and over the gravel. Turning left out of my driveway, I now face the sound. It radiates warmth in the summer sunlight. I pick up a lazy stride as I make my way closer. I cross the street and climb down steep cement stairs to the sand below. Under my feet I feel the type of beach Milford is so known for: rocky, warm, welcoming. I stride down the tide line letting the cool water rush over my bare feet. Close my eyes for a moment, take in the feeling of my surroundings. Opening and reviewing the world, more relaxed, I look to my left and contemplate the wall of softly colored boulders and approach them to find a good seat for writing.

*Neon*

Going home from Rachel's, walking back down the street to my apartment at one a.m., I hit a stride that I don't want to let go of. It is smooth and steady, paced calmly, and confidently. Brushing my face like an affectionate hand is the cool air; it is ardent but kind. It reassures me that I can still function. It invigorates me, fills me with a calm, buzzing energy. The sky is cloudy and the moon is only just peeking through. There are so few people out, save for some standing on porches and one or two stumbling home. A certain hush at night pulls me in and holds tight.

The gas station tells me I'm so close to home; its bright sign glares down asking me to walk slower. It begs me to make sure I make the most of the night. I concede to its request and cut my pace in half. I still have the same motion, the same smooth steadiness, but I've taken my foot off the gas; I'm coasting.

*Stratford*

It's after dinner, and storming out. Normally I hate thunder and lightning, but tonight so much tension is building inside Liz's house that I beg her for a walk. We wander around her neighborhood in the dark, only seeing outlines until the next lightning flash. Outlines of unclothed tree branches twisted, sharply drawn; glowing edges of foggy blue storm



clouds; and illuminated raindrops on roof tile. Wet beyond our hopes of ever being dry again, clothes sticking to us, hair drowned and matted down, we make our way across the normally quiet, and yet now visually violent East Main Street towards Raven Terrace. Todd is sleeping over Alex's tonight, and even though Alex is the source of the unease we go to see if they're home.

His house is pale butter yellow, one of few on the street that is visible amongst the trees and clouds. Knocking softly on the side and front doors, cautious as to not wake his mother, we get no reply. Then we hear scraping, whirring on the pavement. The two of them come skateboarding toward us, water skipping up from the ground, moving from their path. And the thunder shakes me.

*Lines*

Generally out of focus, words blink. They are talking around me, playing games, laughing, standing, sitting, lying. "We've got to get out of here." But I am so comfortable on the floor. It's nearing midnight, and I'm writing down here. They're feeding me inspiration, and I'm charged.

*Marshfield*

Waves were slowly, forcefully, painfully crashing up the shore. Molly stood down on the beach at one in the morning tempting the water to come closer. She stood resolutely taking sand and salt in her face. The foam was all we could see, the foam and the white of Molly's legs. The past few days had been hazy and grey, misting us as we sat in the sand on our towels in the middle of the afternoon reading and playing with the other vacationer's dogs. Tonight was our last night. We had to pack up and drive home, back to Connecticut, in the morning. Our rented beach house and our borrowed ocean gave us a sense of daring calm. Jumping waves for hours and then showering the sand out of our bathing suits served as the perfect escape. But, all week we had wanted to go down the street to sit on the cement wall late at night to just watch and see; we wanted to take in the enormity of what we had been playing with all week.

There was a stillness to the scene. I sat on the wall, Marybeth and Bianca waited on the steps that led down to the coast, and there was Molly, where the crests broke. The water came up and washed over her feet. It crept closer and closer, wetting her legs more as the night went on. Her lower legs were unarmored, her pants rolled to her knees. And she stood there, until there was no more sand to stand on. And we sat on the wall until there wasn't enough ambient light for us to focus on.

## GENEVIEVE

Genevieve holds her pride tightly, like a pistol.  
It encircles her in those ludicrous necklaces.  
My pearls were less expensive  
But with knots in between.  
If the chain broke, I would only lose one.  
Genevieve would lose her pride in one sudden flush.

She wails from the catacombs of silks and minks  
Cursing her mother's name.

Then, she stood, unbridled and Geishan white.  
She clawed at her hair and tore down the photos.  
She beat out the memories.  
She coughed up a long absence.  
She tore down the excuses.  
She tore down the gifts.

I undid her buttons, and she, mine.  
I untied her scarf, and she, mine.

She broke her nails in my skin, but I didn't mind.  
Old hurts welled between her teeth  
But I didn't stir.



## VICTORIAN BRIDE





## EVERY NIGHT I SHUT MY EYES

Unfortunately, her nails-like-razorblades were insufficient, because her nails-like-razorblades were not an unordinary thing, and her nails-like-razorblades ran down his back not for the first time, and her nails-like-razorblades bore into his mind as something trite and romantic in that aspect -- in that they were trite, and in that they were like razorblades, and in that they no longer had any effect on him. He had become used to her nails, those nails that once went deep into his heart, like roots, and they were now simply something ordinary and existing forever. At one time, these things on his back were rose thorns and dove beaks, and they were of the utmost love and of the utmost majesty, lying facedown in satin sheets, caressed by Lover's fingertips, chills down his spine from tiny sharp nails.

Now, tiny sharp nails were no longer from Persian or Parisian fantasy on satin sheets. Now, the stained mattress curled under restless bodies that tried to escape razorblades, not roses. A john; he had always been some sort of john, if not some sick solicitor of love, then simply an addict of affection. And like an addict, he had become immune to his pusher's drug, no longer finding succor in her vice; now he was jonesing for a state of normalcy, a state of comfort. Now, tiny fingertips were like razorblades, like needles driving home a fix: he was addicted to routine.

Originally, it was he who attracted her (in fact, isn't any addict the object of a drug's affection?) and she fell into him with the unique voracious appetite with which only a woman is naturally imbued. Always the most interesting relationships commence at the most interesting times, and those taught with passion are often also taught with a hidden anxiety of unfamiliarity. There were blurry details leading up to it, like the details leading up to a crime. A short passing in the street, brief lascivious eye contact, hesitation, conversation (were either of them going somewhere? In the end, they had missed their appointments, and their friends feared them missing), she followed him home curiously when he suggested it. At his door, an antiquated peeling pea-green portal, she stared at him hungrily as he fumbled with his keys. He was haughty, he was a veteran libertine, and he was used to control. And she would have him.



He didn't even have a name yet, but she likened him to some proud, useless feral beast. His unkempt hair fell across his face and his clothes were carefully disheveled and drab, he slouched with the calculating posture of the bohemian. His skin was so pale and lily-white, his wiry frame so tensed with movement, his eyes so vivid and green as they darted from his keys to her soft, hungry face.

"My name is Sera, like the seraphim."

"Samuel."

"Sorry?"

"Samuel. Like the prophet."

He unlocked the door and smiled into her face quite brazenly.

"He wasn't known for much. He defended the Israelites. But didn't they all?"

She smiled politely and their lips met awkwardly, but soon opened wide and lascivious with taunting eroticism. He led her inside quickly and they didn't speak for another day for lack of anything substantial to relate.

Nights became rapid black and moans; mornings sleeping in and soft naïve caresses. They stayed in his dim, cozy trinity- she was almost an urchin, never living in one place long- and slept like royalty on red and blue sheets, the finest he owned. They subsisted on fruit in bed, and never left that soft slab. Any proclamation of love too soon is simply a proclamation of desperation, and they fell fast into a blind abyss. Within a week, they couldn't stand each other, and every movement was with malice and angry intent. The house was no longer a warm place- it had become tight and claustrophobic, and they could feel each other everywhere. They lay awake wondering when it would be over.

Sometime during the second week together, they sat together at a gnarled, scarred table with a bowl of rotten fruit in the center, which no one had bothered to replace. The shelves in the kitchen had been removed, and what was once a quaint organization of a few dishes was now a collection of a mish mash of cracked tableware. By some chance, they were sitting down together eating breakfast. It was the first time in a week and a half they had been up that early.

"Sera, why in the hell are you even here, still?" She sneered at him and turned sideways in her chair and chewed dejectedly on a frozen waffle.

"You can't stand me, Sera. And this isn't your damn home. You're still here on my goodwill. You can't stand me at all. Why don't you just



leave?”

She turned and looked him in the eye. “Why would you want me to leave? We’re still sleeping together. If you wanted me out so bad, I’d be out, don’t you think? You would have told me to leave, ‘stead of asking me why I haven’t. You still love it. You love the hate we make, ‘cause I know damn well it isn’t love anymore.”

“Well, it was short lived, wouldn’t you say?”

She threw her waffle at him and it hit him in the chest, leaving a greasy stain on his shirt. As she walked away, he noticed the bounce in her rear as she walked, the way her shoulders tilted to one side, the way her hair fell smooth like a sheet of opal midway down her back. She refused to dress any longer (at first this was a romantic convenience, but now it was simply a protest and a refusal to consider this place she lived as hostile) and her thighs were thick and pale and tight, and she was quite beautiful. Sera. She was named for an angel of the highest degree, but it was no angel that held him at night.

They began to convene frequently- he was quite stubborn and knew that any chance he had to keep her out of his house would be taken advantage of, and he (also quite stubborn) stayed to guard the house and monitor her movements. The house began to feel their odium, and began to sag and cry. The walls, once a sky azure, were now a peeling dust color, and leaned in towards the feuding inhabitants as if in anticipation of the next jab. If it is true that you grow into a house by living in it, then you destroy it by killing in it. The house was softly dying.

Equally matched and equally tempered, the two were stubborn and refused to vanquish routine. They continued to embrace at night and continued to interact more and more with thinly veiled malevolence. They could each feel something was coming down; a sword of Damocles followed them through each room.

She began to poison him in conversation. Every word she said aroused his defenses and she pointed out his blindness and helplessness. He hated her for it, but could do nothing; he was a fair man and an upstanding man, capable of defending his house and sanity to the end. He had never seen it coming and hoped she would fall in the end. He stopped sleeping, instead waiting for an opening, staring at her sleeping in his bed. They no longer made love but there was still copulation- it was almost a struggle of wills, and could no longer be considered intercourse by any social standard. It was simply an automatic response



to night, and they did it to win.

His mind became clouded with frustration, and she relished in his growing ineffectiveness. He was becoming dull and dependant- was it that they both relied on habit, or was it she who played upon his habit and planted addiction in him like some sinister seed? His eyes grew dark and sunken with the continued fornication, the continued forced insomnia. His diligence in defending his own house was wearing him down -- if he was not allowed sleep at night, and not prepared to sleep at day, what little sleep he had was taken with a junkie's eagerness. It was not the sleep of the dead but the sleep of the addict. She had begun to kill him, and his refusal only led him further to defeat.

One day as they lounged on the tepid gray couch, there was the uncomfortable feeling of peace between them for an instant. For a moment he was lucid.

"Uh, um, what do we... uh, what do we hope to accomplish by this? You can't kill me. What do you win by wearing me down? When does it end?"

She had not been prepared for such an eventuality; for a moment, he was aware of her sadistic attempts to undo him: she inflicted pain simply because it was her compulsion, and no proper sadist would hope to realize their own compulsion for ruination of their game. She stared at this feeble man whose head bobbed between clarity and the revenge of sleep deprivation. Sera left the room and went upstairs to the unmade bed and slept.

No dream would have been sufficient to rouse her from sleep, for she slept for spite and no amount of remorse or act of violence will dissolve an act of spite. She slept and he wandered in and stared at her beautiful sleeping body. No sound came, but he was crying. He watched his captor sleep in his bed and he wept for lack of power and he understood now the laws of irony. Indeed, it was quite ironic that this man was being killed by the lover he led into his own house.

They had been living together about a month now. He sat at the foot of the bare, yellowed mattress, between two bedposts, his eyes like those of the living dead, and his limbs gray and ashen, hanging limply off his dying square frame. The sheets had lost their sheen and were in piles in the corner of the room. The room was awkwardly lit and reflected a strange, unfamiliar light across the yellowing walls. Sera sat cross-legged behind him and ran red lines down his back: her nails were like tiny knives and she scratched his back maternally with the needle

claw of a vixen. She draped her arms around him and he shuddered, though she didn't know if he could even comprehend her motions anymore.

"We can end this, Samuel," she whispered hopefully. "We can just stop. You can't do this any more. You're just killing yourself."

He was the only one who could end it by conceding defeat; she was far too adamant to leave on her own accord. It must be a battle fought and won, this house must be claimed, and someone must be vanquished. She would not be satisfied with a simple stalemate. There must be total victory. There must be total defeat.

He stirred and she moved back to lean against the headboard of the bed and lay there with her knees up to her chest. She had become almost more beautiful; or at least, she had retained her beauty and he had lost his to consignment. Perhaps she, too, had become a victim of this viral addiction. She played this game simply to maintain a level of normalcy, which had been lost to dear Samuel. As he lost sanity to lack of sleep, to lack of self-preservation, to the defense of his domicile, she became more beautiful by comparison. She hadn't the ability to stop; the captor had become captive to her own game. Samuel spoke:

"Why are you doing this?"

He looked dead and accusatory. No, she searched his face for hatred, but it was not anger she found, but his eyes- those black sores- begged for release, and she broke down. Against the sickly light from the bedside lamplight, which washed across the room, she looked like a martyred saint, and tears rolled down her face, sweeter than the fruit they had eaten a month earlier. It was neither vice nor victory that overwhelmed her, but enlightenment. She had taken the willingness of a human being and destroyed it. She had won the truest victory- the triumph over autonomy.



## THE CITY WITH TWO FACES

“Wait,” I heard a boy apprehensively say to the ticket checker. “We can’t be in Amsterdam already.”

“This train no go to Amsterdam. This is last stop at Oschenslaughter (or something else that started with an “O” and sounded German),” he replied.

“What?!” I yelled to the pair behind me.

“This happen always,” the train worker explained in broken English. “The train from Koln to Amsterdam no run all the days. You take to Dusseldorf then Amsterdam.”

The other American who made the same mistake got off the train with me. We rushed to board the train that was about to leave for Dusseldorf. The American sat next to me.

“Hi, I’m Matt.” He squinted at me through his Harry Potter glasses.

“Julie. Nice to meet you.”

Matt went to school in Tennessee, but was studying in Rome for the semester through Duke University’s program. We were both headed to Amsterdam on our fall break. We got off the train at Dusseldorf, I offered him a cigarette, and we began the forty five minute wait for the train to our destination.

“But oil *is* a good reason to kill people,” he responded after forty minutes of us arguing about politics. “We need it to survive!” I knew that I would get too heated if I continued this barbaric conversation, so I changed the subject to talk about this man I met on the train to Koln.

“And he thought I was getting off at the next stop, so he says, ‘I think you should stay on the train,’ in this really creepy I’m-a-sick-nerdy-masochist kind of way. But it wasn’t my stop; I wasn’t getting off the train, so I was shit out of luck. If I stayed he would think I was staying for him, if I got off I would be at some random place in Germany where I had never been, and I had a train to catch. So I went to the bathroom, washed my hands, washed my face, brushed my teeth, changed my socks, and read my book until I felt the train slow for the next stop (which thankfully was mine). Oh, and the guy would do the most annoying thing when we were sitting there...”

I was about to tell Matt that this weirdo would read a magazine and then burst out laughing - like side-stitching laughter - and look at me as



he did it, like I had any idea what he was laughing at; but the train to Amsterdam arrived.

Half-way to Amsterdam, Matt and I decide to halt our conversation to read. I'm reading along wondering why Molteni is so insanely convinced that Emilia no longer loves him, wondering why Emilia just doesn't get the hell out of that relationship, and I hear it... I hear the laughter from the magazine-reading creep from trains past. I look over and see Matt looking at me, giggling. He's reading a Latin book translated into English about adventure and incest, and is laughing – out loud, to me – just like Creep McCreep.

When we finally arrived at our destination, he invited me to accompany him to the hostel where he had a reservation. Since I had no where to stay, and Matt was a decent fellow, I took him up on his offer.

Matt and I stepped out of the youth hostel at 5pm on that glorious Wednesday evening. The sun was still shining and the birds still chirping, which allowed me to clear my mind of the mishap on the train earlier that day. *Ring Ring* – a bike had sung asking us to let it pass. More bikes followed and each rider had a pleasant smile upon his face. The riders' eyes were lazily half open with a glistening glaze. The bikes took the place of cars on the narrow back roads. No loud, obnoxious honks could be heard even in the distance – just gentle, childish bells and the cheerful voices of the many people walking by. We turned right to explore the new city.

We passed shops full of delicious-looking treats. Treats that you dreamed about as a child: fluffy large loafs of bread covered in chocolate and sprinkles, oversized Belgium waffles with powdered sugar and ice cream pouring over the sides, and one shop completely dedicated to dozens of flavors of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream (which is impossible to find anywhere in Italy). To our left across the red brick road there was a plethora of shops that were made to quench smokers' desires: head shops, smart shops, grow shops, and coffee shops. The head shops provided every type of piece you could think of in glass, marble, and copper, and offered grinders with the same variety of material and designs. The smart shops sold informational books such as "Smokers Guide to Amsterdam," and the grow shops sold seeds for your own personal garden. And the coffee shops, oh the coffee shops...

On the corner of Warmoesstraat and Sint Annen Street, an elephant with brown beads around his head like a crown held the word "Baba" in his trunk and sat on top of a door that was open and inviting. Matt and



I entered the coffee shop and were overwhelmed by the intense aroma and thick fog created by the weed. Once our eyes adjusted from the bright sun to the dim lighting, we walked past alternating high and low tables of people rolling joints and hitting bongos until we reached the bar. The bar was an empty counter that fronted a shelf of alcohol and pieces. To the right of the shelf was a table that held two small coffee and cappuccino machines. The girl behind the counter, probably in her mid-twenties, had a giant ball of light brown dreadlocks plopped in an uneven pile on her head, held by a rubber band. She looked at us without saying a word.

Matt looked at me for guidance and I timidly asked, "Could we please have a menu?" She handed us a menu that's format looked typical for any American restaurant; but instead of meat and potatoes this menu had many types of hash, marijuana, and space cakes. We ordered from the second column, sat at a high table in front of a window that watched the street, and barely spoke – both amazed at what we were allowed to do in a public place. With each hit the sky outside the window grew darker and Matt's eyes grew redder.

We exited the coffee shop and entered the night of a new world. This town was not the Pleasantville we had seen before we entered Baba. I saw everything in black and white, except for the accentuated fluorescent red lines outlining the signs that hung in front of nearly every shop. We turned right out of Baba and were met by people who seemed to be in costume for the taping of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, but there was no camera, no director, and no film being made. Large windows outlined in the same fluorescent red covered the façade of a long row of shops. Silhouettes of women wearing lingerie and dancing in slow motion pressed against the windows. Sounds of laughter, screams, and moans echoed inside my ears. A man wearing fishnet stockings slowly walked past us. His bright pink, tight skirt shimmered against his black and white features. As he turned to us, his eyes in his gray face lit up bright yellow as they flashed in mine. I imagined him putting a mask held by a long, silver pole in front of them, throwing his head back, and heartily laughing as his body rocked back and forth.

Matt and I hurried inside our hostel and out of the Red Light District. We watched the Sin City below us in amazement from our second story window. My body began to feel weak and my head light so I climbed up to the farthest top bunk from the door in a narrow, cold room lined with gray cement walls. As I looked up at the ceiling, which was about



10 feet high, it began to droop down towards me. It fell and fell and fell, but stopped just in time before grazing my nose. The sides of the ceiling that touched the tops of the walls shot up into the air pulling the walls with them. I turned my head and eyes to the right where my bed leaned against the wall. The number 9 with a line fractioning it above the number 10 was drawn there. Small arrows were drawn to the right of the numbers. The lines of the drawing were continuously flowing rainbows or colors, alternating without pattern or consistency. The arrows took the form of mushrooms, gathered smoke at the stem, and rocketed away from the numbers. When Jolly Old Saint Nick entered the room with his sack of toys, I figured my earlier treat was probably laced and shut my eyes to fall asleep.

The next morning we left the hostel and again saw the Pleasantville that had disappeared the night before. Families walked past, smiling bikers rode by, and hippies stopped to chat with us about the fun places we could visit. Across the street in front of a head shop, police were aggressively arresting a man who the hippies told us was a junkie. This man was the only junkie I could see on the streets that day, but one of the many on the same streets the night before when the police were no longer in charge. Other people who surrounded the police and junkie were lighting up joints. Some people gracefully danced past the scene preoccupied with waving their hands slowly in front of their faces and following them closely with their eyes.

After the early morning arrest was over, I left Matt to meet up with my friends. Matt was going rock-climbing, and although he asked me very nicely to join him and his friend, I opted out. I had never been rock climbing, and figured the first time to do it was not when I was "out of mind." So Matt and I shook hands and parted ways. I didn't get his contact information, I felt that our relationship could end here, and I'd be able to move on with my life.

I met up with Jess and Michaela and we explored the city. We passed a cheese shop, halted in our tracks, and turned back to look inside. The walls were stacked with rows and rows of all types of cheeses, and we spent about ten minutes looking around, being indecisive on what to purchase. Once Jess and Michaela found the smelliest cheese in all of Holland, we finally got behind a large line that reached the door.

"Could I have a big ball of mozzarella?" I asked when I got to the cashier, admitting to myself that I missed Firenze.

"Is this good?" He replied holding a wad of cheese that was the size



of a softball.

“Yes! That’s perfect.” And fifteen euro later Jess, Michaela, and I all walked the streets of Amsterdam tearing massive pieces of mozzarella off of our own personal mounds with our teeth.

We wrapped up the cheeses and put them in our bags as we entered a coffee shop. This shop gave off a Hindu vibe. The only light was given by a line of red candles just under a tapestry of deep maroon and purple that hung on the taupe wall. We sat on a wrap-around beige couch so low that our knees were parallel to our chests.

“Can I please have a tea with milk?” Jess asked the waitress.

“I’ll have a pineapple juice,” Michaela followed.

“A banana smoothie for me, thanks,” I concluded.

Michaela twirled the paper between her two index fingers and thumbs until it formed a perfect cylinder. Once her tongue sealed her masterpiece we lit up, grabbed our drinks, and cheered to the wonderful day ahead.

“This place is like a fairytale,” Michaela dreamily said. “I can’t wait to see the night-life.”

I sat back in my chair and thought about the night I had just spent with Matt. I decided not to warn them so they could get the full experience. So I hinted, “Just take it easy on the weed at night: it’s a different world.”

## BITS OF COPPER

*“Si vous seriez un vrai chercheur après la vérité, il est nécessaire qu'au moins une fois dans votre vie vous doutiez, aussi loin que possible, toutes les choses.”* —René Descartes

I am the unrelenting optimist!  
Keeping perpetual grasps on agony,  
And feigning happiness in everything,  
While circumstance works towards my sure distress;  
But bits of glass and copper may connote,  
To something more than everyone suspects,  
Because potentials-as of yet-unknown,  
Reside in places presently unseen.

So maybe bits of copper can provide  
A thing of beauty comparable to gold,  
If the angle used to look's exactly right,  
To see its grandeur and magnificence.  
Glass too shines brighter stateliness to some,  
When sunlight passes through, and thus is cut,  
And yellows, greens, reds, oranges, and blues  
Dance brilliant waltzes through the corridors.

Like popsicles with jokes engrained in wood,  
Melting in the heat of ninety plus,  
Don't matter much but to the four-year-old,  
Who's wading in a 24-inch “pool.”  
With purple syrup melting placidly  
Beneath his lips, and dripping off his chin.  
Not so much disinterested, more detached  
From worries over failure, tax, and death.



In life, and in this world, I will concede  
That I have held *my* measure separate,  
And alienated people in my life,  
While, simultaneously, estranging myself.  
I've seen supposed unimportant found,  
And strangled silent by some selfish few,  
While here I watched my child play alone,  
And chewed the bits of copper from my nails.

## A LOVE SONG TO HIP HOP

double dutch and hip hop  
held hands like brand-new lovers  
who regularly played doctor  
behind the dumpsters

\*\*\*\*\*

can we get back  
can i get back (to)  
double dutch hitting and sweeping  
the blacktop littered with flattened, discolored gum

lauryn's voice keeping in beat  
with the rope as it skips...

skips

when hip hop felt real (and tangible)  
when it belonged to us

we love it when the beat

drops

when//everything is stripped  
from a song until it is down to its element

naked

(wet and willing like a video-ho stretched out on the hood of a yellow  
convertible)

rappers molested our hip hop



they whispered dirty things in our ear(s)  
like an over-enthusiastic sex partner

(a one-night stand; so you say)

the real hip hoppers were  
sacrificed  
put up on a cross after being  
flogged

and their new message is like  
salty-sweet-lemon-water that no one wants to drink  
we are simply tired. exhausted.  
mos def/talib/jean grae  
their cds forlorn and scratched  
because we must

reduce. reuse. recycle  
trying to cling on instead of replacing  
the old with the

new: (read: 50 cent; Chamillionaire; Young Jeezy)

\*\*\*\*\*

i am the only one left standing on Sterling Place  
with  
thin, dirty double dutch wires  
in my hand

they scratch the ground as  
lauryn's voice

skips...

skips...

hip hop and double dutch are over like

Sonny and Cher  
Brad and Jennifer  
Nick and Jessica

\*\*\*\*\*

“Dear God,  
Is hip hop real, and if so, can we get back to  
whatever You created it to be?”

Amen.



# PINHOLE



## FROM JAMES' JOURNAL

I  
Stripped and flaked  
Soiled blue flannel jacket  
From the bruised spine and greasy pages  
Where fingers clutched words for comfort  
I poured over the crumpled innards

Pen scratchings and bloody lashings look the same  
Once they fade

Now  
I know so much of what I did not see  
Before divine spark  
Before I saw the flash go off  
I was nestled in a dark corner  
There was a tall man  
Life began

Now  
I unearthed the womb of religion  
I saw the Buddha born  
I know when dialectic perfection and poetic direction  
Emerged to purge the soul  
I discovered his history

I never got to know the boy  
Only briefly led him as he became a man

I  
Witnessed the adoration for all she's preceding  
Learned that love does come  
Go  
And come again



I  
Read the past four years  
In the two that we were  
I saw the metamorphosis  
Our voices changed  
Our prose explains

It is always warmer in memories

We  
Were children then  
Adults now  
Barred impossibly from return to fleeting youth  
as it is equally impossible to regress to infancy

Consider this an elegy to us

You  
Preached a Taoist testimony  
Your Hamlet fondled the skull of Kerouac  
You wrote the Bible each day  
I was a devout literate

## I WANT A WOMAN

I want a woman,

No;

I want a girl, who- wait... a lady

But,

Not in the archaic sense. Okay.

Not a girl in the archaic sense, which--

She can be a woman, though. A

Woman that--

But nothing too young if she IS a girl. And

No one too overpowering. A

Real spunky thing, but not

To the point of that headstrong

Annoyance so characteristic of

Those tough cookies on television

Who are just unspeakable. Neither will

She be flaccid and submissive as a

Floppy, gravy-laden, open-faced [turkey?]

Sandwich! So,

We've established that she is either:

a) A woman --or--

b) A girl who,

In her mannerisms is neither

a.) A cookie --nor--

b.) A sandwich

And I really do think that headway has

Been established here.

She will not speak unless spoken to, BUT  
Neither will I. It works out fine. This dramatically  
Decreases any sort of gray areas in which one is  
Expected to take control of speech patterns. This  
Is something for which I shall never stand. I want  
A lady who can comb my jagged, HarSH, **cold**  
Edges into smooth, fluid, warm blue lines, and  
Furnish my mind with leather words and  
Upholstered ways, leaving us



Teetering on the edge of that exact moment when  
We hear the bells and that silly, delightful, never-ending, unmistakable,  
fun-but-urgent  
Song, and by the time we get outside the ice  
Cream truck is already halfway up the  
Block...

But, no matter.

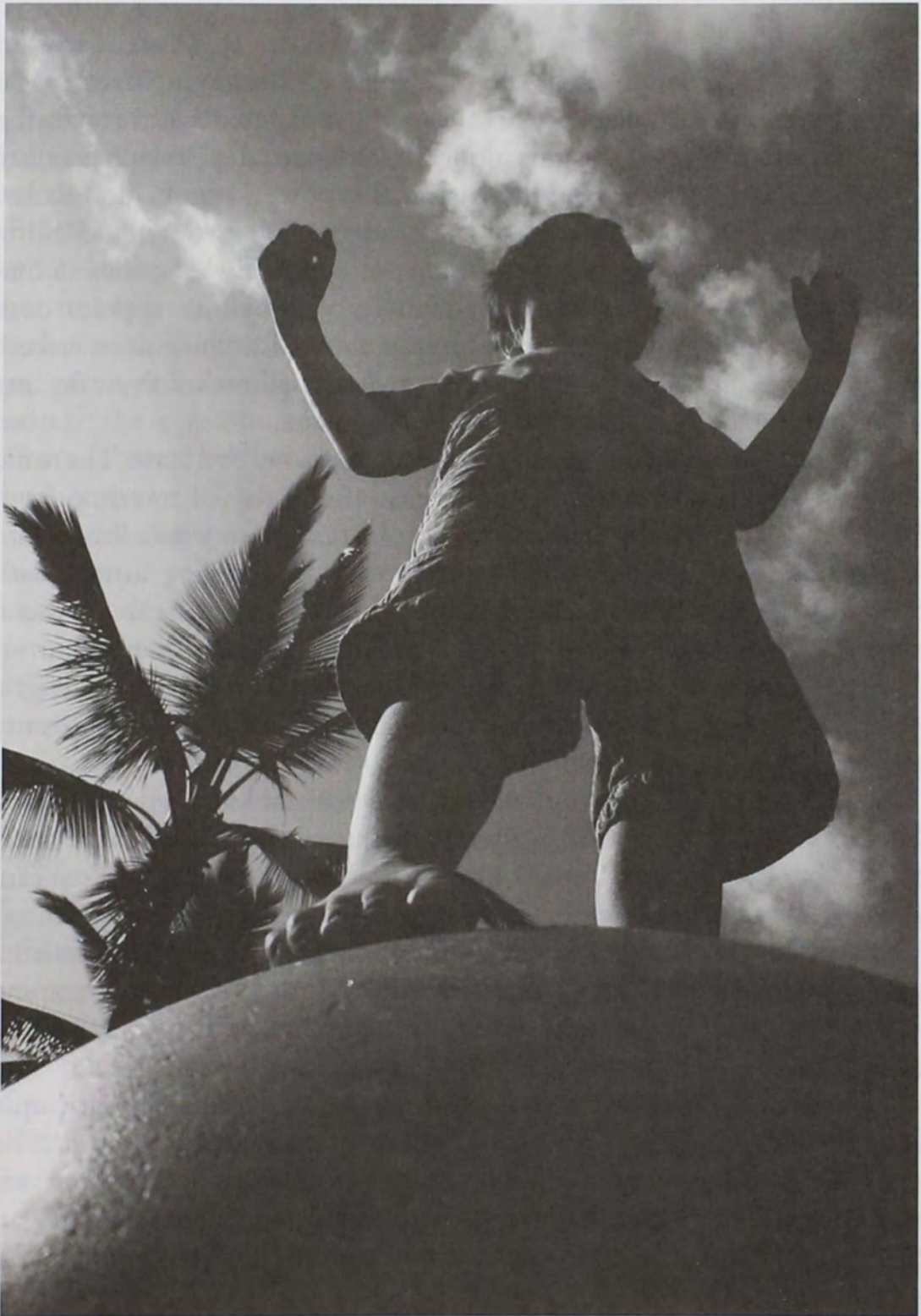
She will incongruously blur and mar

My vision, too, but for the better. I'll

Begin to not see anything [or one] else, eventually.

I hear that's what they like.

BOY ON BALL





## I DIG YOUR CELLO

The half bottle of wine is taking effect now. It warms my skin against the cooling night air of Venice's Piazza San Marco. The huge square is surrounded by buildings whose lights blaze through the night like white Christmas lights along white fences. Le Procuratie, once a palace of Napoleon during the height of his power, stands rectangular, its U-shaped form making up most of the square's perimeter. Making up the remainder of the border of the main square is la basilica di San Marco, for which the square is named. Its white stone appears dark under the faded light of the clouded moon above, but the golden statues and mosaics which adorn the façade in great arcs glitter wildly, reflecting the lights which dance about the rest of the square.

Dinner had been an interesting experience, to say the least. The wine was the most enjoyable part, a cool repast after a day of traveling from Florence to Venice. The atmosphere of our restaurant was a little more of a shock. It had been designed as a cave, the ceiling armed with stalactites which looked like evil, upside-down pongee sticks. It was a most theatrical experience, to say the least, with a menagerie of fiberglass cave beasts watching us and the wait staff moving about. The gaze of the toothy-grinned inhabitant of one corner is still fresh in my mind.

The food was also memorable, mine especially so. I grew up in a shore town, Cape May, in South Jersey. There, seafood comes like steak for Texans. I've tried all I could from the sea: fish, mollusk, crustacean, seaweed; or at least that's what I thought. What was set in front of me at the restaurant was something else entirely. It was what the menu called a typical Venetian dish, *black squid with polenta*. It looked like a heaping mass of tar, steaming beside two slabs of grilled yellow corn meal. I thought black squid was just a figure of speech; apparently not.

I picked up my fork and stabbed into the black mass, and pulled up a piece of rubbery squid. I glared at it momentarily, and then bit it. The taste was delicious, momentarily surprising me, but very odd. It was as if someone created a sauce from an extraordinarily excellent-tasting cigar, then used it to coat oddly meaty cuts of bike tire. My first reaction was to share.

"Tommy," I said. "Try some of my squid." He put down his four-



cheese gnocchi and stuck his fork at the squid, then tasted it. "How is it?"

Tom looked momentarily stunned and his chewing slowed. "Interesting."

"Good? Bad?"

"No, just... interesting."

Back in Piazza San Marco, flowing, dramatic classical music is playing from a band set up along the walls of Le Procuratie. Their black tuxedos and dark mahogany instruments stick out against the white cloth walls of the tent. I stand among the tourists gathered to hear them play, my former dining companions joining me. The music prompts Tom and Sara to begin to dance. They move with huge, exaggerated motions in rhythm with the music, which is equally exaggerated. Tom, in his dark hat, green windbreaker, and enormous backpack, is almost, but not entirely, the opposite of elegance. Sara fares little better as she makes efforts to keep her handbag from sliding down her denim shoulder as she moves.

The dancing is interrupted as Jonathan and Jason come bearing bouquets of red and white roses, held like thorny infants. They pass them out to the girls, smiling wryly. I can only stare at them with a surprised, hurtful look. Why wasn't I in on this deal? The girls smile and giggle. I stand to the back of our group; I have neither a rose to give or to receive. Or so I thought.

"Brad," Jonathan approaches me. I glare up to his face and then down to his hands. He holds a single white rose.

"What is this?" I ask, my pitch going up a little more than usual.

"We think you should give this rose to those girls over there." I notice Jason behind him, wearing a wide smile that stretches back over his narrow face. I then look to the girls he is pointing to, a group of eight who are dancing in a circle to the music which has now picked up a bit.

"No," I say. "No way. Okay, gimme that thing."

Clutching the rose I make my way over to them until I notice they are already getting roses. One of them, a girl with curly blonde hair, clutches a gigantic bouquet that puts shame to Jason and Jonathan's. Embarrassed, I turn back to Jason and Jonathan.

"They're already getting roses," I say to them, spinning the green stem between my hands. "That girl bought them a bunch. They bought their own!"

"Here," Jonathan says, grabbing my shoulder. "Just give it to those



girls then.” He points to two girls in fashionable clothing standing at the front of the crowd.

“What should I say to them?”

“Just say, ‘Ciao bella! Per ti!’ Just like that.”

“That seems kinda weird and creepy.”

“Not from you, just be pleasant!”

I stand back for another minute as Jason and Jonathan continue to edge me on. Then I move through the crowd to the girls. I approach the one closest to me. She has short cut black hair and wears an orange silk scarf. Her friend looks nearly identical, only with a pink scarf. I move up to them and extend the white rose like a marching baton.

“Ciao bella. Per tu!”

They regard me with horror, both sets of eyes glaring. Not another word is said. I slink back into the darkness behind me, wishing I had some sort of large moving vehicle to throw myself under. Jason and Jonathan watch me return to them, staring disappointed at my rose which hangs at my side.

“They regarded me with absolute horror!” I yell at them. “That sucked!”

They both stand there, looking slightly embarrassed for my sake. They return to their respective girls. I look back at the other group of girls from before. I am determined to rid myself of this horrid flower, so I move towards them. I hear English. Excited by a common language, I jump towards them and lean towards the tallest girl. She stood out to me, not just because she was tallest, but because on her back was a cello case, clinging like a giant black beetle. It failed to inhibit her movement as she danced around with her friends, her long reddish hair bouncing. I extend her the silky white rose.

“Excuse me,” I said, smiling as warmly as I could. “You speak English! This is for you. My friends and I dig your cello!”

The girls all began laughing hysterically. “Thank you!”

“Where are you all from?”

“England! You?”

“America! The States! My friends and I are all studying in Florence. Why are you all here?”

“We’re a choir group. Today we sang in that church!” She points to the Basilica di San Marco.

“Wow, that must’ve been great.”

“It was!”

“Wow. Okay, nice meeting you!”

They respond by waving and laughing as I return to my own group. I tell them all about the English girls and they laugh along with me. They agree that I should now get them to sing. Okay, another challenge; here we go. I return to the group of eight, pushing past elderly tourists and a dark greasy man selling yet more roses. The eight girls seem to be laughing just as hard as when I left them.

“Excuse me,” I say. “But my friends would like to hear you sing a bit... if that’s okay? What do you say?”

“Absolutely!” The cello girl yells.

I motion my group over. We mash together, American and English accents competing wonderfully. The English girls make a circle and, after tapping the dark cobbles with their feet three times, begin to sing. The voices flow over the music and together they drown out every other noise. It’s just us for a moment, a group of friends here in a Venetian plaza. The white rose bounces along with the music. It found a good home, after all.



## PEREGRINE RAIN

(Finding Again the Lost Inspiration from Grammar School)

Asking

About an ice-slathered ocean  
That was once broken up by firecracker arms  
Behind hyper fingers drumming  
A ceaseless winsome tune  
Upon wooden surface and greasy tables

But now the mammoth tide  
Naught but a trickle  
And the greasy hand  
Mills over ponderous hills  
Fingers now clutching  
The bronze-wire stubble instead

Once much amiable, due to the wind patterns  
Of the breeze of the honeyed wood  
Once a tiny, intricate blue-horned salamander (made with colored  
pencil)  
With fiery pennants on its back  
Twirling through puddles in peregrine rain

Now asking where the hysterical  
Weights of water and sea have fled  
Wishing for the trickle  
To again, to once more be dripping nectar hue  
Onto wholesome pages.

WINDOW





## NEW ENGLAND STATE OF MIND

While pondering life's questions, the tiny old man reaches slowly up, hand wavering in the thin air of New Hampshire's winter, and inserts his finger into his nose. With every jab, recoil, and insertion he discovers more and more about the universe, like why were we put on this Earth and if God exists. But, as I gape at his honest actions, I realize I had better close my mouth, for he may start trying to share his discoveries. Naturally, I don't say a thing. I close my eyes, and drown out the noisy silence of the day with the humming of a tune. It is at the time of night where the sun and moon flirt with each other, waiting patiently for the other to make the first move. They dance.

It is hard for me to imagine that a person from a city or suburb could understand peace. They seem to be in a constant state of needing to do something, even though there isn't really anything to do. I practice the New England state of mind. On this evening in particular, with the ground coated in what looks like dried frosting, I can smell peace, I can taste peace, and I can touch peace.

The old man has long since left, and now I am alone, left with all of my fears, insecurities, and obsessions to keep me company, but this does not bother me. As I inhale another sharp breath of air, I exhale what my lungs decide to release. The cloud is thick, dense, filled with my failures and triumphs.

Throughout this evening, I am never alone. In the distance the dull red lights of a school bus ease to a stop, the children inside are warm, protected from the icy daggers that are now stabbing deep into my calves. They have their wool mittens (the ones that are warm until they get wet and then are useless), they have their bright red cheeks, and they have their patch work smiles. Slush below them engulfs a splayed pink glove; the bus is a war zone. Tiny Velcro boots of combatants march down the aisle away from the horrors and into the arms of their loved ones, a victor's parade.

I snap out of the DMZ to see that, while I was wasting away hours of time which could have been used doing something productive (even though there isn't really anything to do), a teenager stands in the space where the tiny man had previously occupied. I turn to look at him, his stare echoes mine from a few minutes ago. I laugh to myself and talk to



him about the good old days, the days that we had the obligation to do nothing, to inadvertently explore, to create. We share our memories. It's a touching moment shared between complete strangers. The conversation eventually steers towards high school. He tells me that he is a freshman at Fall Mountain, a complex, surrounded by corn and football fields. His name is John; of course it's John. It would have either been John, Chris, Alex or Adam.

John asks me for a cigarette, I guess we have reached the point of our relationship where we feel comfortable bumming smokes off of each other. I say this to him and he doesn't smile. He snags the cigarette from my hand and asks for my lighter. We sit on top of a stone fence along the road, smoking our cowboy killers. He unrolls what appears to be an army surplus sleeping bag to protect our butts from frost bite. I look closely at this sleeping bag, it is tattered, worn out, ripped apart. Stuffing dangles from the openings which John was unable to doctor with some duct tape. I give him the rest of my cigarettes and my lighter. It was a full pack. I only smoke when I am home. He thanks me and puts the red and white package into his flannel shirt's front pocket.

Our conversation has ended; it had reached the point where if I wanted to talk more, we would both have to share personal information. We dance. I break away and look into his eyes. I have seen him before, but cannot figure out where or when. The eyes are hurt, either from the sting of the raw New England wind or something deeper beneath the surface, sheltered from the cold. I finally give in and tell him where I am from, what I do, and other useless facts. I smile, hoping that my opening up will make him do the same, or at least say something for god's sake. But he doesn't. John stands up, takes a drag of my cigarette, and smiles. But that is it.

The moon had made its move and taken its place amongst the stars. I have somewhere to be, people to meet, and beer to drink. John looks at me with those eyes, but I have to leave: I cannot protect him, I cannot shelter him. He says goodbye to me with a hand shake as I get up and leave.

Honestly, I expect more. Guided by porch lights, I reach my car in a short fifteen minutes. As I drive, I see lit windows and smoke from chimneys. This is the beauty of New England.

Next morning I awoke to see that I had slept through my alarm, it is two o'clock in the afternoon, and my parents are at work. I walk down stairs in my boxers and interrupt my mother and father watching a



movie. They cannot leave the house, the roads are slick with ice and the sky is a deep shade of grey. Next door my neighbor's toddlers are playing in the snow, yelling at the top of their lungs. My mama gets me some coffee and my dad throws me the newspaper to read about the storm. Reportedly all of the schools in the area have been shut down due to weather, there were a few car collisions last night, and a drifter froze to death. He was too young, his family shouldn't have to deal with this sort of pain, it is simply not right.

My dad starts to talk to me about getting a job during winter break; I brush him off and tell him I will look for one later. I leave the house to have a cigarette (I only smoke them when I get home—I don't really smoke) but had forgotten that I gave my full pack to John, along with the lighter, to John with the hurt eyes and ragged sleeping bag.

My hand reaches slowly up, wavering in the thin air of New Hampshire's winter, and I insert my finger into my nose. My dad slaps my hand down, like I was a toddler reaching for an electric socket.

The time of the day oozed by, it crept through the shades of the window, engulfing me. And all I could think about was stealing my pack of smokes back from John; he had never thanked me. I needed that feeling back.

I am sure he found a way home that night; maybe he followed the same path, guided by the porch lights of the cozy New England homes. The pain which had resonated from his eyes echoed the struggle and want of the modern man, regardless of social status. Shelter, a good woman, and the buzz from a simple cigarette. Our lives had taken different paths, he tread the dirt with stained steel toes, while I lived in my New Balance sneakers. I had luxury, I had pleasure.

When we reminisce, we hide the pain. It is easier to remember, when you burry the hard times beneath the drifts of fresh powder. However, the crispy down will flake and melt away. Exposing insecurities, pain, obsessions, and regret.



# CONDEMNED





## RESURGE

when I began to forget, the first thing that went was skin and flesh  
but I didn't realize this until  
these bones were not my own

meanwhile, bones slowly return  
we overburden ourselves with this lounge light setting  
meanwhile, I get my bones back  
this time, fortified with vitamins and other virtues  
meanwhile, I regather my broken bones

ashes are a hard place to make your bed  
and an even harsher wellspring  
sometimes, even bones can't heal

so  
linger here while I tapestry my lifestyle  
nothing there but causes and lost distractions  
slightly dusted but never opened  
even plastic decays

with that in mind, I'll bust these rusted hinges  
and scatter a quart of old dust across the floor  
or what's left of that  
cause I'm all about tight scheduling  
and losing sleep all over again  
it opens up my ears  
hell, I'm all ears now  
so listen well  
cause I'm gonna say this once only  
and you gotta get some curve in your body

so strain against those bonds

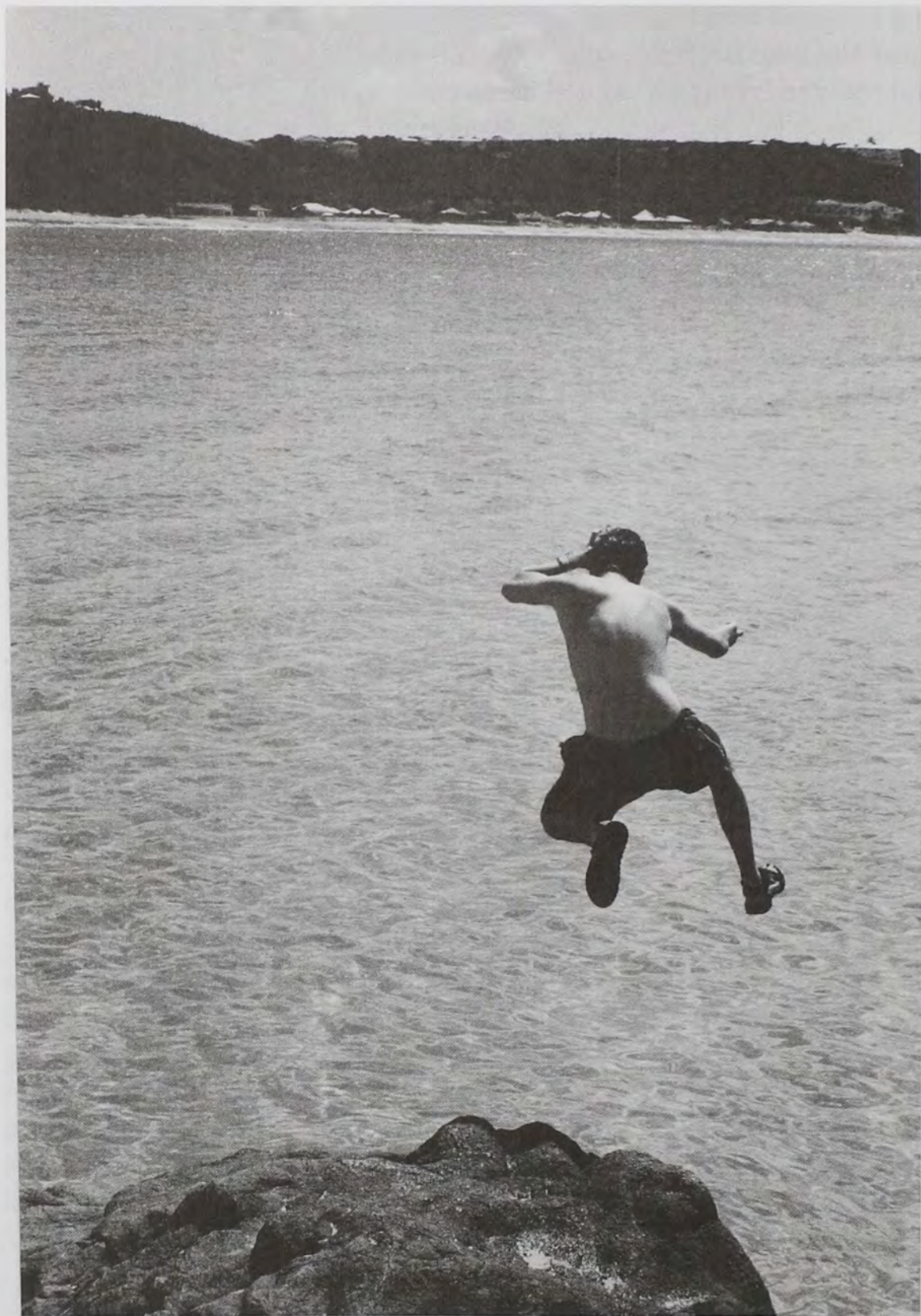
and strengthen in a matter of days  
are you listening?  
your virtuosity's not enough to pull outta expectations  
and my good form's on automatic  
cause I'm tired of all this solo  
and ready to lay my knives and harmonicas to rest

so I hope you've been born ready  
and know your stuff  
cause noone now's gonna knock sense into rhythm  
and if there's nobody but

well, that question's been asked



# JUMP





## LIFE-FILLED GHOST TOWN

The sun is setting over the mountain. The prism of cherry, orange, and lemon-yellow rays breaks through the rising darkness. In the dying ashes of Autumn then, heavy droplets hang in the air as you drive slowly on route 61 South. You approach a bend that is blocked by white and orange picket fences: Nothing to worry about, it is only a detour, you deduce. Up the mountain you drive until you can see far past the town of Ashland, Pennsylvania. Houses dot the mountainside with cars speeding back and forth through Ashland. As quickly as you feel on top of the world, a simple turn changes perceptions and perspectives. You, reader, have reached Centralia.

The sunset seems to be swallowed by patches of darkness on a blank canvas. One weather-beaten road is the one and only option for your car. Turnoffs are a turnoff when you see giant cracks and pot holes scarring the pavement. Other roads become dead ends with a wall of yellowing grass metastasizing on top of concrete. The only evidence of life is the foundations of homes and a cracked basketball court next to a broken swing. Only three houses are visible from the solitary road. You see smoke rising from the cracked pavement and barren hills. I'm sure you, dear reader, are wondering the story of this town. Why one road? Why uprooted cement? The shrewd raven who greets you on the leaning stop sign will not tell you. Reader if you are curious enough, keep driving. If not, please turn back and grab a roast beef sandwich at the May's Restaurant in Ashland.

It is a place that was once bustling with basketball courts, playgrounds, and 545 families and businesses. This was during 1962, the pinnacle of the town's life. 1962 was also the turning point that led to the eventual abandonment of this cozy town. 1962 was the beginning of the fire, the fire that is still burning.

The locals have many variations on the cause of the fire. Some locals like to say that a miner hit a spot underground causing the fire with the loss of many miners. That story is more grandiose for telling outsiders or little children. Children then do not like to go near the open or closed mine shafts that are scattered on the outskirts of the town. Others believe the government caused the fire. The entire evacuation



of Centralia is believed, by some locals, to be a conspiracy by the government to steal their land and take over the coal industry in the Northeast. Centralia is part of a large area of old mining towns. Under the towns there are various areas where miners would go and collect coal. So how did the fire truly start? The true story is so simple you would not really believe that it would cause the ruination of a bustling town. It all started with a garbage fire.

The fire began a little away from town when a local dumped and lit some garbage in an abandoned strip mine. The garbage was put out, but not before it ignited remnants of coal within the mine. People believed that since the garbage was put out, the fire was extinguished. For years the town was in blissful ignorance. Unfortunately the fire did not die, but flourished under the large vein of coal. The fire can not be extinguished now. Instead it could continue to burn for another century before it dies out. The end of this vein of coal is near Ashland, the place you were going to eat roast beef, about 4 miles away. Therefore, within the next century or so this devastation will spread to the town that you just visited. There will probably be no more rows of houses and strings of Christmas lights down the main strip, but empty foundations and cracked pavements.

Few families moved from Centralia when the fire began in 1962. Only a few families moved throughout the first two decades. It wasn't until the 1980's when the emergence of holes became prominent that the government started evacuating the town. The ground would steam with toxic gases that made the air almost unbearable. Still people protested against government evacuation. As typical rural mountain folk they were very private in their business with outsiders, especially urban government officials. They became suspicious as to what were the motives of the government to pay them to leave what had been their home for decades. The steaming pavement would burn locals during the winter, but still many remained for a while. But, the fire's voracious appetite was never satiated. Holes would emerge instantly when a dog or a person would be stepping by. At any moment people could fall into a hole where toxic gases would kill them instantly. It was then that the people of Centralia knew it was no longer secure in their little hide-away on the mountain. It was time to move.

The life-blood of Centralia was seeping away slowly, hole by hole. Gases would rise through cracks in the pavement and through the remains of grass. Columns of smoke and fog grew in number to remind



the residents of Centralia that their home was theirs no longer. This ambiguous presence settled over the town in a milky-gray mass. The garbage incident was forgotten because the fire had taken on a life of its own. Centralia's activity and prosperity was flourishing in the 1960's with over 1100 people. By 1997, only 44 people remained in Centralia and it was still depleting. Rumors say that now only six people remain; others say two. The younger generations in the surrounding areas make up ghost stories about the remaining people, or protestors as the locals call them. Maybe the toxic fumes genetically altered their DNA so they need to remain in the town, some speculate; carbon monoxide is their equivalent to oxygen. In fact, the protestors are the older generation that believe in the government conspiracy so they would sooner die in a hole than give 'the man' what he wants.

The fascination with Centralia is fueled by the surrounding areas. Friends dare each other to go up to the Eastern Orthodox Church on the Northwest corner at the top of the hillside town. The blue dome of the church is like the star on the top of a burnt Christmas tree. It glows in the setting sun amidst the smoke. Another more common dare is to walk in the fenced cemetery on the border at either night or Halloween. The cemetery is immune to the rising toxins; it seems that the fire has passed the cemetery or (more than likely) has not reached the fences yet. Clouds surround the tombstones, protected by mesh gates in a futile attempt to stop the amorphous spirit. No one really attempts to go there at night. Possibly Halloween excursions are attempted, except for the threat of holes appearing as if by magic to swallow up the trespassers to appease its appetite. The raven flies to the lone telephone pole as the sun surrenders to a starless night, looking down the car-less road; he is a sentry of the doors of a crumbling town.

Although an eerie feeling settles on passersby, the town still has some heart left. Autumn takes its last breath when the heavy droplets fall in puffs of snow. You drive slowly down the road, passing the raven's intelligent stare. You expect a blank canvas, devoid of laughter and sunshine. The leaning stop sign greets you and as you pause, you see something on the corner. The local Speed Spot, a former biker's shop, is no longer there. It burned down a few years ago. The only thing left is a forest green bench, the paint scratched away in various places with bold lettering "CENTRALIA." Three feet from the bench stands Centralia's last piece of life. A small nativity set is glowing in the darkness. Fluorescent lights spell out "Merry Christmas" behind a



sparkling gold star. The frozen faces of the Virgin Mother and her newborn stand true and honest. The nativity scene is set each year by the protestors to give the locals as well as outsiders a message. It says, "We're still here."

## FRUSTRATIONS

I.

Jittery chocolatier  
finds the paint  
of paradise on her lips,  
the tree to shade her gardens.  
But finds she cannot  
sell the stuff  
only allow the temptress  
her work, her nature  
and love expressed.  
She sips the paint  
colored of earth.  
Waits for curious kisses.

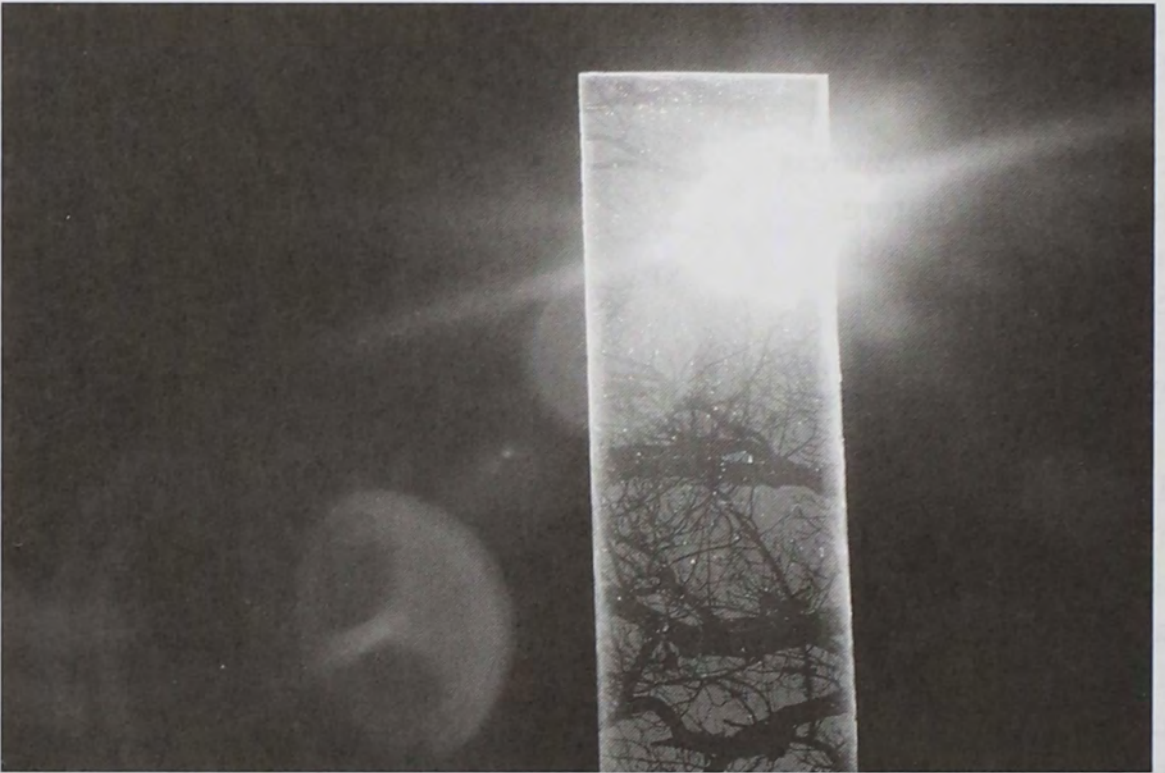
II.

I will bite you like an apple  
anchor teeth in firm flesh  
and let the bottoms follow through.  
I know what piece  
of you I want and how  
to avoid the sour spots.

You should be so lucky  
that I'd leave only the core.  
Releasing fruit in small  
landslides into my mouth,  
your regrowth will be  
so much faster  
without this shield  
I so recently  
devoured.



# ILLUMINATIONS I



## YOUR BODY'S WEIGHT IN WATER FOR YOUR SOUL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Several cases have been documented in which patients in psychiatric wards describe a similar experience after having been institutionalized. All claim to have been in a desert, endless in expanse, and to suddenly have been without memories of the past, and of the outside world. Yet, even without memories, they all agree that they sought to escape the desert, to a world which they were sure lay beyond it: a feat which, oddly enough, they all also agree was impossible.

When this obvious internal contradiction was pointed out to them, a few seemed slightly anxious, though in the end they all maintained their conviction: they managed to exit the desert which was endless in expanse. Several pointed out that the question was unnecessary: they held that had they not exited the desert, they would not exist, and thus would not be answering the questions. Even when compiled data was brought to them which proved the impossibility of a desert infinite in size, they nodded, agreed with the data, but nevertheless did not change their minds.

The intriguing thing was that, though there were minor discrepancies in their stories about what happened after they exited the desert, they all had something in common: every single one of them said that the only way to leave this desert was to make a pact, and it must be with one of the five 'True Families'.

Also common to all the patients was that when the subject of interrogation came to the Families, especially the Family which each person had talked to personally, they immediately became reluctant to speak.

Almost as if it was something to be ashamed of.

*There is a desert  
Which separates life from death  
A desert without beginning  
And without end.  
The desert at the end of the world  
And at the end of despair  
Sought out, then left behind.*



-Excerpt from a ballad written by an anonymous composer in the 5th generation of the Noshin colony. The piece, titled *Es*, was written in a form of Ronki ballad, normally comprising 62 stanzas. All but this one have been lost.

A nameless man walked down a nameless path in some nameless desert on some nameless world now long forgotten to humanity. How he had got there, he did not know, as he did not know where he was going or how to get out. The sun, as it is in the hot, sandy type of desert, was hot indeed, and the nameless man mopped his brow and retied the piece of fabric he had wrapped around his temple. He would sleep during the day, and travel at night, as one should in the desert, but since he did not know how to navigate by stars, and since one is easily drawn off one's proper bearing in such a place lacking landmarks, he had no other choice but to use the sun. He would travel towards the sun until it was overhead, then he would travel away from the sun until he could no longer see it. In this way, he knew that at least he was not traveling in circles.

*Unless the sun is playing tricks on me, of course, the nameless man thought to himself, but if that were the case, the world would be mad, and I might as well just sit down on the side of the road and wait for Death to come walking by. He thought about that for a bit. Though it must be kind of hot, wearing all that black and all, in the desert. He laughed aloud.*

"Why, may I ask, are you interrupting the Silence?" a voice said from somewhere beside him. The nameless man turned, surprised, and there beside him on the path, which now seemed to even be a road, the ground baked and beaten, stood stopped a procession of carts and palanquins.

The one who had addressed him sat staring at him with blank eyes, still waiting for an answer.

A weak 'oh' was the only sound he could make in response. His mind, as if in shock, was amazed to see such a surely miraculous occurrence in front of him. And just when his water had run out and he was going to give up.

"I'm saved! Thank you! Thank you so much, I was about to die out here! I'll pay you anything once we get back, so don't worry about the bother I'll be."

"What are you talking about?" The one who addressed him said. "You are Arthur Alfred Nihil, are you not? Your father was one Johan Nihil?"



*Was my father named Johan? I do not remember. How can this be? Was my name Arthur? That sounds familiar, but it's the first name I've heard, so that may simply be my imagination. And outside the desert, before I got here, what was I doing? What is outside this desert anyways? I don't remember anything from before, or how I got here...*

"Y—yes, I am. But how did you know that? Were you sent to pick me up?"

"In a way, yes," the one in the cart said. "Tonight our main caravan shall pass by this road. You will talk to someone on it, and see what will happen. I warn you, though: we are not the only power operating in this place."

The procession began to move.

"Wait! I have questions for you! Please! Where in the world are we?"

"In the desert, of course."

"Yes but, which desert? Which con—"

*Which continent? How many continents were there anyway? What were the names of famous deserts in the world?* He was sure he knew these things, but not one would come to his mind as he tried to recall.

He looked up, and the procession was already ahead of him, and moving quickly out of his sight. He sighed, and sat down. If the caravan would come and pick him up, as that person had said, then he could just sit and wait.

But everything was strange. Surely he did not come to this desert of choice? Perhaps he was suffering from amnesia. Maybe his plane had crashed and he had been hit in the head and — yes, that must be it. He was suffering from amnesia. He tried to remember what he had read on the subject. Did amnesia go away by itself? Or was it incurable?

*Surely I cannot be cured out here though, he thought. So I must assume the best and try to get my memory back by myself. Then, let's start from what I know. Today I was walking. I remember stopping and resting last night, there was a slight incline and I remember waking up with my head hurting because I had slept with my head downhill. The day before that, more walking. And that night. And before that, more walking, and more desert. How long have I been out here? God, I'm so thirsty. I hate deserts.* He grasped his water canteen and moved to drink.

*The canteen, of course!* Surely the type or the make or something would give him some clue about where he came from. He looked down at it. Come to think of it, it was rather small. It couldn't have held more than two or so liters of water at it's fullest. How had he survived until now? He remembered drinking from it, but not how many times. But



assuming he drank a quarter of a liter a day, that would still only be eight days. Could he remember eight days ago? He slumped and thought hard.

Time passed and the sun moved overhead. The nameless man fell asleep in his desperation, after he could not remember beyond five days past. The cycles began to blend together, with no landmarks, and no occurrences. When the sun was almost touching the horizon, unnoticed by the nameless man who still lay dozing, a haze rose near him on the road, and several carts appeared, seeming to move out of the distance. These carts were different from those which had gone by before; they were carved and crafted in a different manner, though what it was could not easily be described. They drew to a halt near the man, who was still sleeping.

The sun crept slowly and unnoticeably towards its daily Death.

"Excuse me."

The nameless man woke with a start.

Two things stood before him, and there behind them on the road was another procession of carts. He looked over at the sun. So, he had fallen asleep. *Well, it was probably for the best,* he thought. *And besides, it all turns out the same.*

Are you the caravan that I was warned about earlier?"

The two creatures looked at one another.

"We may be," one of them said. "That will be up to you to decide, I suppose."

"Oh. Right then. He did say something about deciding. But really," he laughed awkwardly, "the choice is obvious, right?" They looked at him blankly, just as the other one had done, before. It scared him, a little.

"I want to go with you of course. To get out of this goddamned desert before I die."

"That," one of the creatures said,

"Is exactly what we wanted to hear." At this statement, several more creatures appeared out of nowhere.

*They surely came from behind the cart,* the nameless man convinced himself. *Surely.* He was silent as they moved to partially encircle him, the perfect shape ruined only by the fact that they seemed to refuse to stand on the sand off the road, and so directly behind him and for about a sixth of a circle on each side, the circle was lacking. This did not seem to phase the creatures, however. He unconsciously tried to move back, more off the path.

"Do not move while you stand on the pedestal."

"Pedestal...?" He began, then looked down, and indeed he was standing upon a pedestal. Around him was arrayed interior of the hugest building he had ever seen. He could barely make out the floor, which glowed white, and the walls he could see seemed to be at least a kilometer away, though it was hard to judge, as everything was made out of some clean, white, marble-like substance. The huge arched windows were evenly spaced along some walls, though whatever was on the other side of them gave no light, and so they were black. On the ceiling above him, in a scale he could not begin to comprehend, was carved and painted intricately some sort of design. Five circles arranged in a rough circle, each displaying different pictures and symbols which he could not decipher.

"Then, Arthur Alfred Nihil, we shall state the terms of our contract." He snapped back, and looking around he realized he was in the desert again.

"Oh yes, anything and I'll—"

"You stand under a circle of the five crests, on a pedestal by which your promises will become binding. You will not interrupt," said the one in front of him.

"Right. Yes, then, I'll just be quiet..." he trailed off.

"As per the laws set by the Pattern, our trade shall be as follows. In exchange for one's body's weight in water, we shall take any one thing from you. You will not be told what this thing is."

"Arthur Nihil, son of Johan Nihil son of Peter, descended from Adam, do you accept these terms?"

"Wait, you're not going to take me back with you?"

"Do you wish to go back with us? Where we are going, if you do, you shall surely die, or become something other than that which you are. I do not know what your goal is, but from my limited experience with your kind, these things both usually come unwelcome."

"I...don't understand. You are going to get me out of this desert, right?"

"If you follow this road in the direction which our procession is pointing, you will exit this desert just as your water is fully depleted. Though you must not be too greedy with the drink, or too sparing, but I'm sure you will judge correctly. In that way, yes, you will exit the desert. This is our contract, and these are the terms. Spoken at the moment of our creation, the words said deny us the power to alter the



terms in any way, or to state the compensation, justly taken. We are of the house Water, under the True Name Anachi, the fifth crest displayed in the Circle. Do you accept these terms?"

"Well, sure, but—"

"Then, in the name of our Sorrow, our compensation has been taken."

(AT LEAST) YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO  
WRITE ABOUT

You came like a flame from a crowd of familiar faces  
You completed me quickly, cleared a cavern in my heart, and  
You made yourself comfortable in an armchair in the corner.  
You dwelled deep dormant for a time that seemed to stretch,  
You lingered at least long enough for the tunnel to collapse,  
and then,

You, in an unexpected excavation, began picking your way out again  
you used sharp tools, previously only owned for my protection)  
and once

You had defeated my most needed organ,  
torn through my ribs and that last layer of skin —  
You wiped off my remnants and never looked back  
at the wound in my chest where you had once been.



## LAURA, ON HAPPINESS

### A Monologue

I'm fine. I guess I've just been thinking. *[pause]* I really think it's important to not underestimate *anyone*. Like, the whole thing with Tommy—he's really actually smart and creative and motivated, but he's, like, a drunken, messy slob most of the time, you know? No! Not like in a bad way or anything. Well, not in a bad way until last night. Cause, for real. Just look at all of my friends. We're all fuckin' mutants. We're all *real* weird. Like, Benny knows every line to every movie that I could ever think of, Tommy's creepy...with all the languages he knows how to speak, Bobby ...Bobby is just... out there *[laughs]*, and I play the fucking cello and ride horses. And I know that these are all good things or whatever, well, except for maybe Bobby *[rolls eyes]* but they're pretty fucking useless things, and bizarre things, so therefore they're mutant things. And I like to play in the dirt with flowers. That's not cool! Like, I'm seriously a *weirdo*. Well, I guess that's because I live here. It's nice and all—that's funny, it *is* so nice, and this still happened to me. But I'm thankful for what I have and that I get to ride horses and that I can own a cello, shit, I could own 8 cellos and 8 horses if I wanted to, and I'm thankful that I'm not in some shithole where I gotta fight for my life every night or where I gotta worry about getting ra... well...you know. *[pause]* I'm grateful for it—but this *bullshit* lifestyle is not for me. I love my parents but I can not do what they do everyday and be happy. You know, I think, I thought, that life is beautiful and amazing and wonderful and a gift even despite the country club bull shit—which fork to use and who *[beat]* fucked who. *[pause]* I just want to be happy, and make others happy, and how could he do that to me? I know that he can get really drunk, and sometimes be an asshole, but I never thought... I mean, we're all just buddies—I'm one of the guys. I've known these dudes for 15 years—my whole life—and now? I don't know how I could ever look at Tommy again—I don't know how we'd ever be the same—the four of us. If Bobby and Benny find out... they'll kill him, I think. Then again, I don't know that they'd even care, maybe they'd pat him on the back, 'cause I feel like I don't know anything anymore. Never in my life could I have imagined the things he

said to me, how he touched me... what he did to me... the things he made *me* do. I can't... I just can't believe it. It's so fucked up. My world is upside down now. Maybe he thought we had a good time. I don't know—I don't want to ask him, I don't want to find out. I don't know what to do now, where my life is going. I want to believe that life is beautiful again. I just... I'll think about which fork to use if I could just get him out of my mind. All I can see is his face in mine, his hand in between my thighs, all I can smell is his whiskey breath...hear his whispers, my shirt ripping, my whimpers. Oh my God oh my God oh my God it can't be positive. It can't. I just want to be happy.



## THE FUN OF GIVING INTERACTIVE HISTORY LECTURES AS A SUMMER JOB

Now, listen close—there's much to show and teach,  
And only just one hour. Stay back, don't touch,  
And keep it down, or else you'll never know  
How Harold lost the war to Willie C,  
Or Urban claimed that crossbows'd end all war.  
But first you've got to learn our favorite phrase—  
Repeat: better weapons, better armour.

There are many different kinds of swords:  
The arming sword—a small sidearm for knights—  
The Rhineland's *grosser messer*, France's *flamberge*,  
The rapier, épée, foil, holy cruciform.  
Repeat: better weapons, better armour.

Leather armour. It's very cheap, but then  
Not great at saving lives, at least in times  
Of iron swords, spears, and arrows. They learned  
To forge and weld and dish and rivet plates—  
Fluting makes it stronger, see? It bears  
My weight in full, won't crack or bend when struck.  
The French say *cap-à-pie* for head to foot—  
The knight is practically impervious,  
So now: better armour, better weapons!

See how my partner's armet keeps his head  
From turning jelly as I beat upon  
his brow? Don't laugh...it's really not a joke...

Smash or crash, bust and break their joints  
With hammer, flangèd mace or falchion—  
New trick to throw at them: the poleax, halberd,  
Bill-hooked staves to drag knights from their handsome  
Mounts. When on the ground they'll pull out knives  
And cry for mercy, please, and end their lives—

A dagger in their brains. That's it, no pain.

Did I go a bit too far? That's kind  
Of gross, I know, but that's how it was done.

Pikewalls killed a lot of charging steeds,  
(you see, there was no ASPCA)  
Crusaders died of dehydration. Death  
Came slow and painfully and all alone.  
The arquebus, made late and shoddy,  
Killed graying knights and many riflemen.

That's right; it blew up in their faces half  
The time. Blew them right to smithereens.

Well, boys and girls, that's it for now; we're out  
Of time, but please approach to hold a sword  
Or feel how heavy chainmaille really is.  
Don't mind the blood and rusty bits. Bring home  
Your newfound knowledge, too.

Always remember,

War is very bad, but awful fun.



# ASCEND





## A STORY THAT'S 10 PERCENT TRUE

For christopher, caitie, and katie  
Written with regular reference to you  
By a romantic old lady

Once, way back when the world was fresh and had lived for only a while, parrots and pandas and monkeys and moose lived much in a human-like style. They had huts, high hotels; they had bungalows, boats; pink pueblos, palaces, inns on the coast; loft houses, long houses, tree houses, tents; houses with diamonds and houses with dents. But this tale is no legend of gatehouse or grange; it's the straightforward story of Samuel S. Strange. Some called him Sammy or just simply Sam, this mythical he-mole who lived like a man.

Sam stayed in a basement, a singular cellar with peas, a piano, and an airplane propeller. With cookbooks and care Sam could fix a fair feast: peas fry and freeze pie and bread without yeast; waffles wasabi and cherries with cheese, Sam could attempt tricky treats such as these. The piano, placed close to windy wood stair, tinkled as low and as light as the air. Propellers achieve no such actual chore, so Sam allowed his to adorn the front door.

Over Sam's house lay a handsome hay hut inhabited by a most miserable mutt. Patti, they called her, and she liked to growl, to grumble and grunt and to holler and howl. Her bow-wows! and bark-bark-barks! baffled our mole, who much preferred hushed, peaceful, hollowed-out holes. She belted her bell and she blasted her bottles, her kettle would cry with the force of full throttles. Samuel sometimes would sulk, scowl, and brood on how handsome, nice neighbors raise rackets so rude. But sometimes our Sammy would soften her screams with delicate, dizzying, dancing day dreams: of having a heartening hand he could hold and with faithful embraces a friend to enfold.

Patti (Patricia or Pat, as you please), amid all her hubbub discerned by degrees that she suffered from solitude same as our mole, but both figured friendship a futile, grand goal. Patti thought Sam wanted waffles for one and Sam far from fancied Pat's fidgety fun.

Then, one especially ear-splitting day, Sam sat at his piano and started



to play. Sick of her yelling and sick of her moans, Sam mostly felt tired of sitting alone. Clanging and clacking the keys in their course, Sammy tried to surpass the dog's din with his force. Suddenly Pat's strident soundings just ceased as Sammy's incredible anthem increased. Halting his hands just a hint, Sammy dared to see who was squeaking the steps of his stairs. Once Samuel stopped, Patti bellowed below,

"Keep on playing, please, Sam, the best pianist I know!" Sam smiled and said,

"Oh, you'll puff me up, Pat, but I don't deserve so much praise as all that."

"What's that?!" she requested, "Repeat that again! Did you say you're in desperate need of a pen?! Forget it! Keep playing! I am mad for this piece!" Sam shouted back,

"Then I'll play without cease!"

Sam wondered why, through Pat's thunderous cheering, he'd only now noticed she's so hard of hearing! No *wonder* Pat made such an uproar upstairs; her rumpus and ruckus was made unawares!

They after that day did devise a routine filled with concerts, adventure, and artsy cuisine. Sammy convinced her a vet could help out and (a hearing-aid later) had no need to shout. They'd read and they'd run and they'd sing and they'd sup, this most marvelous mole and this pleasantest pup. They cherished their treasure: a foil and a friend to love and to listen to until

THE END.

So now you know if you feel friendless one day, a caring companion's not too far away. Know that it doesn't take much on your part to carve out a niche in another one's heart. Be brave and reach out today, try something new; someone is waiting and wishing for you.

## EXIGENCE

If I could persuade you  
To persuade me  
Then maybe we'd be getting somewhere.

From where I sit, though,  
We're covered in pervading dust  
Settled from Sixteenth Century bypasses,  
Byways,  
Short-cut-secrets.

"Talk, talk, talk  
to me."

You barely opened your mouth,  
Oil will fix that creak  
(nothing will fix that creak).

"Talk, talk, talk  
to me. I like  
seeing your lips  
move."

I envision you more like  
A broken carapace, I  
Wanted to say.

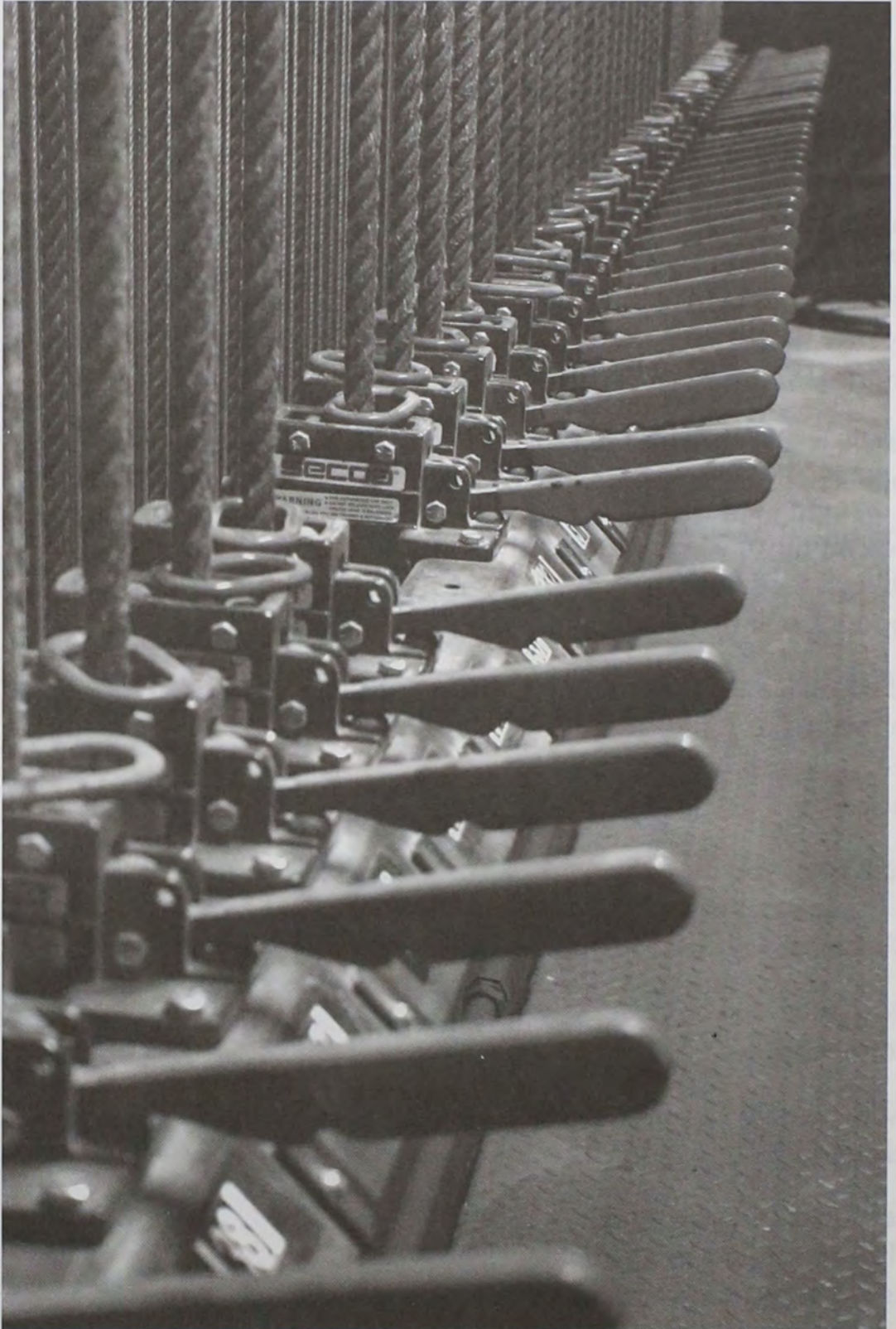
Disjointed, but  
Connected.

"What would I even  
talk about?"

Response versus gravity,  
I let the sound carry its own weight  
As the glass moon turned  
Bright red and drowned.



# BACKSTAGE



## INTEGRATION / ASSIMILATION

**Y**ellow rice, green olives, red beans. Fifteen years later the taste still haunts me. Just a little spicy, and so reminiscent of our culture. Far more flavor than macaroni and cheese.

Most girls our age idolized Barbie or Madonna. Michael Jordan, he was ours.

“Don’t trust a Puerto Rican man,” Elaina’s mother, Tracy, told me while her eyes rolled to the back of her head. She was just bitter. Her first husband had left her with two children, bad credit, and no money.

As a kid living in the suburbs you had to be creative to avoid the boredom. This week we would dedicate ourselves to becoming rappers. Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre were too violent for us; too removed from the safety we felt in our neighborhood. Instead, we chose TLC. Without the slightest clue of what T-Boz, Left-Eye, and Chili weren’t to proud to beg for, we danced for the neighborhood on the stoop. Boom box blaring, parents dismayed.

“No, move your hips like this, Katie!” Elaina swayed her hips in a pattern that followed her feet. I woke up in the middle of the night and practiced in the dark.

We had been planning this party ever since I learned to Salsa. Elaina could entice all the cutest Puerto Rican boys to come. I sat on the balcony alone while boys from the neighborhood twirled her around broken glass and forgotten toys.

If there was ever a day off from school Elaina ran to the basketball courts down the street. She would strut around the teenage boys in clothes her mother bought her, but that she had modified with scissors and safety pins. A hole here, and tear there. Whatever would get the boys to miss a jump shot.



Another eviction notice drew attention to my front door. But when I walked to the back of the complex, I wasn't alone.

Their wedding was traditional. White woman in a white dress. Black man in a black tux. He would be Elaina's second father. "Maybe I can have one of every color," she said.

Orangina and fried chicken in Trenton at Chuck's.

When I woke up, Uncle Pablo was eating pancakes at the dining room table. Mom was in her bathrobe. I always wanted Uncle Pablo to be my Dad. But my mother wasn't willing to wear a diamond for a Green Card.

A girl from the next building over ran up to Elaina, braids bouncing. "You guys have to come to N-14 now! Keisha found her Dad's porno movies!"

Integration

My mother tried to incorporate Elaina into my Girl Scout troop. Most of the girls were from the other side of Hightstown. They didn't understand her; her dialect of Puerto Rican and black slang mixed together, her defiance, and the way she used her hips to make a path across the room. Now Elaina knew I could assimilate.

One dollar would be enough for both of us to get a Coke, one Now-And-Later, and three Reese's Cups at Krauser's.

Tracy was dating a lifeguard from Ewing. One day in August, we drove for hours to go swim at the private community pool where he worked. There was never money for us to get monthly passes to the local public pool where all the rich white kids swam. On our way to the duck park we hissed at their 8 ft. deep, concrete pool. If it weren't for Tracy's selective dating, we would be out back with a hose.

"They want Katie to skip to the second grade, ya know." I lowered my head and shifted my eyes. Elaina couldn't be me. I knew she would be punished for it later.

In the school yard, Elaina didn't know me. At school she was the Latin Temptress that the boys flocked to. I often ate lunch alone only to spend recess watching my classmates play from the bleachers.

My apartment became a home for strays. Lost kittens. Lost souls. Laura came looking for shelter. Long thick curls graced her shoulders. She looked, and sang, like Mariah Carey. Her boyfriend washed dishes in his spare time when he wasn't beating her.

Elaina briefly introduces me to Carrie before we head to a party in D12. Five minutes after Elaina leads us up the smoke filled stairway, Carrie's orange hair disappears behind a Mexican's bedroom door. She lost her innocence at 12, with Elaina's blessing.

One short. One with a rat tail. One ugly. One blonde. One tall. We were sure it was the New Kids On The Block. NKOTB! Renting an apartment in our complex! We knocked and hid in the bushes. Jordan Knight came to the door. But when he turned around we saw he was lacking his signature rat tail. Another dream spoiled.

Sundays meant one thing; karate in the old laundry room of F building. No one from the neighborhood could afford real karate lessons, so a man from B building shared his expertise with us. I sat there amazed at how high the boys from the neighborhood could kick. On Monday, the same boys would practice in the streets.

The weight of Social Studies and Grammar textbooks came down with a thud on my back before the bus could come to a complete stop. My mother never picked me up at the bus stop. Thank God, that day she was there. Parents weren't allowed on the bus, the driver yelled. But my mother wasn't going to watch this bully push me back into the green plastic seats for another round. She pushed past the apathetic bus driver and put the fear into the girl towering over me.

Buildings A through D didn't interest me. Mostly white families. E to G housed the Asians who rarely had children for me to play with. The black kids who lived in H through K usually made fun of me. I found a home in K to N. Mostly Puerto Rican. A secret pathway behind buildings A through M led to the back of the apartment



complex where Elaina lived.

Melvin came over to play school. But we played doctor.

The YMCA took care of me after school in first grade. There were poison honeysuckles out back; far from where the popular kids staged their mock weddings. No one wanted to marry me, so I spent my time with the honeysuckles.

The Ice Cream Man always came by my apartment. But when I spent my summer afternoons in the back of the complex, I never heard his tune.

Her leg was propped up on the bathroom sink, foam everywhere. "Come on your mom will never find out. The boys really like it when your legs are silky." My mother wanted me to have a childhood. Elaina's mom wanted her to drive the boys wild.

## WHITE WATER

I would like  
To sip tea  
In the grey light  
Of morning  
With you

Up to our toes in sea  
Perfection lapping  
Memory lapsing  
An ocean of time  
Desires, eye fires

I am unable  
To be profoundly  
Aware this time  
An icy breeze  
Blows over

As I awaken from  
Dangerous dreams  
Of doubt  
What do I wish  
Of this tarnished time

It is you  
An emergence of new  
Souls, growing  
Undiscovered not unknown  
Tell me truths

Bloodshed from  
Broken shells



On the shore  
Of the hearts  
Who shattered here

Do you have a doorstep  
Where my dreams  
Will lead me?  
Oceanfront porch of ours  
Nevermore.

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Rachel Bower** is a Senior English Major Creative Writing Minor who has a weakness for Italian peaches.

**Andy Brienza** would like to semi-thank, but mostly condemn his roommate for surreptitiously submitting entries from his totally embarrassing SUPER SECRET JOURNAL as a joke.

**Brett Celinski** was shattered betwixt the roaring rivers of bullshit and decay and emerged as greater a centaur than Nessus himself!

**Brenden Connor** really wants a Philly cheese-stake because it is 1:52am right now and he is hungry.

**Chris Curley** enjoys the alliteration of his name, the way it rolls off the tongue, and how a big 'C' and a lowercase 'c' look next to each other (C.c.). He agrees with Oscar Wilde that "a grand passion is the privilege of someone with nothing to do," and prefers to keep his no bigger than a size 12.

**Rachel Jessica Daniel** is a young writer who wants to have the courage of Elaine Brown, the fury of Angela Davis, the intelligence of bell hooks, the practicality and scholarship of Patricia Hill Collins, and above all, the love of God.

Once **Nathan Dawley** was a world-renowned bio-chemist, dying of an unknown blood disease – and desperately searching for a CURE. He found that cure – but, in turn, it afflicted him with a CURSE far worse than any possible disease; the curse of the blood-sucking night-beast; the curse of...THE LIVING VAMPIRE!

**Greg Diamond** wishes to inform you that it costs much less to park illegally on Collegetown roads than it does on the Ursinus campus.

**Katy Diana** would like to thank everyone that has compared her to ripe



mangoes. She's graduating (!!!) and looking forward to an exciting, treeless life in Philadelphia where she'll keep orchids in the window and dream about Thailand.

**Julie Gentile**, a senior English major, is some kind of high powered mutant never even considered for mass production. Too weird to live, and too rare to die.

Student **Ashley Higgins** is blind, but her other four senses function with superhuman sharpness and a radar sense. With amazing fighting skills, she stalks the streets at night, a relentless avenger of justice!

**Katherine Jones** is a senior who will be entering graduate school at New York University for Global Affairs. She hopes that the sights and sounds of New York City will provide her with countless afternoons of inspiration while sipping a Mocha Latte in Central Park. After graduate school, she plans to enter the Peace Corps and write a full-length memoir while in Africa.

**Georgia Julius** gets a kick out of seeing her name in print. Georgia Julius. Georgia. Julius.

**Erica Kaminski** won the Xbox 360. HAHAH It's amazing! I did last night at the ball for a door prize! I am so excited!

**Maureen McCarthy** is a lonely young American abroad who is looking forward to a visit from one of her all-time-hands-down-favorite people ever.

**Ivy McDaniels** is a Sophomore English major who has a fish named Vidalia that she loves very much. She also likes sunsets (and wishes she could quit you Trevor Strunk!)

**Jen Mingoello** loves chocolate soft serve ice cream with rainbow sprinkles.

From the secrecy of lonely Wildwood Cemetery comes the greatest crimefighter of them all, to aid the weak and oppressed – **Heather Morris!**

**Ian O'Neill** just doesn't care.

**Phil Repko** is the reason that most women are pro-choice.

**Pat Roesle** is the god of hellfire, and he brings you--

**Natalie Rokaski** thinks that pain is nothing but a four-letter word.

**Dan Sergeant** delivered a deft kick to my stomach. Leaning over my shattered frame with a wild-eyed grin, he said, "Now, you're gonna tell the people at home that I'm a sophomore English Major from New Jersey who knows NOTHING about the Heidelberg Experiments." He then spat in my face as I blacked out.

**Bradley Smith** is a cleverly arranged lump of proteins and nucleotides designed to look like a real boy.

**Rori Smith** is a senior at Perkiomen Valley High School. She studies English at Ursinus as part of the Special Student program.

**Joshua Solomon** is preparing to climb Mt. Fuji.

**Trevor Strunk** is convinced that robots are secretly living amongst us. And he is okay with this.

**Danielle Tatsuno** has dedicated her strange gift of speed to bringing justice into a crime ridden world, aiding the forces of law and order against all crime and ruthlessness!

**Domenic Terpolilli** is a Senior History Major who wants to name his first child "Iron Hand" Terpolilli. Thanks to my friends and The Lantern for being an awesome literary magazine.

**Richard "73h j0k3|2" Veale** is a Computer Science & Philosophy double major who thinks Helen Keller is a brand of cereal and that Paul McCartney and John Lennon are historical figures from the Cold War. Once, he was electrocuted by his refrigerator, a fearful experience which changed his perspective on, well, pretty much everything.



During a routine mining expedition, **Christopher Wierzbowski** was bathed in the light from the Gem of Cyttorak, turning him into an unstoppable force - a Juggernaut!

**Tori Wynne** commissioned this bio from a guy who she has helped in the past. It is meant to be as flattering as possible – she is *great*.

**Klaus Yoder** is humbly grateful for all the Ursinus people. He looks forward to hot summer nights in Brooklyn with Nymphy.

**H. Ziskind** is a freshman poet and prose-writer, not a lowercase, is not followed by punctuation, and his head is completely engulfed in fire.

Ursinus College Literary Magazine  
<http://webpages.ursinus.edu/lantern>