

IN-SCAPE (N.)

The essential, distinctive, and
revolutionary quality of a thing:
“Here is the inscape, the epiphany,
the moment of truth.”

-Madison Smartt Bell



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Julie Robinson
Beautiful Love
Gelatin Silver Print
First Place Award



Julie Robinson
Home
Gelatin Silver Print

POETRY

Sara Dalise Blackburn

Oracles of Light

A caveat of mockingbirds,
Preach apocalyptic
 (Oracles of the light)
They are the midnight dancers
They are the three-fourths cry
Waltz a little closer
See the sounds grow quiet

The birds chant on
To the morphine dreams
He cannot live a lie
The world keeps spinning
Hearts keep skipping
An arrhythmia to life

Morning dew on church steeples
Empty pews inside
The mockingbird warns
Deaf ears don't reply
Gather 'round the graveyard
Down on bended knees
The world.
Stopped.
Spinning.

Sara Dalise Blackburn

Paramour

The depths outline the dark figures,
They swan gently over untouched surfaces,
Sanding down every groove,
Casting flat glances at passing passionates.
Wanting to grasp at an excuse when
Showered love met unrequited.
Emotions ride crests of complex waves,
Hitting the shore with forced feeling,
Breaking the shells the shadows tread upon,
Shallow water to drown the fervor.
Love, I promise this won't last forever.

Sara Dalise Blackburn

The Ghost-Man and Her

You're the card up a magician's sleeve
I am art on a canvas for everyone to see
The hat trick gone bad
A master's fake
A caricature of smiles
A waiting rooms pace

Silent screams breaking the night
Hushed sounds penetrating the quiet
I'm poised
You're passionate
We're nicotine for an addict
The last drag of a cigarette

We're coffee veins
Late night lovers

I am a pinstriped jacket, never worn
You are an old t-shirt, faded and torn
A backless black dress
A tuxedo for hire
In a closet of truth, we're bated with desire

You are the prayers
I'm the Sunday saint
We are the fire
The ice
The inevitable break

I'm the night the sun left the moon
You are the patient lying in the next room
We are the ones who were gone too soon.

Rebecca Chaney *A Walk Along the Creek*

Walking our healthy 2.8 miles
has become pleasure more than duty.
I enjoy Knoxville's many greenways,
but have settled on one thus far
as a favorite.

I read a review after several visits,
and saw it described as "creepy";
however, I have never found it so –
perhaps because my faithful
Pit Bull, Roxie, treks alongside,
but there has never been a sense
of foreboding there for me.

I am not immune to sensing
an ominous presence –
real or imagined –
and Roxie, much more attuned
than I in such matters,
reinforces a sharing of our path
from time to time.

This morning, I looked up
and saw the most vibrant,
glossy leaves of a magnolia
standing squarely and mysteriously
amid January's brown
hickories, ash, and shrubs
whose blooms have not opened
their name to me.

The blue above fit neatly
between winter's spindly fingers,
and remains to me since childhood
the purest the sky has to offer –
not tainted with indiscriminate dissonance
of that which surrounds.

At least once on our meander,
I wave to the faceless engineer
of the Norfolk Southern,
and listen to its steady insistence.
It reminds me of my father's
labor as yardmaster
for the Pennsylvania line,
and his powerful and gentle
nature urging me on to the right path.
It is ironic, in fact, that the train
at this point divides the two Eggs
of Fitzgerald's island.

The reviewer wrote of isolation
and fear for a lone female jogger,
but except for the overrunning
of Saturday's crowds,
I listen for the comforting breaks
in solitude as joggers, new moms
with cozies, and men with canes
pass into their own reflection
on the weekday route.

Rebecca Chaney
Krispy Kreme Girl

Young woman,
bright green
gloves,
picks through
the box.
Delicate
lady fingers
grab
at each
confection.
Yeast sinks
between
the teeth.
Sugar
flies
and lands
amongst
the pages.
The Portrait
of
a Lady
in hand.
Chubby
fingers
balance
the yellowed
and frayed
story –
line for line
she bites
into each
with
delectable
pleasure.
Unapologetic
and completely
sated.

Ashe Chapman

10-Point Buck

It's an empty feeling,
But not really, because it fills the
Hollow space inside your chest
With a heavy, aching pressure.
Like seeing a mounted deer head
Staring down at you from the wall
Of a restaurant.
Knowing that the sight of it isn't
Satisfying, the meat was.
It's a cold, distant, vacant star
Shining dimly in the daylight
For hours and days and years and
Millenniums.
You've felt it for a while now, but you
Don't know why or how or if it will
Ever disappear or if that hole inside
Your chest will ever be filled by
Something that doesn't leave you
Gasping for breath
Or
Crying on your bathroom floor.
You want to get to the meat of things?
Then you have to be the one holding
The gun.



Gilbert Sutherland

Left Arm

Relief Print

Second Place Award



Gilbert Sutherland
Right Arm
Relief Print

Ashe Chapman
Screw You, 144,000

Exaltation and the blood's
Rushing to my head
Fairy dust and I'm
High and mighty
Manifest my own destiny
Carve it out of the universe's soul
With a chainsaw
No more waiting around
Grasping at "what if" and
"Maybe someday"
Someday is today
And my eyes are wide
Open and shut
No more questions
Evidence points to a
Guilty verdict
And the sentence is
Death to the inquiries
And the "you'll never be anything's."
It's my future now
And I shine brighter than
A forest fire at noon.
Burning eternity
Never to be extinguished.

Ashe Chapman

Sunder

Ten thousand miles and I'm still not far enough
Running through heart attacks like I was born for it
Dropping words and lines and everything to just get there
To get to the end
Finish what I started, or was it what I hadn't even begun?
Stepping through the mesa, and tripping up mountains
My feet just can't carry me far enough
And it's all so wrong
I never should have let you go
Now I'm grasping at cirrus' that flow like your hair used to
Praying that the next time I fall
The dirt will feel like your skin instead
I see your face in passing seasons
And your voice carries towards me on breezes
Sifting through leaves like a phantom
And it seems like I'll never be far enough
Past mistakes make terrible bedfellows
And when I wake up it's with your name on my lips
And the smell of vanilla and sandalwood hanging around my neck
Like a noose
Chances fell like rain, but I was so far into the desert
I remained parched
I'd tear down mountains for you
Rip apart seas and sunder the skies
Just to feel your fingers skim lightning into my skin
But it's just not enough, 'cause it's gone too far.



Kirstin Hardin
Strokes of a Genius
Digital
Third Place Award

Melissa Dawn Conn

Existing

I love her guffaw and
The snorting that follows
I love breathing the same smoky air that he breathes –
The putrid smell that forces smiles to break loose
It takes me back to off white walls
Cluttered posters
Claw marks
Chipped paint wedged between freshly-painted nails
Last minute paper revisions at five in the morning
Trips to get coffee an hour later
I miss them so
I miss his wisdom
I miss being between them on our big leather couch
The movie's words being drowned out by her laughter
The plot exposed by his movie expertise
I miss getting our first tattoos on that chilly Sunday evening
I miss her Catholic school stories
Her tales of mischief and sin
I miss his blue-gray eyes and calloused hands
I miss existing

Melissa Dawn Conn

Jocelynn

He says he doesn't want pot in his home.
I'm very good at baking.
He hates my small tits, he says.
I'm happy he pays rent.
He loves me, he says.
My co-workers say I'm lazy.
Faking kindness is enough of a job.
Do the holes in my ears
And the sleeves of ink on my skin say just how hard I work?
The ink on the pink slip

On my desk
Says a lot.
What will he say
when I come home with a pink slip in my hand?
What will HE say –
What will SHE say –
What will THEY say –
What will Jocelynn say...
Yeah. “Joceylnn says ...”

Melissa Dawn Conn
Peppered Snow and Homeless Folk

A math test killed him
Framed on his gat dang tombstone
It was lost and he was lost
The search party had balloons and streamers
Entire stories could be written about them, but thank goodness we don't.
Entire stories hidden in one sentence
One smirk
One blink
But thank goodness we don't write them
What do writers write about, then?
Peppered snow and homeless folk
Velvet words draped in blood and bones
Book spines dripping Times New Roman
My hand is swollen
Is that where all the words are trapped?
I love to hear my words spoken by others mouths.

Dallas Cox

Life After Love

Step 1: Become

See him sitting with that girl you talk to in 7th grade algebra
and when she says “hi” she steps aside and he says
“hello,” for the first time.

Step 2: Decide

You don't know if you both love the same
things because
you both hate the same things and that's
enough
to decide you should probably “go out.”
Drop hints and tell your friends to tell him
to ask you out
only if he wants to.
Check yes.

At the end of that year he signs your yearbook with
“you're the best girlfriend ever!”
and you'll never forget that.

Step 3: Break

Let other people tempt you too close,
get caught up in the blonde hair,
the blue eyes, the others.

Bounce back and forth and wonder
if you're ready to break this bond.
Choose poorly.

Step 4: Replace

Start college with someone else
and replace him for someone new
for someone new
someone new.
And never feel like you're being honest
with yourself.

Step 5: Understand

Try to reconcile
feel the same as always
uncomfortably familiar.

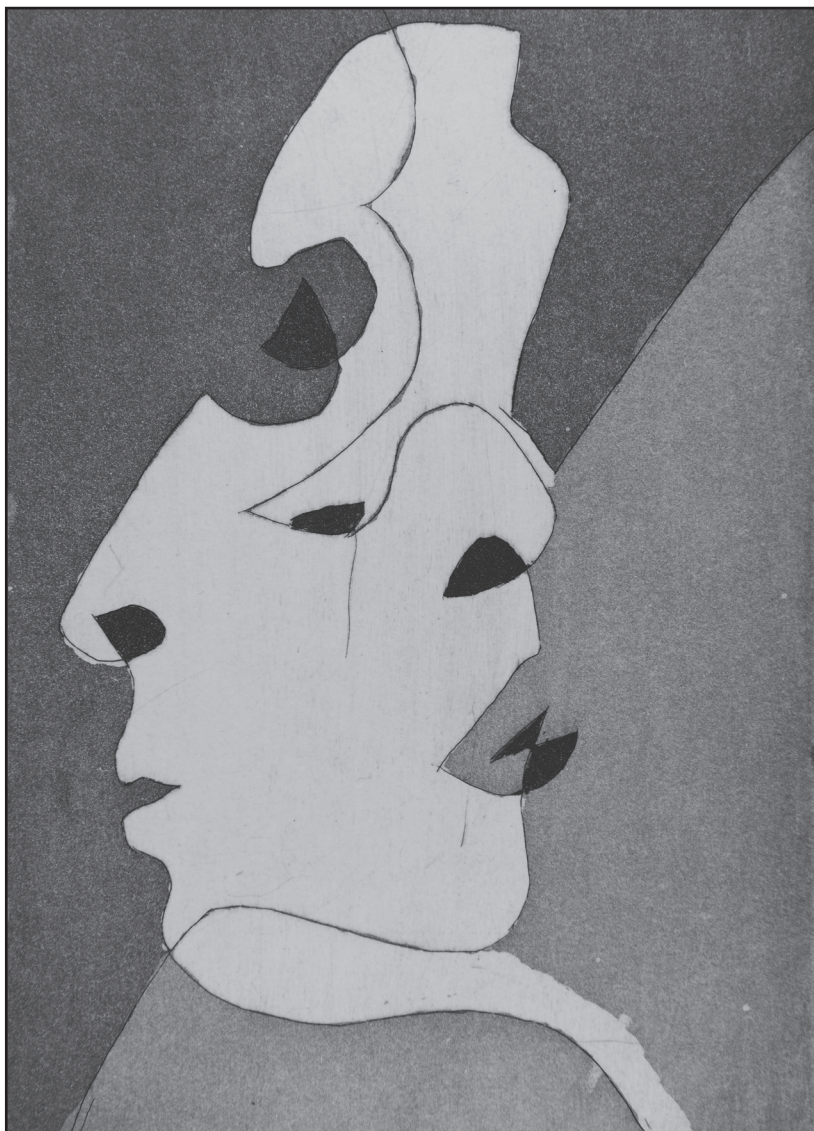
Things change.
People change.

Dallas Cox *Total Consumption*

I want to be with you – your words –
I want to compose those on your lips
while you sleep, I want you to need me.
Let me know.
Consume me.

I want to be the reason you let your guard down
invite me in.
Hold me close enough that I can memorize your heartbeat.
Best friend.
Soulmate.

Reach out to me for the first time
take responsibility
in Us.



Kristin Howell
Becoming Me
Intaglio Print
Honorable Mention Award

James Day

A Trolley Ride

My brain likes to take a trolley ride.
The dangling bell is manually
holding on by a thread.
My brain likes to trail blaze on the side
and proudly smile its phosphorescence!
My brain likes to get off at every stop,
eager to push through passengers.
My brain likes to sit and wait,
to be the last one off
at the last corner.
My brain likes to skim previous headlines
and half-finished crosswords.
My brain likes to lick the standing-room-only pole
and saunter across scuffed shoe tracks.
My brain likes to get stuck between stations
and selfishly ignore dinnertime.
My brain likes the thought of her
while minding the gap between mother roles.

In my blood the trolley winds.
The narrow hills become steeper.
In my blood The Conductor tips his hat
and offers warm greetings and salutations.
In my blood the tracks shift to another direction
while the only child eats his ear-bud *Beats*.
In my blood the Professor and Maryann misplace their seats,
losing focus for a nanosecond.
In my blood trendy galoshes mock vogueish slush
when the sun calls it a day.
In my blood hubcaps hug unwarranted gestures
from the heavy, yellow boot.
In my blood meter maids choke on their own breadcrumb laughter.
In my blood the easy-going tram swells at the sight
of ticketed parked cars.

In my bones Lazy Susan gyrates on the skull
of the rhythmic sound from the wheels of steel.
In my bones the quiet-car sign screams, “LOL!”
In my bones the hipster’s caboose
runs loose around the looping cul-de-sac.
In my bones the salamanders and ferrets contemplate
The *Nike* ad campaign found on artificial leather headrests.
In my bones the broken taillight is not distracting at all.
In my bones the rubber bell *Bing* strip informs the masses
of few individuals left.
In my bones the downtown trench coats and fedoras
lose their colorful feathers.
In my bones all tickets are punched from a pocket comb,
Finally home.

Nettie Farris

Decaf

It was a bit of an odd moment when I found myself telling you that I don’t drink decaffeinated coffee. I remember complaining, “There’s something missing,” and as I said the word *missing*, it occurred to me that, for some time now, I have associated you with decaf. It’s simply the image that comes to mind when I think of you—a cup of hot milk-chocolate-colored liquid that promises far more than it delivers. Looks like coffee. Smells like coffee. When it drips down the front of my white cotton blouse it feels like coffee. But when I become intimate enough to actually take a sip, I quickly realize that some vital element is missing, and so the experience is, overall, disappointing. However, I don’t believe that the missing element is truly what disturbs me, but rather the seduction that lures me in, again and again, despite my dissatisfaction in the past, implying that *This Time . . . I’ll get what I’ve been expecting all along*.

Jennifer Parker Gribble
Blackberry Picking

A woman and her son pick blackberries,
From long, green, tangled vines,
Lying braided on a blanket of leaves.

Our leaves
Our vines
Our berries

Born of dark softness.
We and those fruits are the same.
Of sunlight and spring,
Of vegetable greenness,
Of ragtag blooms and sandy earth.

On a neighboring road, I can still visit it.
A vestige of stone and
A wilted wood cross.
Curious, amidst empty graves
Sunken and shrouded.

You are gone to dimness and dust.
And I am here.

You are gone to the night air.
You are gone to the starlight.

You are gone in dark softness.



Meggan Sloas
Food Chain
Ink and Digital Media
Honorable Mention Award

Jennifer Parker Gribble

Deer Crossing

Ruffled mossy fur and soggy noses
Snuffling in mint springs of tender shoots.
Pulling, plodding, clods and
Doughy earth painted on asphalt.

A brown, thin crackling leaf skits across
A road lined with brisk tendrils of grassy steeples—
Relics of summer, consecrated and passed over.

A lone sentinel watching turns back.
His crown of talons winter bare of spring softness.
A breast of lion's glory, thrust forward—

A griffin of the meadow.

Jennifer Parker Gribble

The Fisherman

On the shore I stand.
I do not listen to the water,
But I taste it and the shore, the earth—
The rocks, the grit, and the sand.
The water is crisp and sharp, and
The sand is like pulverized bones
Beneath my feet.

My thoughts skate
Along the surface of the water.
I cast my net and fish its wideness.
Pulling it to me, I examine my catch,
See my fingers tangled in the fibers,
And then I release myself back into
The depths of the sea.

From this hidden place
I touch faraway stars, clear
Past a dim and distant surface.
I feel the smooth flesh of fish on my skin
And the delicate whiteness of their bones,
And I open my mouth to taste
The Lord on my tongue.

Jennifer Parker Gribble
Where Time Sits

The years pass by the place where Time sits.
He has stopped to taste some molded cheese
On a weathered porch, on a glass table,
Cracked under a layer of dust that blows in tufts—
Like the finer feathers of cold ash,
From the fiery centers of hissing timbers.

Like rage they rise through fissures of cracked wood,
Prodding the stale air into motion.
A front moves through the once still grass,
Bringing birds and crickets and children,
And old men laugh as the generations swirl
In eddies around the porch where Time sits.

Lauren Hamm
A Haiku for Israel

I have seen you laugh
like the walls of Jericho
and fall perfectly.

Lauren Hamm
Appalachian Sun

Sweet Jesus,
these cold, bare hills
like my exposed back
in a prematurely chilly shower.
They know me.
Know me better than
all the years I've spent alone
with myself in this bed.
Ancient endings cycle
annually before their
wrinkled, wise eyes.
They've seen it all completely.
There is nothing new
under this Appalachian Sun.

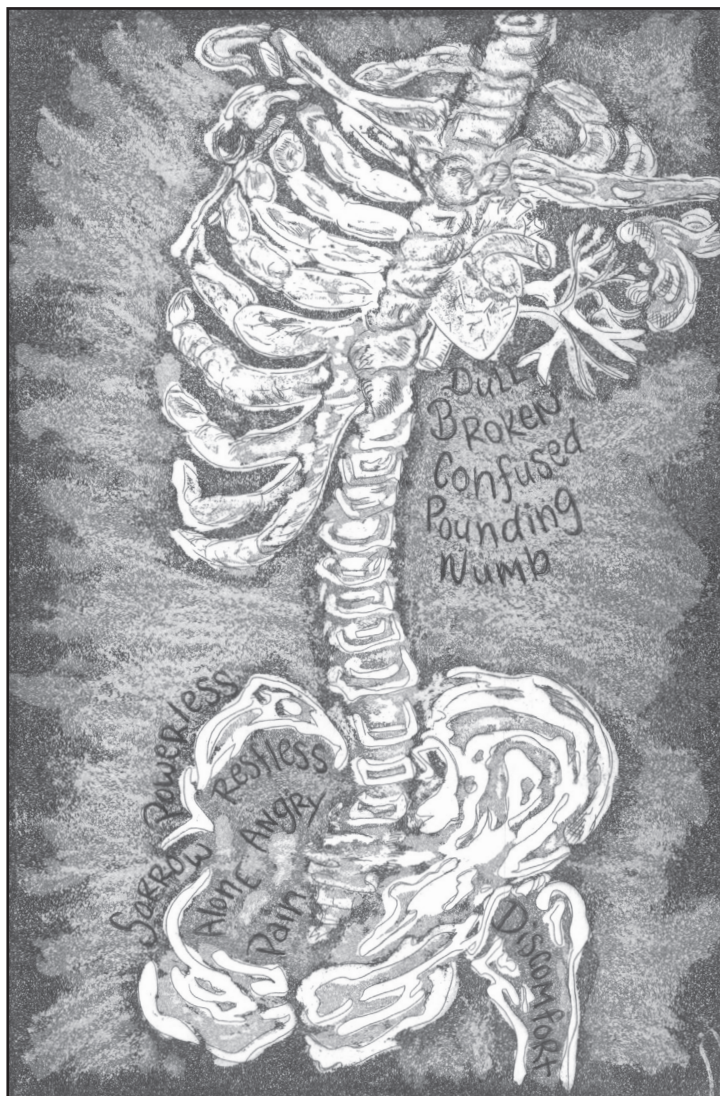
Lauren Hamm
Ghoul

I should have died five years ago.
A ghoul beneath the ground.
To save me from the witch I am,
from these relentless hounds.
I have no home; I am alone.
There is no one like me.
A cage-a hole-a great glass box
afloat an endless sea.
Of storms and islands I know well
for I have been them too.
There is no wave can knock me down
quite like the way you do.
I hear you speak within my head
though you've been gone these years.
There is no comfort in the sun,
no way to squelch these fears.

You are the reason I sit here,
bronze statue built of death.
Afraid to move for fear of life
and using my last breath.

Lauren Hamm
Growing Up

So this is growing up?
Stripping silently,
alone.
A hot shower substitutes for
warm arms.
Tangled, wet hair
hangs limply down my
bare back.
A chill draft
at the opening of the curtain
runs sharp nails down
my quivering spine.
Dressing, silently,
alone.
The moon shines
through an open window and serves
as a lover's eyes
I have not yet met.
Bed sheets open
like a mouth,
like a sky,
like my mind—
And I lay here, silently,
alone.
I won't accept that this is growing up.



Sarah Nicole Jackson

Fixing in Time

Intaglio Print

Lauren Hamm

Silence

I know a thing or two about silence.
Breath held, crocodile tears, a grimace.
White walls like projectors at dusk.
Cold showers, brisk walks, stale coffee.
A sea of the same, hobgoblin face, grinning.
Night terrors, fight-or-flight, paranoia.
Cold, winter air making the skeleton weak.
Trembling body, dark room, no consent.
The lifelong disease eating away the mind.
Enslaved, enraged, eternally alone.

Damon Huff

The Curious Tale of a Bump in the Road

A nowhere, backwoods town
Somewhere between, "There's nothing here for me."
And "I miss how it was back then."

A perfect mix of green and brown woods covers the horizon.
In other locations you may see for miles and miles,
Here, the offspring of the Appalachian Mountains always cast a shadow.

Green mounds cut across the perfect azure landscape,
And hug the valleys of dirt and rock.
Of warmth and light.

The people here walk backward, using their hands as feet.
They see nothing in front, only behind.
A past of black dust.
Poverty.

Discretions so easily remembered.
"Did you hear that Johnny fucked Sarah?"

“Oh my God, they had an affair?”
Whispers. Ear to ear.
Everyone is immortal in a small town.

The smell of walnut trees and touch-me-nots wafts through Main Street,
The heat of a summer day as two boys lie on the deck,
Wearing nothing but cutoff denim shorts and smiles
How they complain about wanting something to “get into”.

An unused rusty swing set is the only thing for miles.
Surrounded by the green and the rock
The light and the coal dust
Happiness and sadness.

A traveler could blink and miss the whole show,
With only a lingering memory of something familiar. Almost like an itch,
That smells of walnuts and touch-me-nots.
And reeks of strange, strange people.

People who walk so far while staying in place.
A curious bump along the interstate,
Abandoned long ago to the lost and desolate.

Who would live there?
The sweat off her brow is another dollar earned.
The till cutting the Earth is another meal.
The sun coming up is another day God has given them.

Who would belong there?
A banner across the old high school reads “We Are Magoffin”
A pile of maroon shirts gathering dust in the closet: “Hornet Pride”
A lifetime of memories; an innumerable tome of wealth.

Who would love there?
She welcomes her son home with hugs, tears, and the smell of smoked honey ham.
He is sitting on the couch as usual; he’ll never let his son see how much he misses him.
But the son knows. Momma tells him.

Who indeed ...

Damon Huff

In Memoria

I remember laugh lines most of all.
But now you are gone and I am alone.
Now you are stepping out and I am catching the door to step in.

My dear, we are made of our forefathers;
We stand on their vast shoulders.
We are made of those demons cackling in our sleep.

I always hated not being able to look away.
I hated how today becomes yesterday,
And tomorrow is so foggy.

I hate semantic satiation;
Now your name has no meaning.
Just sounds echoing in my empty head.

I hate when the Raven croaks, "Nevermore"
The clock strikes twelve;
And I realize I'll never write like Poe

I hope you choke on your words.
A curse on those words!
Never uttered, never cured.

Now I shall sing myself to sleep;
The sound of angels a blanket.
Warmer than you ever were.

I am done with your croaking,
Your incessant barking,
Your yell.

I will never again fall to the Siren's song
And as I sit with Apollo's Lyre,
We will all weep at the sound.



Meggan Sloas
Manifestation
Cast Bronze

Damon Huff

Invocation For a Dreamer

I pray to the sky,
Even though I don't know what's up there.
I pray with my heart,
But I'm still not sure what's in there.

I pray for waking up and realizing
That my reality has surpassed the duality
Of my dreams and I have achieved
Greatness

However, greatness is arbitrary.
There is no concrete
For the poet and the man
In search of an absolute.
You see, this is a problem.

I pray to see the finish line
All drenched in golden leaf.
I pray as I cross that gilded line
I see the works of my dreams manifested before me
And I know I've made it.

I pray these people see my vision,
Learn to respect my choices.
Oh yes, I pray for these people,
And all the lost voices echoing tonight.
I pray they be heard.

I pray for the power to convey.
I pray for maturity, sincerity, celerity and clarity.
I pray I am as strong as I think.
Ya know what? I think I pray for a lot.

I pray for the Iris this conflict surrounds.
I pray those petals see sunlight,

I pray they not feel the Gardener's cut.
Those petals have only been picked...
Because someone loved them a lot.

I pray beyond hope
That I can still carry on.
I pray I have the strength, motivation
Skill and determination. . .
To prove them all wrong.

Damon Huff

My Poem

My poem wears ugly sweaters and sings Christmas carols horribly.
It has my brown eyes and messy hair.
It eats my thoughts and spits them out in an odd way,
Some call it poetic meter.

It dreams of summer days and Subway sandwiches.
It drives a Prius because it's economical, ya know,
And lives in my mind.
But doesn't pay rent.

On weekends it likes to stir
As I'm playing League or reading
Or possibly playing with my dog.
And I have to answer the call.

Its fears are my fears.
Its fear is never to be written.
Its fear IS fear.
The end of the strength to write.

My poem is in love with itself,
But I don't love it.
My poem wants the attention,
But I won't let it sing.

It needs to be set free,
It wishes to breathe.
I want it to shut up,
So no one will hear. . .

Damon Huff
Six Foot Tall With Boots On

Messy hair,
Glasses slightly askew,
A slight, absolutely faked swagger.

This is me.
This is why they say
"You are like your father;
you are his son."
I always brush it off. Smile. Tell a joke.
But those words ride the waves of everything I do.

And now I look on my carbon copy.
The man who has raised me is merely a boy
pretending to be a man.

Just like me.

What I would give for a conversation
with my father-to-be.
Do the similarities go any deeper
Than simple skin and bone?

Does he do that thing with his hands
when he's nervous?



Austin G. Casebolt
Choices
Gelatin Silver Print

Does he sometimes take long walks around campus
Just to be alone with himself?
Does he sometimes spend a *little* too much time jerking around,
And turn that big essay in an hour late?
Does my father look into every pair of eyes he meets. And think
I will prove myself, I will prove myself, I WILL PROVE MYSELF!

Is my dad as nervous as I am?
Do his doubts cling to his every action, accenting each breath he takes?
Does he sometimes go home and just lie on his bed for minutes?
Hours?
Days?
Does my father look to the sky, count the stars and think.
Just think.

Has he met my mother,
his bride-to-be?
Does he guide himself through the dark using the light of her eyes?
Does he worry about their time running out?
About holding hands a little too tight?
About their lips coming together a little too long?
I mean, did he have any idea at all?
Or did she just “chase him down” - Like he claims?

He never was much of a runner.

I wonder if my father has changed much
from the boy I see.
I wonder not just what he thinks,
But *why* he thinks,
Why he acts the way he does.
And mainly, what I should be.

But maybe I'm thinking too much.
Maybe I'm giving the old lug too much credit.
Maybe he's still just waiting –
hoping he'll figure it all out someday.

Just like me.

Michael Hutchinson

Awkward

Awkward was the first time I saw my grandfather
after his wife's passing,
his grey eyes,
his grey lips,
his grey everything pleading,
his broken mind needing,
like I had all the answers.

I was twelve.

Wading through people and silence
I entered the house,
not home,
chilled
'til pins serrated my skin
and left me exposed,
to the salt in their eyes.

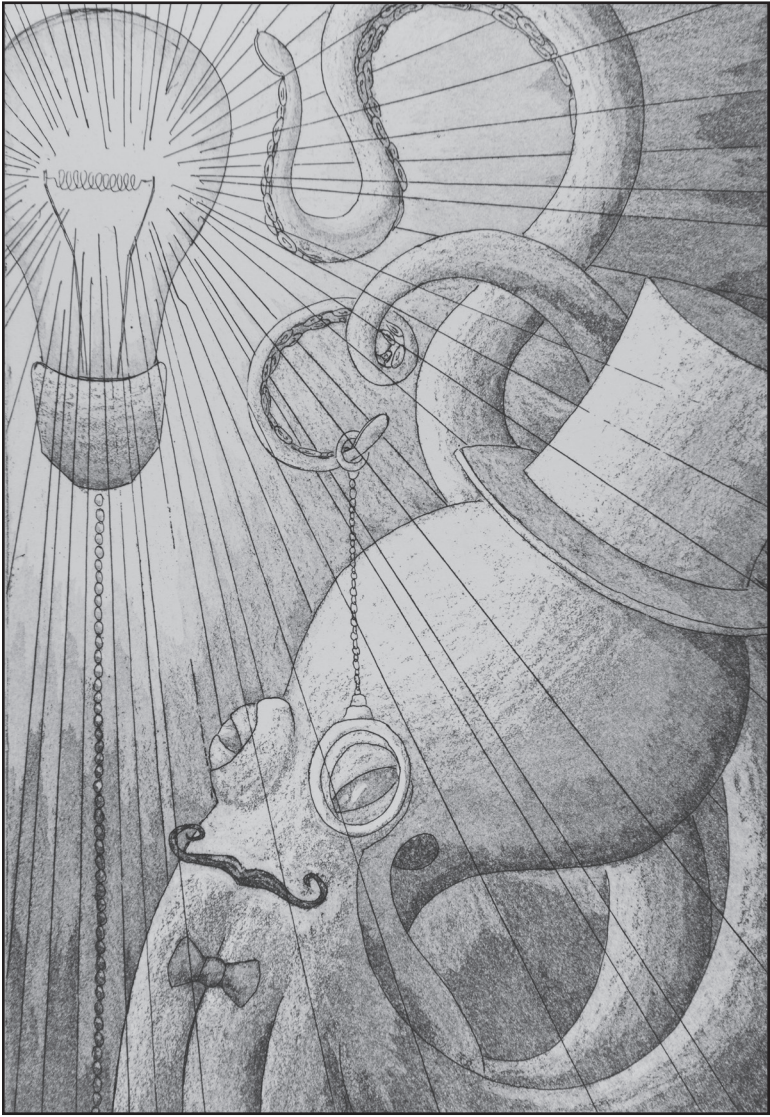
For God's sake,
I was twelve.

Deflated skin sunk six feet,
draped across a recliner full
of cigarette burns,
of the first beers in years, or ten,
and nothing but a pricked balloon
sailing farther off by the second.

Goddamn,
I was twelve.

Relatives stare just as blankly
as I bawl,
as I gasp,
as I wonder;
how could I find succor
in a man whose heart died
the second his wife did?

And still,
I'm only twelve.



Aj Bauer
The Wisdom We Find
Intaglio Print

Michael Hutchinson

Words of the Wise

Words of the wise
don't rest on my mind
and facilitate inspiration
or guide my technique.
They chatter and click
across each synapse
like seizing wooden dentures.

As lectures persist
I hear forefathers laughing
at the great men and women
we're not sure we can become.

They are not the runway
across which we glide,
guiding us towards the sun.
They are the rotten teeth
that chew,
and gnash,
and gum the sinews
of our apparently sinful brains.

Our tombstones will never stand
proudly beside theirs.
Not because we are not worthy,
but because we'd rather die nameless and silent
than to ever repeat what they've said and done,
no matter how badly
they think we ought to.

Bethany Johnson
Through the Keyhole

Darkness is
the frigid cold of space,
the iciness of night in midwinter,
somewhere I can no longer be,
a place where I find my voice
bounding, screeching,
echoing
through
the deep,
the secret
place where
I look through
the keyhole and find
one of your azure eyes
staring back at me forever.



Kristin Howell

Of All The Places I've Seen

Black and White Photograph

Erika Kendall

Papa con Ají

If your taste buds have gone bland and you need a remedy,
My grandmamma will surely prescribe some papa con aji.
She always told me to cook good food if I was lacking love.
So we cooked all night heartbreak mending papa con aji.
When I lost my zest for life and everything was dull,
My grandmamma took me to her kitchen and fed me papa con aji.
Spicy, tangy residue on papa starchy soft
comfort warmth and family
is papa con aji.

When I was scared shitless to be married at age nineteen
Grandmamma stroked my tongue with papa con aji.
The first dish I ever cooked my married man and me, was
Fiery, sensual, dance in mouth, papa con aji
Now as a mother with one of my own
I cure all her follies, with
loving, caressing, back scratching good papa con aji.
Looking back upon my life it seems such a shame to see
That my own mother could not cook
Not even papa con aji.

Erika Kendall

The Clock

Control is lost for the mothers.

She cries, I jump
wallowing in my neglect
to pre-diagnose her every

Whimper.

Tick tock

The day is gone

Control is lost

Opportunist I am
to have the luxuries

to eat,

to sleep,

to bathe.

I place third in every way.

Everyday,

I reminiscence

on the days galore

when selfishness was not a flaw.

I grasp for authority.

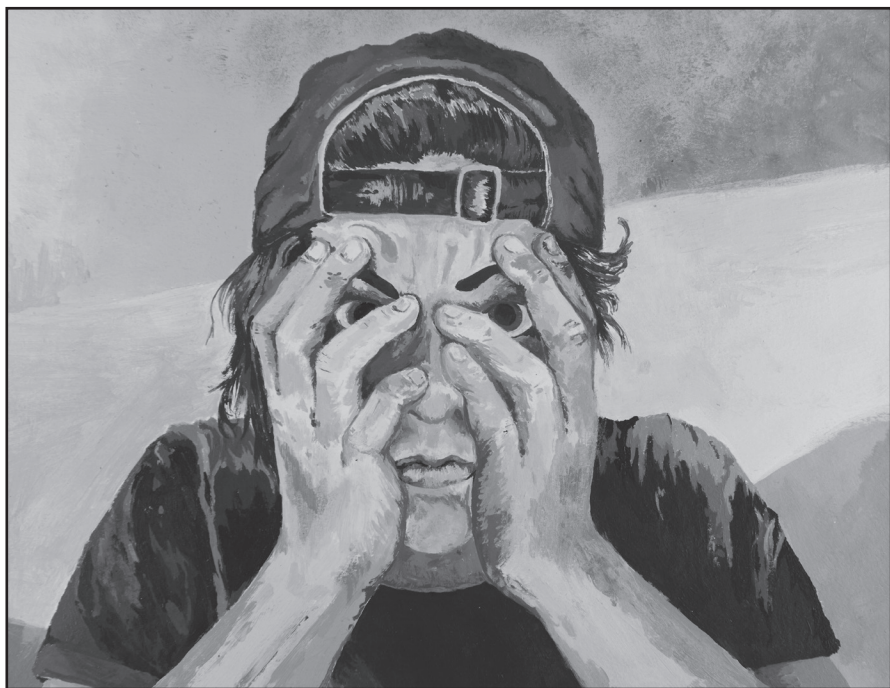
I strive for perfection,

or at least a good hair day.

But tick tock

the day is gone

Control is lost.



Scout Odom
Introvert
Acrylic Paint

Erika Kendall
The Living

I remember sunny days and constant play
pretend. Her musical voice would always say
the right thing to make me smile.
I remember Mom.
I remember floating on a waterbed. At age three
Getting tickled and feeling carefree.
Blue eyes kind and true.
I remember Papap.
I remember a kitten so sweet it should have barked.
Named him Homer instead of Bart.
Amongst rows of cages he was a king amongst cats.
I remember my first pet.
I remember a woman of trials
and sticky morning Kool-Aid smiles.
A parent whose technique was freedom.
I remember Tía Virginia.
I remember too much gold
On the neck of a woman whose loud voice told
Exactly what she felt
I remember my grandmother Detica.
I remember a woman so old;
solid like she was made of stone.
We always said she would outlive the young.
I remember Abuela.
I remember eating hidden sweets
Smelling menthol, watching novelas on TV
At the edge of her bed.
I remember Mamita.
We are all made of dust and water.
Our memories keep us alive.

Benjamin Lee Martin

Obedience

Opaque eyes,
always searching the side of the road.
muzzle pressed to the ground,
heart asking,

When will you come again?

Days pass by,
painting the grayscale of their departure.
Clouds reminisce around the halo,
the last place where he said,

I will wait for thee.

Until that day,
the rain will dance upon his hair.
His head hangs high for at that day,
he can say,

I waited for thee.

He waited until his heart
was drenched in the frost of the night
until his skin baked under the cruel Sun,
until he asked,

Will you come again?

The Time passed.
The frost of the night froze him,
eyes searching and muzzle to the ground.
She finally said,

I arrived too late.

Chelsea Mayse

A Search for Beautiful People

As far as I can tell, there is more than one type of person in this world.
There are those who fear oblivion, or sharp knives,
Or who crave lust over love when they need it least.
There are also they who scream at the innocent with guns,
Who prey on the weak with their clean hands and bloody eyes.
There are those who walk softly, lightly, upon the earth,
Trying not to blink.
There are those that ask nothing and want nothing.
Those who blame many and need many.
But all of this is no good.
The best, most beautiful people to be close to are those who understand.
The ones who know it doesn't matter who you kiss,
Or what you dream
Or when you were born
Or whether you prefer coffee to tea.
These are the people I search for.
I spend my whole life just trying to find them.
Sometimes I see them twiddling a thumb beneath a book shelf,
Sitting under a dead tire,
Leaning against the tree roots, smelling the dry sun.
And sometimes I will find them crying, quietly, in secret.
And I cannot see their faces.
Other times, they will soundlessly sit in a coffee shop with observational faces,
just reading, listening to the little people talk around them.
Sometime I watch through the window,
Hearing the tink of a steel ring as they sit the glass down,
And open to a new page.
But they never see me.
We do not speak, but we are friends.
I wait for these people, and they come, once in a while.
When I see them, I smile, blinking hard,
Because they are changing everything.

Chelsea Mayse

Bones

I see the dangling figure of a body,
Made of pure bone.
No skin or polish,
No cushion or silky hair.
And he looks just like me.
And the President.

I squint.

And my mother.
And my teacher, but which one?
Oh, and Dennis from fifth grade. I see him, too.
And all the eyes of my whole neighborhood glare at me through the two dead
holes in the body's skull.

Oh, God.

And there is that smelly shrink I used to visit, who told me I was batshit crazy.
And the light eyed dentist who stole my teeth.
And, would you look, there's little Bo Peep, but where are her sheep? I certainly
don't see them.

I take a deep breath.

And there is that singer that everyone loved.
And Anne Frank, who hide so well, but not well enough.

Oh, why is he smiling? Is he smiling?

Why is he still?

And that one poet from English 2A looks like him, too.
And the homeless man who often weeps.
And the third president of America.
And that lost Chinese artist who is a prisoner in his own home.
They look like him.

And, sweet baby Jesus,

He looks like my rotten good for nothing ex,
And the rotten good for nothing ex of my best friend whom, just last week,
robbed four banks in Wisconsin.

Why didn't he just take cheese?

And the librarian is there, the one that always reads on her lunch break.
And I know he has no hair,
But I see my father's beard.



Lauren Eastep
Nano
Digital Illustration

And I know he wears no makeup,
So why is he wearing my grandmother's lipstick?
What's that, now?
Oh, my.
I never noticed before.

His skinless fingers are hard and strong.
They look just like Michelangelo's.
I can see him painting,
His breath heavy,
His shoulders broad enough to hold a child,
a stack of rocks,
the whole Panama lip.

But he does not move. Why is he so still?
I think he wants to tell a story to me,
Many of them,
Of life and loss,
Like we all do.
So why do we fight this fact of

u
n
i
t
y

Underneath?
He doesn't.
He just hangs there,
Quiet,
Understanding the variety of life,
Like a mocking bird,
On a
Nearly
Dead
Limb.

Chelsea Mayse

Shadow

I love when your dark swan body becomes acquainted with my secrets and nothing more is held behind those tiny, wide blue eyes.
I love when the lake slowly moves,
Our hands drifting on a piece of broken chiffon from your blouse,
And the scent of gilded amber and sparkling quince fill my brain,
Like the melted candles my mother used to light.
There is something raw in the way you kissed me,
As if nobody was watching even when they were.
Tonight, I'll stand by the window and watch the moon,
The way we used to do.
And I will never forget how love is so short yet so lovely,
How easy it is to love and how hard it is to forget.
I will always lie down and dream of the glitter frozen forever we promised and the way we said,
"Keep, keep, and keep these secrets of mine,"
As if they would slip through our fingers like fairy dust wishes.
Things like that are so precious, my love.
I am glad we kept our fingers tight and our palms closed.
Nothing could make my heart thud faster,
Than the lightning strike.
I glow as it stabs the earth,
Like you stabbed my heart,
When you joined it in the sky.
Something flickers in the clouds,
A light in the dark.
I revel in how I still see my angel,
My gold and naked love in my soul,
How I fall asleep holding the air and wishing it was your hand.
I love the way I continue to seek your dead heart, in shadow, where no one can see and I do not tell.

Chelsea Mayse

[We laid on the moist grass]

We laid on the moist grass,
Kissing the wasted water off each other,
Peeking at secret places,
Colors slowly falling into one another's eyelids,
Dancing lips until we knew no other taste,
Listening to the blissful beat of our hearts.
You asked me to dance,
And I followed your feet like some follow God,
As they blithely shook upon the dirt.
There was nowhere I so much wanted to be,
And I needed to do everything with you.
Your hands pressed against my back,
Holding me closer,
Like I would melt away.
But I would never leave you.
I was secretly wondering if somehow our bodies could become closer.
I kissed your forehead,
Tenderly,
And you sighed into my neck.
The sun soaked up the last pieces of my hope to refrain.
I knew I'd give you anything.
Knew I'd be anything or anyone,
For you.
And it was rather beautiful,
How we let our fears and pasts die,
As our hands squeezed them off.
And they fell,
In drips,
Of soiled tears upon our skin.



Sarah Barrett
Untitled
Gelatin Silver Print

K.M. McCann
Abandon Hope

There is nothing permanent about hope, you must understand this.
Boats will surely sink,
Redwoods will surely fall,
Seasons will surely change.
Even the limestone is older than man and the god of man;
 Older than the prehistoric ammonoidea imprint.
Yet the stone remains fully present to transformation
 Like a long exhale converted
 From hard to soft so it can ride the wind.
Hope is a hand to hold, you must realize this.
 A hand will surely wither & the strength of fragility will
 Finally urge it to let go.
Chasing hope robs you of the present moment:
 It is a mythos dictated at you for centuries
 Designed to cocoon you, as though blindness and claustrophobia is
preferable to awareness.
As though someday (not today, but someday), you will become
 Happy, beautiful, and without suffering.
And so you ignore the Now when Now is the point of beauty.
This is the truth & the truth is inconvenient.

Kip Nead
At the Edge

Their feet leave the ground
they are still
poised in space for an instant
weightless
an instant
after the jump
before they can see the landing
an instant
of almost infinite joy
for having made the leap

Kip Nead
Chili Love

The smooth-skinned chili
lies
on the counter
its brazen green
and lush curves
call to my lips
my tongue

It reminds me
of you
filled with a heat
that even in repose
brings blood to skin
and liquid to my mouth



Mike Sealand
Adrenaline
Gelatin Silver Print

Kip Nead
Unstable Air

On the couch
between us
anger has rolled in
like fog
at the beach
late on a summer afternoon

It brings cold oppressive dampness
obscures
enough sun
to bleed color
and warmth from our days

It will pull back
hang offshore
a chill breeze
licking at our edges
until the slightest change
in temperature or wind
moves its palpable weight
between us again

If it carried promise
of some heavy weather
that could be borne
and then was gone
endurance
would not seem
this trial

Mick Parsons

Meditation on the Shards of a Broken Mirror

All real-time sensibilities are cut to the bone at 55 miles per hour.

Geography, at this unsalable trajectory, is nothing more than series of abstract obstacles. Like taxes. Like Death.

Shards of color invade the periphery,
bleed into the corridor of focus.

Autumnal fires have dulled
into an early winter gray.

Along the river, fog surrounding Ghent consumes all possibilities,
illuminates only the outlines of once sacred outliers.

The remaining bits –

imagination, mortality –

are not shattered to pieces by a degree of centimeters.

A daughter's tears at twenty
cut the same as when they are two.

The fear that these arms are not strong enough
to stave off the pain of impact

is only a reminder

that the curvature of the earth
and the shape of tears
and the meandering river path

is all evidence of a life embraced

by a degree of mere centimeters.

Mick Parsons

*Waiting for Gonzalo Guerrero**

There is crystallized dirt as far as the eye can see.
Age old trees groan in the throes
of the mathematical expansion of ice.

Only the bluebirds are out this morning,
stripping the last few berries off the holly branches.
Already, the mind carries these bones into the future:

long hours of sleep haunted by dreams of an unknowable Spring.

This moment fades like December Solstice light
and we play the someday game
after the manner of our venerable forebearers.

This moment flashes and the image
is a poor representation.
Each trip to the grocery store,

we behave like Times Square tourists
who need pictures as proof
because no one trusts a memory.

Memory is a starving dog
covered in crystallized dirt
huddling outside the back door.

Sentimental as we are, we like the dog
until it chews the old man's chair and is banished outside
left to wait for that unknowable spring

that might as easily bring bounty or conquistadors from the subterranean
depths.

**A mythic 14th century Spanish sailor who was shipwrecked in the New World. He was captured and then enslaved by the Mayans, but later became a respected warrior. He married a Mayan woman and had three children – who, according to the tale, were the first mestizo children in the New World. He was later murdered by Cordoba in retaliation for engaging in armed conflict against the Conquistador.*

Phillip C. Ratliff *Chestnuts*

Below where the drift mouth of night opens above the trees,
Pale chestnut stumps emerge against the darkening hill,
Their blanched bareness protruding from the dead-leaved slope like broken
bones.

Sprouts of limbs wither on the nearest, dying
Back from the blight of the fathers;
Even now they wilt toward the waiting earth.

A dented pail packed
With rust and emptiness dangles
From a distant stump, clanging quietly
Against the side in a bothersome comfort.
For the wind begins its habitual evening shift
From the valley below up into this hollow's steepness,
While the moon sags behind the head of Steep-Gut Point,
And Decay and dusk merge the pale profiles into a union
Of the infinite and extinct.

But as the stump shadows stretch in the gaunt light from the window
And rise to descend into the black, damp
Face of the mountain—bucket swinging in its stiff, creaking gait,
Thin stems waving white and naked and by
In the wind like bare-skin limbs—there seems the need
To slow the slant of their dim departure,
To cry this collapse of words out after. But where they go
Words cannot follow.



Julie Willian
Jonathan
Black and White Photograph

Phillip C. Ratliff
Sockball

Sometimes the moon's a slow roller
Along the line of Steep-Gut Hollow,
Swinging low
Through threadbare tops of trees, striking out
Past leather-brown leaves and curving
Down like an out-of-round ball
That breaks hard
Across the inside of me again.

And I recall the care you took to wind-up
Lengths of played out stockings
Some soul had parted with so sparingly—
The patience you once displayed
To seam each woolen mound you stitched so soundly
With such uniform care.

Perhaps it was our skin
You wound around the small stone
You bound into a denseness for the center.
For the outer surface grayed
And frayed apart
From our misplays
And arrays of blows that we inflicted,
While the inner core became rigid and unmoved—
So like the way we have become today ourselves,
So like this unyielding hardness
Time has bound so tightly
Now within us.

Lindsey Roe
Silence

The silence talks to me,
It speaks and I hear it.

It can command me to do anything,
Just by being here.

It makes me question nothing,
As it questions nothing.

It says, "Just listen,
And the answers will come."

Silence is bigger and louder than most think,
Maybe more so than the world.

After all, the universe itself
Is nothing but silence.

Dr. Cassandra Smith
I Deserve!

Yes, I deserve joy!

Pacing around the bedroom,
Every evening past midnight.
Always waiting for phone calls,
Cannot stand sleeping alone.
Escaped once by moving away.

Yes, I deserve peace!

Holding myself together,
Always with a ram in the bush.

Praise to God for courage.
Pain in the pit of my belly.
Yes, Lord I hear your voice

Yes, I deserve to be happy!

Someday, the hurt will stop.
My day will come soon.
I will have peace, joy, happiness.
Love will not stand alone.
Every day, God is even closer.

Yes, I will have a smile!

Dr. Cassandra Smith
Black Enough

strolls on stage
in 2004 while
strangers gawk
holds minds still
lean eye candy

smart of color
stares before utter
delivers a speech
of valor applause
raises the roof

daddy black
mama white
baby black

tribe mixed roots
father coal black
mother lily white

baby mocha tan
wife ghetto roots
seeds African names

daddy white
mama black
baby black

black but smart
welfare president
yells the rebels
who cares when
black enough to
make a change

Samantha J. Wilburn
Beauty

An elastic band presses the mammaries
Tight
Forming tumors of industrious
Fat
That swill malice so
Bloated
Sight is unnecessary to feel
Ugly.

The mammaries endure while tallow
Inflates
Adolescence in bands of perfume so
Habitual
That an atman is incased in
Folds
That evoke nightmares of damning
Disgust.



Emilee Craig
Flowers
Gelatin Silver Print

Adam Garrett Williams
To the Minister with Love

Standing, speaking, yet silent the same.
Speaking, preaching, yet silent still.
Bored benediction,
High strung platitudes,
Hollow strands stripped of substance.
Lackluster.
Language lacking life;
Requiring renewal, demanding depth.
How can the deep be reached when you are deaf to the depth we desire?

We have become dependent on another.
We have become deprived of self.

FICTION

Michael Jarvi

Lily

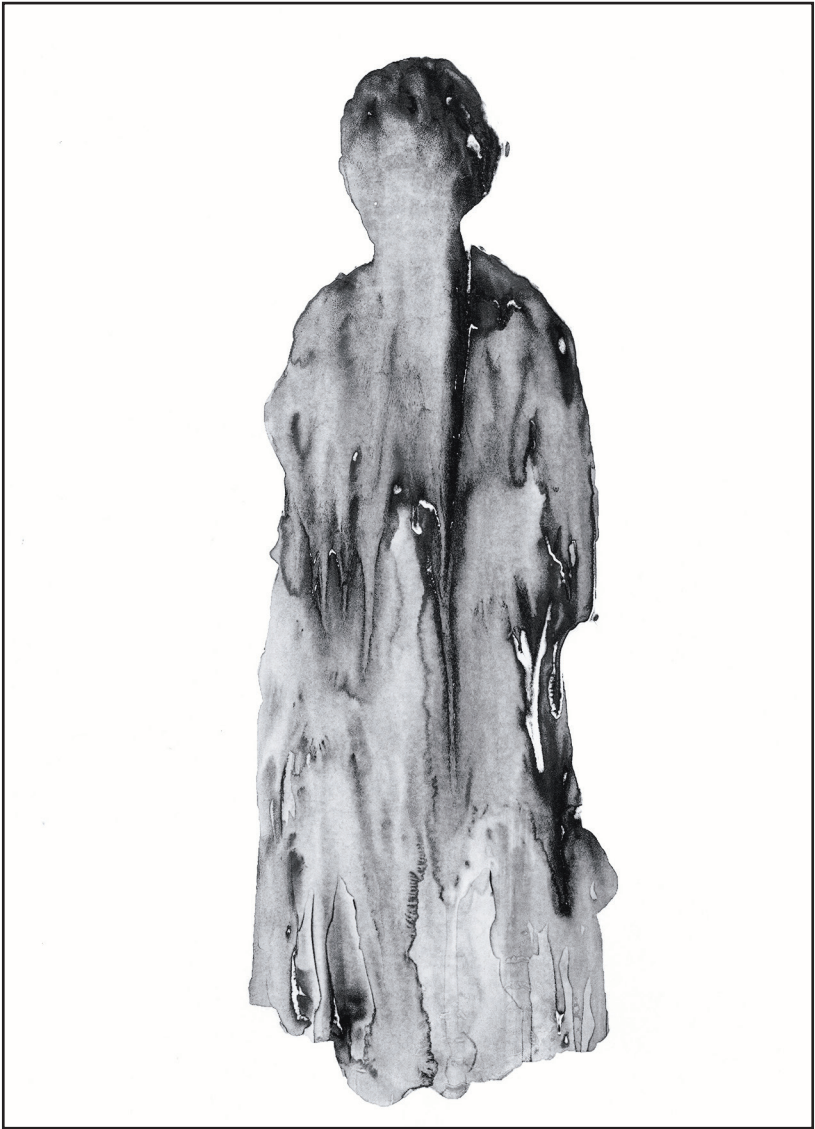
Lily is a forest. It's hard to tell where the forest ends and where it begins. The forest floor is littered with backpacks from when people have dropped the weight they carry and decided it best to carry on without it. Most who enter the forest become lost in it, but they soon come to love it, and they no longer want to be found. They enjoy the questions the forest asks. But the forest is not forever. Sooner or later, the branches of the trees will shrink and the roots will wither. It may be years before the forest dies, but the forest *will* die, and when it's gone, the lost find themselves in the place they were before the forest.

There are never forest fires. They are rained out before they even begin. And when it rains, the drops run down the trees, and they are washed clean. Like the raindrops running down the trees, a river runs through the forest, and to that river is where people most often run. Some run into the river. Of those, some remain, and like a cancer in the blood of an open wound, some are carried downstream. But others run across the river to the other side of the forest. Or so they think, because the other side of the forest isn't a forest at all, but a cliff.

Michael Jarvi

Jessica

Jessica is a city. There are coffee shops and southern restaurants; department stores and clothing stores. There is a factory rich with graffiti. Outside the city, there are farms with barns and incandescent light bulbs, and the farmers bring the food they grow at the farms to the farmer's market in the city every Saturday. The parking garages are safe, and the airport quiet. It's a nice airport, but most people prefer to drive when they come and go. There's a florist where boys can buy girls flowers. There's a park where couples can walk together and a church where they can worship with one another. Behind the church is a graveyard where people dig their own graves. Space is running out. At sunset, the couples buy ice cream, sit on their balconies, and watch the streets clear out. The men and women in the streets have ice cream, too, but their ice cream melts faster than the couples'. They try the doors to the apartments where the couples live, but they're all locked, save for one. Most of them go to the hotels, where they can stay the night, but not the week.



Cecily Brooke Howell
Nanny Silhouette
Screen Print



Cecily Brooke Howell
Father Silhouette
Screen Print

Rachel Pelgen

Mirrors

Five-thirty on a Friday evening and here I was again sitting in a church basement with seven other people. This was the support group my doctor had recommended to my mother. Not exactly the most eventful thing for a seventeen-year-old to be doing to kick off her weekend. I had been counting down the minutes 'til six since I walked in the door; thirty minutes down, thirty to go. The group had been listening to Catherine drone on about how proud she was of all of us for continuing to come each week for exactly twenty-six of those minutes. Catherine, our fearless leader as she called herself, was a short middle-aged woman with long dark hair. I never understood her desire to be seen as "fearless" – what she had to be afraid of I wasn't completely sure. By the looks of her wide hips and rounded frame, she never had a problem skipping a meal. I would put her at about one-hundred-sixty pounds, and she had earned every last one of them devouring three meals a day. I know that sounds harsh, but Catherine was the epitome of everything I did not want to be.

I glanced at the clock again. Forty minutes down, twenty minutes to go. I sighed as Catherine started to describe our activity to be completed in the precious six days we were apart. "I want you all to write a letter to your fully recovered self, from the perspective of where you are now. Use this as an opportunity to explore how you are feeling and why you are here." She smiled a plump little smile then asked the same question she always does right after giving us something to work on, "What do you guys think about that?"

"You want to know what I think? I think this is all bullshit. You expect us to do these silly little activities, to write these letters to ourselves and for us to get better. You're kidding me, right? Do you actually believe that will help us? We starve ourselves and your best idea is to have us write a letter to our self from our self. Well that's just great, let's just ignore the bigger issue, it's not like we come here for help or anything. Or did you forget the reason we show up every week? Did it slip your pretty little mind that the reason we come to sit in this dingy little room with you is because we're all recovering anorexics?"

“Well Izzy, I am certainly glad that you shared your opinion. However, I do think my ‘silly little activities’ as you call them, can help you. Of course, it is always your right not to participate; but the activity for this week stands.”

Of course it was my right not to participate; it had been my right not to participate since I started coming three months ago. Coming here once a week was definitely not my choice, but it pleased my mom so much that I felt like I had to. I had already put her through enough. She was the one who found me passed out in the living room when she returned from work. I think my mom had started to suspect something was wrong before that but couldn't exactly put a finger on what it was and started to grow more concerned when I began losing weight. I had been starving myself and hiding it from my family and friends for seven months when my body finally had enough and shut itself down. I spent three weeks in the hospital recovering from what we would tell the rest of my family and all of my friends was a bad case of pneumonia. After that, the doctors recommended that I join a local support group, so, for the past three months, I have been sitting through a dreadful hour with Catherine counting down the minutes to my escape.

I looked up at the clock. Dammit, my little rant only ate five minutes of my time. Five-forty-five, forty-five minutes down, fifteen to go. If I was being honest, I couldn't blame Catherine for group being so painfully annoying. It's not her fault the only experience she had with eating disorders was what she read in books. Our group was just kind of thrown at her when the last lady quit. Catherine is probably the only person I know willing to pick up a support group for something she literally knew nothing about. Now that I think about it, maybe she got her stupid activities from all those books she read on the subject. I'm not saying that I don't participate in some of them—it's just that I find most of them extremely ridiculous. Especially this last one. I mean, how is a letter going to help me? I highly doubted it was going to lead to some epiphany that would make me okay with the disgusting body I had been given.

I spent the last ten minutes of group looking around the room and letting my mind wander. Occasionally I would tune in to hear the end of someone's story about how their week was going, and how they were doing so much better now. I would just roll my eyes and go back to counting the flowers on the wallpaper, or examining the cookies left on the plate next to the punch, or staring at the cracks in the ceiling. Did you know that there are exactly

two-hundred-seventeen flowers on the wallpaper? At least that's how many were on the side of the room I had been staring at for the past three months. Also, without fail there are always eleven cookies left from the dozen that were brought to fill the plate. Catherine was the only one who ever started each meeting with the provided snack. And if you look at the ceiling long enough the five cracks kind of started to make a picture with each other. Like I said, not a really eventful way to start a weekend. Finally it was six o'clock. After sixty excruciating and mind-numbing minutes, freedom was mine. Even if it would only last for the next six days before I had to return for another glorious hour with Catherine.

Unfortunately, my weekly routine was not over when group was. I still had the distinct pleasure of driving the twenty minutes home, and painting on a big smile because Mom already had dinner waiting on the table. I would nod through my parent's conversation about their work day while I moved food around in circles on my plate taking the smallest bites possible when Mom looked over to keep her from worrying. My Friday nights really were monotonous and pathetic. But I was happy to play my part because Mom was happy to believe my lies.

The truth was I hadn't eaten lunch at school all week and didn't plan on it next week either. I would buy a meal just so my parents would see that the money in my school account was going down as it should. If one of my friends didn't eat it, it would end up in the trash. When my friends would ask why I wasn't eating I would tell them I had a big breakfast or mom was making a big dinner and when Mom would ask why I wasn't eating at dinner I would tell her it was because I had a big lunch. School really was convenient for hiding my lies and Mom was so eager to believe I was actually getting better this time that she readily believed everything I told her. I also couldn't tell my mom that the reason I went to group every week was to please her and the only thing I ever got out of it was a break from her worried stare. She didn't need to know all this, so instead I would end Friday dinners praising Catherine and her little group because they are helping so much. Then I was free to escape to my room and await the coming week.

Saturday through Thursday was my safe haven. I embraced the days I didn't have to worry about the lies I would have to tell Catherine. The days where I didn't have to fear the hours that led to five o'clock. The days that

ticked away a little too quickly as my safe haven would eventually come to an end.

At five on the dot Friday night I was back in Catherine's control in that little room. I sat down in my chair and waited for Catherine to finish her cookie. My stomach grumbled as I watched her munch away happily on her empty calories. I pulled the pack of mint chewing gum out of my back pocket, and slowly folded a strip into my mouth. I smiled when Catherine gave me the same condemning look she always did when she watched me pop in one of my five calorie meals. She knew the only reason I always had a pack on me was because mint's a natural way to curb your appetite. Apparently she didn't feel like commenting because she jumped right into group, but that didn't stop her from throwing me disapproving looks all night. Honestly, she was starting to remind me of my mother. This session was exceedingly boring; it took exactly thirty-seven minutes for everyone to get through the letters they wrote to themselves. This left Catherine with twenty-three minutes, and knowing her, she would use every second.

"Izzy, are you sure there is nothing you would like to share with the group?" she asked. I just shook my head; I wasn't about to change my mind just because she asked me to. "Well, you always have the option to revisit this assignment whenever you feel up to it."

I nodded. I didn't have the heart to tell her that I would probably never feel up to writing a letter to my recovered self, partly because I thought it was a stupid idea and partly because I thought there would never be a recovered self to write to. I had already accepted that anorexia and I were going to be in a relationship for a very long time. We were like one of those married couples who never really knew why they stayed together but felt incomplete without the other one by their side.

So I went back to my usual routine of counting the flowers on the wallpaper. I kept thinking how one of these days I would have to switch to a different side of the circle just so I could have a new wall to stare at mindlessly. I looked at the clock, just as the hands ticked into place. Forty-one minutes down, nineteen to go. That's when Catherine finally said something that caught my attention: "There will be no assignment to work on for next week." I thought she had finally given up on the idea of giving us things to work on. But apparently I could never get that lucky because at five-forty-two with eighteen

minutes left she spat out that “next week our assignment will take place during group instead. I am bringing my full sized mirror from home and we will begin group with each of you taking a good long look into it and sharing how that makes you feel.”

My stomach lurched and I nearly choked on my gum. “We are doing what?” I coughed out breathlessly.

“Each of you will be standing in front of a mirror and sharing your reactions.” She repeated the information like she couldn’t possibly fathom how this would be a problem for any of us.

“But we have the right not to participate? We still have that right, don’t we?” Of course we had that right, we always had that right. I began to let my heart rate slow again as I gave Catherine a smug look of victory. She never forced us to participate.

“I’m sorry Izzy, but this time I want you all to take part in the assignment. I really feel like this will help all of us. I will also be informing your parents that next week’s meeting is a critical step in your recovery and it is absolutely imperative that everyone shows up.” With that she smiled, looked at the clock and dismissed us for the week. Five-fifty-eight, fifty-eight minutes down, zero to go. Two minutes of freedom hardly seemed like a victory after news like that.

I spent the twenty minute drive plotting exactly how I was going to get out of group next week. I knew my parents’ account information for their emails; if I tell them group is cancelled next week because Catherine has to go out of town, then go straight upstairs to wait for Catherine’s email to pop up, I can intercept it before my parents even have a chance to read it. I pulled up in front of my house and took a deep breath. This could only work if I acted as if everything was completely normal. I walked in the front door, hugged my mom and went to sit down for dinner. I casually slipped my gum into my paper napkin and awaited my usual Friday night ritual. My mom seemed remarkably happy so I prepared for her to launch into some story about her day. This is why it caught me off-guard when she looked over at me and said, “Honey, I got a very exciting email from Catherine tonight. She says that next week is a big week for you!”

Damn, she works fast. It took me a few seconds before I could reply, “Yeah.” Wasn’t my best work, but then again, I wasn’t expecting Catherine to email our parents as soon as we walked out the door.

“Oh sweetheart, I am so proud of you! I know you have come so far and I feel like you are so close to putting all of this behind you.” Apparently I was a better liar than I thought if my mom actually believed I was on the brink of some big break through. After that, my Friday fell into its usual order. After dinner I retreated to my room and sat on the edge of my bed to face my own full length mirror. It still had the purple bed sheet hanging over top of it. I had thrown it there almost a year ago during what my mom would call my “bad days” and had refused to take it off since. Looking in the mirror was always something I hated, even before my disease took hold of my life. Now, it was even worse because I knew the reflection that would be thrown at me was something I would want to cringe away from. It would only feed my problems. And because of Catherine, I was about to come face to face with myself for the first time in months.

All week I could feel the knot growing in my stomach as I ate less and less trying to prepare myself for what I would see Friday night. Maybe if I could just lose a few more pounds, I thought, the mirror wouldn’t be so hard to face. I knew I would be able to see every bit of the past few Fridays forced dinners. Each bite of food would latch itself to an even more unflattering part of my over-sized body. At night I stared at my own reflection-less mirror not daring to uncover it. Friday had approached quicker than normal, almost as if time was working with Catherine to make my life miserable.

It was four fifty-six. I sat in my car trying to savor my last minutes of freedom. I pulled out another five calorie meal and folded the stick gently in my mouth. My jaw was sore; I had gone through two and a half packs of Wrigley that week. A new record I thought to myself as I watched someone walk in. I got out of my car and stood by the open door. I didn’t have to go in; I could get back in my car and drive around for an hour. I sighed, and slammed my door. Catherine would probably call my parents if I didn’t show tonight. I walked in and took my seat, not caring enough to switch sides this week. I was required to stare straight ahead for fear of catching sight of myself in the glass that stood directly under the clock. Looks like I won’t be habitually checking the time tonight. Catherine walked around and handed each of us a stack of

Post-it notes and a pen. Strange, I thought, no snack for her tonight; maybe she was finally learning from us.

Catherine explained that we were each going to take a turn standing in front of the mirror, then we were to write as many words or thoughts on the post-it notes as we could and stick them to the glass. I sure had a few choice words I would have liked to write. I smiled to myself and looked down at my blank Post-its. Catherine thought it was only fair that she participated in this activity too, and to show that she trusted us, she would go first. She walked up to the mirror and stared for a long time before slowly starting to write. She had covered the entire surface before she asked us to go up and read her notes. I hesitated, but the mirror was completely covered now, it couldn't hurt me yet. So we walked. I had expected to find words of encouragement and support written. And I wasn't wrong, all the words at the top of the mirror were exactly what I would have expected from Catherine; the notes read happy, strong, proud, beautiful, important, making a difference. But near the bottom of the mirror were words I had never expected to see written. Printed neatly on Catherine's Post-its were the words "fat," "overweight," "worthless," "sick," "struggling to overcome," "insignificant." Then I got to the last two post-it notes squeezed onto the bottom corner of the mirror and began to unconsciously read them aloud, "survivor" and "recovered, we all have stories." I looked at Catherine and saw for the first time that she had a tear streaming down her face. I had never known that Catherine had gone through the same struggle all of us had. I assumed she read her books to prepare for us, not to save herself.

With a deep breath Catherine explained, "When I was twenty-three, I began to realize how unhappy I was with the way I looked in the mirror. None of the diets I tried were working and I didn't really have time to go to the gym. So one day I decided that it wouldn't hurt to just skip one meal, I didn't really need the extra calories. That was the first time I made a conscious decision to not eat and I have regretted the day ever since."

Silence hovered in the room, cloaking us in an awkward shock that was hard to break. Why hadn't Catherine told us this story before? It certainly would have made me more willing to listen to her, I might have even done a few more of her stupid activities. No one knew what to say, so we just sat and waited for Catherine to continue. She walked back to our circle and we followed wordlessly behind her. When we were all seated she continued,

“When the opportunity came to lead your group, I knew I had to take it. There was no one there to help me through my eating disorder; I was always too ashamed to tell anyone. I couldn’t live with myself if I let anyone else go through that because I was still too afraid to admit that I had the same problem once.”

She said she didn’t want to tell us before because she wanted to be the strong one we could always lean on. Since there was no one there to help her through it, she had to turn to books and the activities they provided for recovering. For a fleeting moment I couldn’t help but to arrogantly think I was right all along about her activities coming from the books she read, but I immediately felt bad for the thought. “I have been walking you through the same steps I took when I was trying to get healthy. It worked for me so I hoped it would do the same for you,” she explained. “The activities I have been giving you, while you may have found them silly, had a point. I wanted to give you a chance to explore how you were feeling before I confronted you with your own self-image.”

Right then I took back every bad thing I had ever thought about Catherine. How I thought she could never understand what we were going through. How I wrongly accused her of never skipping a meal. How I didn’t think she had any right to stand in front of us and call herself fearless. I took it all back. I would never be able to look at her the same way ever again. After Catherine told us her story, it was our turn to face the mirror. One by one we went up and posted our stories for everyone to see. I don’t really know how long it all took; I was still afraid to look in the direction of the clock even with the mirror covered in its present state. But eventually it was my turn. There was no one left in front of me and I could not put off my reflection any longer. Slowly, I made my way to the mirror. It took me what felt like several minutes before I could even lift my head to look at myself, but when I did I was finally faced with reality.

The image that I had run from for so long was now standing right there, I could not run anymore. I faced the mirror but did not write; I lifted my hand and braced myself against the cool glass, touching the imperfect reflection in front of me, clinging to an image that couldn’t possibly be real. On the scale one-hundred-thirteen pounds looked so big, but on my five foot seven inch frame, one-hundred-thirteen looked almost ghostly. How could my mom

possibly believe I was getting better? I could see my collar bone protruding unnaturally under my baggy t-shirt, my arms hanging lifelessly at my side, so thin that I could have wrapped my around them with ease. I wondered if my eyes had always been that sunken and how quickly my cheekbones became hollow. How strange it looked to be able to count every rib, for so long that had been normal, the work I was most proud of. I didn't want to accept this stranger in front of me. Was this really what I had become? A skeletal frame covered in an almost transparent layer of skin. I hadn't realized that all my hard work would be reflected back to me as frighteningly as it was in that mirror. I had expected to be appalled by my own self-image, just not like this.

I don't know how long I stood there shaking, letting the tears flow out of me as I faced my reflection for the first time. Eventually I had nothing left to give I let my hand slide down as I fell to the floor. I could not bear to look any longer but could not make myself move either. At some point Catherine had dismissed everyone else and it was just the two of us for a very long time. She didn't say anything; she just let me stay there cradled on the floor rocking as she soothed me.

When I finally got the strength to go, it was nearly ten-o'clock. I drove straight home, apologized to my parents for missing dinner, and went straight to my room. Now there were words, words that I couldn't write on Post-its but words that needed to come out anyway. I sat down at my computer and had barely gotten a Word document open before they burst out of me. When I was done I printed two copies. Then, taking one in my hand, I walked up to my mirror and ripped down the purple sheet. In the middle of my mirror I posted the paper and stared at it for a while. Then I went to bed and waited for another Friday to come. Friday came and went; I couldn't bring myself to go to group. It was easy enough to get out of going: I just had to tell my parents that I was starting to feel sick, but it was probably just something I ate. All I needed to say was that I was eating and Mom was content to let me take the night off. The funny thing about pretending to be sick is that it conveniently is also the perfect excuse to skip dinner for the night. Even after being confronted with my image, my marriage to anorexia kept me from eating on a regular basis.

I hadn't been to group for two weeks, but I wasn't going to get as lucky a third time. Catherine had emailed my parents asking if I was all right, and in truth I was. Since my meltdown in front of the mirror I was actually starting

to feel better. There were fewer five calorie meals and I had even started to not dread lunch at school. I couldn't keep pretending to get some bizarre sickness that only struck on Friday nights so I knew that this was the week I was going to have to face Catherine and her group again.

It was a long week, waiting. But I was starting to get more comfortable with the idea of going back. Every night before I went to sleep I would take a long look at the mirror, rereading the words I had posted there. The second copy still sat on my desk, but I knew it wouldn't last there long. I tried to make this week my best one yet, taking small steps to prepare for Friday. Monday, I threw a brand new pack of gum away. Thursday I came home and asked my mom if it was ok if I had a snack. I thought she was going to cry as she made me peanut butter crackers. I could tell my body wasn't used to consuming this much in one day. Each bite physically hurt and my stomach clenched and tried to figure out how to deal with the notion of food again. Some days the pain would double me over and leave me curled on my bed holding my stomach. The reintroduction of small amounts of food was more painful than I ever imagined it to be, my body was literally rejecting the idea of nutrition because it had been deprived for so long. The week dragged on, ticking away to Friday. It was the first time I remember be impatient waiting for five-o'clock to roll around.

Friday evening I took my second copy of my paper off my desk, folded it, and put it in my pocket. I arrived to group ten minutes early and waited for everyone to file in. The mirror was still hanging on the wall under the clock, but it didn't scare me this time. I had already come face to face with my demons once in this room. When everyone was seated, I told Catherine there was something I wanted to say before we started group tonight. I took out my paper and unfolded it, smoothing out the creases as I went. I had almost forgotten that I hadn't seen anyone from group since my breakdown three weeks ago. Some of them seemed shocked to see me, maybe they thought I had been put in the hospital again or had finally had enough and convinced my parents to stop making me come. Whatever their reasons, they looked at me strangely as I glanced from my paper to their eyes. I took a deep breath to steady myself and then began to read.

"Isabella,

It started and ended with divorce. The first time I divorced food, left it unannounced and with no explanation. And in that divorce I realize I lost custody of you. I'm sorry, but I didn't know you were there, I didn't know what I was losing. But I can finally see you and believe you exist. Maybe this isn't what Catherine had in mind when she told me to write to you, but I know that you are the only one who will fully understand. Because it also ended with a divorce. My reluctant lover finally let me go, and I slipped away from anorexia's devoted grasp.

I will say this divorce was a lot messier than the first, but this time I won you back. I want you to know that I am happy for that, getting to keep you made it worth the months of fighting. I know there is something you can't say, something you have to hide so you can look strong. Your own personal secret. I know it's in your past and you have moved far beyond it and I'm proud of you, I envy you. But sometimes when you look back on your life, group reminds you of your own pain. How you would look into the eyes of those people every week hoping to realize that what other people say about you doesn't matter. I wish I could learn what you have, to get past my own inhibitions.

I am sure you know I have a secret too. I haven't been through what you've been through, not yet anyways. But I let what other people say affect me to the point where I don't want to get out of bed each day. I have thought to myself that it would all just be easier if I were dead. Maybe God would make me skinny in Heaven. Then again maybe he only let skinny people into Heaven and I was screwed from the beginning.

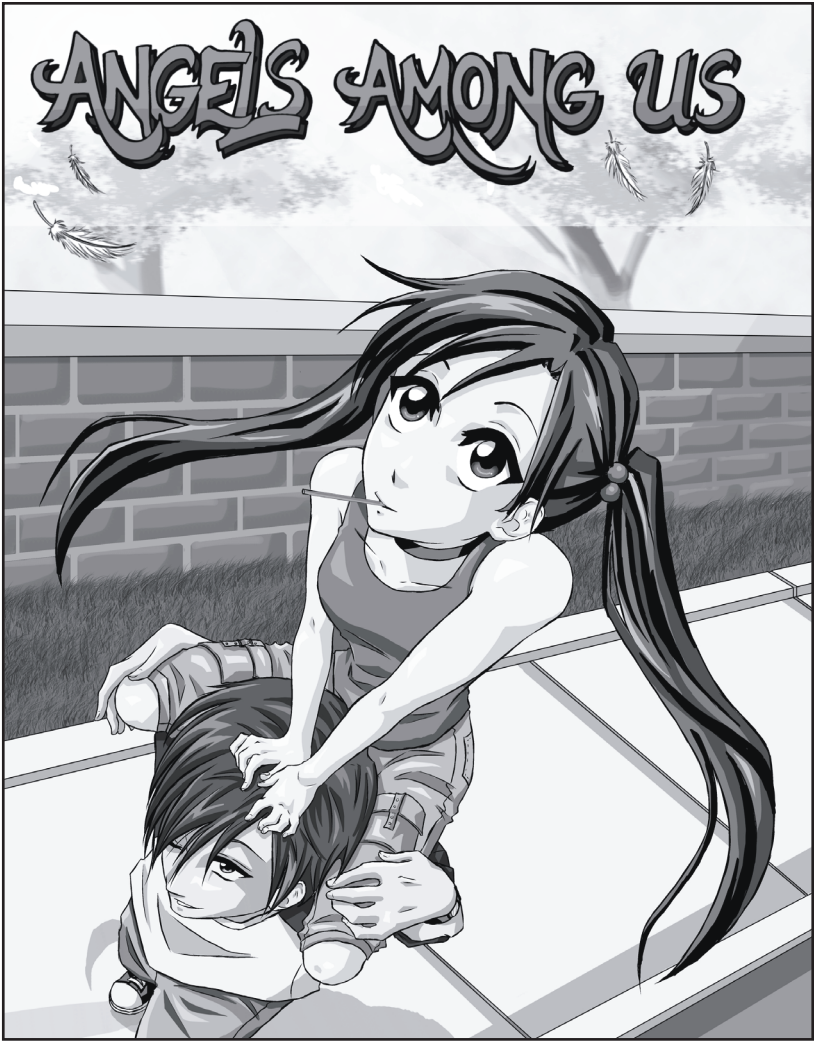
I wish I could say I was strong enough that I still didn't have these thoughts sometimes, but I would be lying and that's not fair to you. You hide things because you are strong; I hide them because I am ashamed. That is the difference between you and me, strength and weakness. You see, I have been able to move past the fixation of my own size long enough to realize I was really focusing on others perceptions of me and not my own.

I refuse to be weak enough to allow people to end my life for me but I am not strong enough not to listen to what they say. I replay what people say to or about me over and over until I believe it myself. This is why I said I envied you; you were able to overcome the hate of a few to realize your potential. I feel like being fat will always be holding me back from things I want to do. It defines every aspect of my life.

The clothes I wear, the things I do, the way I carry myself, my future career. Who would want to hire a fat girl? Who would want to be friends with a fat girl? Who could love a fat girl? When can I stop being a fat girl? You found the answers because you were able to stop seeing yourself as fat. You were able to change. I feel so weak compared to you. You are everything I want to accomplish but nothing I feel I will ever achieve. I'm trapped in the body of a fat girl, screaming and fighting to get out. To realize I am beautiful. You believe I'm beautiful, one day so will I.

Love Always,

Izzy."



Erika Bias
AAU Ad 01
Digital

Frank Scozzari

Guardian of the Treasure

“*Prelado de los tesoros*,” the bartender said, gazing thoughtfully out the window at the old mission. I turned and looked in the direction he was staring and saw a peasant boy walking across the street.

“He is the guardian of the treasure,” the bartender then said in English.

“Guardian of the treasure?” I asked.

“Yes, he is the Guardian of the Treasure,” the bartender replied.

The boy did not impress me favorably. He was maybe ten-years old at the most, wore the typical white serape draped loosely over his small frame, and looked no different than any of the other Mexican boys I’d seen romping in the plaza.

“What treasure?” I asked.

“The treasure of the old fathers!” the bartender exclaimed. “The Jesuits! The *Venditos*! The holy ones who built the mission!”

There were three large Mexican men sitting at a table behind me, and when the bartender said this, they laughed. I turned and looked at them and they quickly averted their eyes and resumed drinking their mescal.

“From the old Spanish days?” I asked the bartender.

“*Exactamente*,” he replied. “A great wealth in pearls was taken from the Sea of Cortez and explorers from all over Spain came in search of them. But rumors began to spread in Spain that the Jesuits were hoarding the pearls, so the King, who did not like the Jesuits, and did not want them accumulating great wealth and power, expelled them from Baja California.”

“And what became of the pearls?” I asked.

“Do you want another beer?” the bartender asked.

I looked at my bottle and realized it was nearly empty. I didn’t remember drinking it that quickly. But it didn’t matter. My flight to L.A. had been bumped a day so I had nothing better to do than to burn time. And it served me right, I thought, for booking via Mexicana when I could have already returned safely home via *United*.

“Sure, another Tecate,” I said.

The bartender popped the top off another beer bottle and set it on the counter in front of me. I picked it up and took a healthy swallow.

“The Jesuits claimed the oyster beds had dried up,” the bartender said. “They said there were no more pearls. But in truth, they lied to the king.”

“So was there a treasure or not?”

“*Pues sí*. Of course,” the bartender said. “But it’s not what you think.”

“What do you mean it’s not what I think?”

The three Mexican men behind me laughed again and when I turned back to them, they went silent again.

“There is a treasure,” the bartender said, wiping the counter with a rag. “I can assure you of that ... hidden away for many years, passed down through the generations. And like his father and his grandfather before him, the boy now is the guardian of the treasure.”

“So you’re saying there’s still a treasure and that boy is its guardian?”

“You don’t think it’s possible?”

“I find it a curious that a treasure of such great value could go untouched or more than two centuries?”

“But it hasn’t gone untouched,” the bartender said. “Many people come looking for it, from all over the world practically.”

“And no one’s found it?”

“Not the pearls.”

“That’s amazing.”

“Ah! You believe now. *Uh Señor?*”

“Not really. It sounds like a bunch of crap to me.”

“There is a treasure, Señor.”

The three men behind me began to laugh again, and when I turned and looked at them this time, the largest one, who had a big, black mustache like Poncho Villa, grinned at me. I watched him take a drag off his cigarette. Then he raised his glass to me, and the three of them resumed drinking.

They all had dark, sun-baked skin, and looked to be the local goat ranchers. I mean they were like *comancheros* except without horses. I had noticed herds of goats just outside of town, so I assumed they belonged to them. It's an odd profession, I thought, to get drunk in the morning and look for one's goats in the afternoon.

"So where is this treasure now?" I asked the bartender.

"Another?" the bartender asked.

I looked at my beer bottle. It was empty again. "Sure," I replied. "Another."

"The treasure is rumored to be hidden in the old church," he said, popping the top off another beer.

"There?" I asked, looking at the old mission. It was right down the street.

"Yes, there," he said. "As I was telling you, many men have come searching for it. They come begging and pleading, and digging. And when they're done turning the village upside down, they leave with their heads down and their hearts hollowed out." He paused, looking at me curiously. "You see, the boy will never give up the secret. It's in his blood."

I had to laugh, really. It was preposterous. But I decided to play along. I was curious to see where it would go. "So, what are my chances of seeing this treasure?"

"It is possible," he said, "but before you go running out and digging up the churchyard, I must tell you, no harm is to come to this boy."

"What? I'd never hurt that kid. I'm just curious. I'm not a treasure hunter or anything like that. I just like old stuff."

"Besides, the boy only watches over it when the *Padre* is gone and Father DeGarcia will be back tomorrow. So if you want to see the treasure, you can see it tomorrow."

"I have a fight to catch tomorrow, out of La Paz."

"Well then, that's your fate."

He looked at my bottle. "More cerveza?" he asked.

Shit! I'd already finished another beer? I couldn't imagine where it had gone. It went down too easily in this hot, humid weather, I thought.

“Okay, one more,” I said.

The bartender continued for another twenty minutes, elaborating in detail about the treasure and all the treasure hunters who had come seeking it, and I continued drinking. Occasionally, I’d hear the three Mexican men behind me laugh, and as before, I wasn’t sure if they were laughing at the story or at me. And when I finished that last beer, he asked me again if I wanted another, but my head was feeling that drunken elation now. I wasn’t drunk. I was just feeling the buzz, so I thought about returning to my motel room.

“I think I’ve had enough,” I said. “How much do I owe you?”

“It is twenty,” the bartender said.

“Twenty? For three beers?”

“Five, Señor.”

He motioned his head to five empty Tecate bottles sitting at the backend of the counter. I didn’t think I’d drunk five, but I wasn’t in a position to argue so I put a twenty-dollar bill and three ones on the counter.

“Keep the change,” I said.

Lifting myself from the barstool, I stepped past the three Mexican men, and again they began to laugh. It was a bit annoying, their laughter. It was rather rude I thought. And it seemed to me there was something mocking in it. So I stopped and stared at them.

“What’s so funny?” I asked.

“Nothing,” the big one said.

I continued to stare, waiting for them to wipe the smirks off their faces, which they did not, and for a minute we all watched the smoke from their cigarettes rise and get cut-up in the ceiling fan.

“It is nothing,” the large one then said. “It is just laughter.”

“Okay then.”

As I turned and took another couple steps toward the door, I heard the chuckling resumed. And as I stepped outside, struggling to find the steps, the laughter grew louder. They had been drinking all morning, I thought, and not

beer – *mescal*. Combine that with the heat of this place, and chasing goats for a living, that'd make anyone delirious.

I headed back to my motel room for a siesta. It was too damn hot to do anything else. Besides, my head was spinning. If you want to know the truth, the beer bottles are not a normal size down here. They are at least a pint, and the alcohol content higher than in the United States. And the heat made them go down too easily.

As I crossed the street and looked down at the old mission, I saw the boy in the distance – the guardian boy. He was walking through the courtyard past some boys playing soccer. He went up the steps into the old mission.

It's a bunch of bullshit, I thought. *A treasure buried by the old Spanish Fathers?* Yet, the great mystery of it compelled me to want to know more. Besides, that'd be something to tell my friends back home, and to take the edge off the flight delay with Mexicana Airlines. To say I'd seen an ancient treasure!

So I walked down the street, through the plaza, and up the sprawling steps of the old church. It was this classic, sixteenth-century, Moorish-style piece of architecture – a European wonder completely out of place in the middle of the Baja desert.

When I stepped inside, it took a minute for my eyes to adjust. Then I saw this magnificent façade. Above the altar was an elegantly-carved Christ statue looking down at the pews. The ceiling was arched and painted blue, like a sky with white stars, and there were very old icons and statues everywhere, some probably dating back to the Spanish days. I saw one painting that could have been a Greco.

I located the boy kneeling in the first pew. I think I surprised him when I walked up behind him.

"Hello," I said.

He turned and looked up at me with a strange expression.

"You speak English?" I asked. "*Se habla English?*"

"Si, yes."

"You are the guardian of the treasure?"

He stood up, made the sign of the cross to the Christ figure, and then turned his attention to me. For a moment, he studied me carefully.

“There are no pearls,” he then said in perfectly good English.

“You are the guardian of the treasure? No?”

“Yes. But there are no pearls.”

“That’s not what I’ve been told?”

“I tell you there are no pearls,” he said.

“Well, the bartender and all the men in the bar seem to think there is?”

He said nothing, and for a long minute we just stood there looking at each other. He had these black eyes, like little gimlets of ice, burning with a cold fire. I remember that well. There was no geniality in them, only a hidden ferocity I could not easily describe.

I opened my wallet, took out a twenty-dollar-bill, and held it out to him. “Twenty bucks if you show me the treasure,” I said.

He immediately shrank back from it as if it were an evil thing. “Keep your money.”

“Take it.”

“Father DeGarcia will return tomorrow,” he said. “If you want to see the treasure, come back and talk to him.”

“I’ll be gone tomorrow. I have a flight to Los Angeles.”

He made no sign of acknowledgment.

I contemplated for a moment. Then I took out another twenty, lined it up with the first one, and held them out together. This time his eyes locked on to them, and his hand moved forward, though hesitating and withdrawing quickly.

I pushed the bills closer to him and he nervously drew further back, all the way against the altar rail.

“C’mon, take it,” I said.

For a moment there was a pause. Then, suddenly, he snatched the twenties from my hand and started walking away, briskly.

“Hey, wait!”

“It’s in the graveyard,” the boy replied. “Follow me.”

The boy walked quickly toward a back door, weaving his way through the pews in a way that made it difficult for me to keep up. And when he opened the back door, he bolted out of it, not giving me a chance to follow. For a second I stood there, blinded by the light. And when my eyes finally adjusted, I saw the boy was gone.

It was in fact an old graveyard – a sizable one – enclosed by an adobe wall and filled with the graves of Indians and the tombs of long-departed padres. I searched behind some tombstones and walked along the back wall of the mission, but I couldn’t find the boy anywhere. Then I saw a gate on the far side of the adobe wall, left ajar. All I could think of was ... *that dirty little bastard!*

My head still spinning from all the cervezas, and I was baking in the sun, and I was feeling pretty damned mad. All I wanted to do was pursue the little scoundrel. But I had no idea where he went. I exited the gate, walked back out to the front of the mission, passed the two boys playing soccer, and found my way back inside. I sat in a back row. There was a cool breeze running through from one door to another. The thick lava-stone walls kept the temperature and humidity down, and for a moment I just sat there, cooling off and listening to my heart beat.

Then I heard it, something up front, a noise near the altar. I stood up, walked forward, and sure enough I found him – the guardian boy – hiding there, crouched like a little cockroach trying to be invisible. He looked pretty scared when I came upon him suddenly. He tried to run but I grabbed hold of his collar quickly.

“Not so damned fast!” I said.

The boy wiggled and tried to get away. I twisted the collar around his scrawny little neck.

“Where’s the treasure boy?”

“I told you, there are no pearls!”

“And you took my money anyway?”

He pulled the two twenty-dollar bills from his pocket and thrust them into my side.

"It's Judas' money!" he said.

"It's too late for that!" I replied.

He let the bills drop to the floor. I reached down, picked them up, and stuffed them in his pocket, still holding tightly to his collar.

"How many people have you ripped off like this?" I asked.

He did not answer. Instead, he gazed above the altar at the Christ statue, as if expecting some kind of divine intervention.

I wasn't buying it.

"The pearls!" I insisted.

"There are no pearls!" the boy cried. "*Nada más!*"

Of course I knew he was lying. I had the benefit of the great, white enlightenment which comes from alcohol. I had clarity of mind. And I wasn't going to get sucked in by all that religious crap. He had already proven to be a clever little snake. And I think he knew I was a bit inebriated. He noticed me wobbling, and I could tell he was thinking of some way to take advantage of my condition.

I pulled the noose even tighter around his neck.

"The pearls!" I said.

"Go away Americano!" he cried.

I am sure he disliked all gringos. And probably for good reason. I wasn't the first who came in search of the treasure. But I was the current. So he looked upon me with a jaundiced eye. All the hatred from his past encounters was now centered on me.

His shifty eyes began looking for a place to run.

"Don't even think about it!" I said.

It was a travesty what he had done to me. Taking my forty dollars and running out the back door? Then trying to pretend he had some kind of religious privilege, or divine immunity? Really, this boy needed to be taught a lesson. I wanted to slap him. I needed to slap him. In fact, I pictured myself



Maria Lind Blevins

Erosion (Part II)

Wood Fired Stoneware with Platinum Gold Luster

wailing on him. But instead I twisted my grip around his neck until he began to choke, and I pushed him straight back against the rail of the altar, bending him over it in a way that had to hurt. About that time I went blank. All I remember was my jaw stiffening, and my head buzzing; spinning like a wobbling top. It felt like a gyroscope was running wild in my head.

“Come on you dirty little bastard!” I screamed.

“The treasure belongs to the church!” the boy cried back.

So there is a treasure?

I knew I had him now.

I pushed him further back. I figured a little pain might do it. But it only seemed to make him more resolute. As from a remote distance, I think he heard the voices of his ancestors telling him not to give in. Saying: “You are the Guardian of the Treasure. It is in your blood to protect that which belongs to the church!”

I snapped my right hand back above my head as if I was going to smack him. In fact I did it twice, and he didn’t even wince. I was a bit surprised by that. A natural reflex would be to reach up to block it, but he merely lay there like a thing dead ready to take it.

With my equilibrium wandering, and the humidity crippling me, there was that moment when soberness began to settle in. I felt my good senses coming back and I was about to ask myself; *what are you doing?* I was about ready to release the boy.

Then I noticed the boy’s eyes had watered up, and I saw his hand trembling, and his body suddenly went limp.

“I will show you!” he cried. “I will show you!”

I pulled him around facing forward and pushed him ahead, keeping a firm grip on his serape. I noticed a red, chafe mark around the back of his neck. It was he who had caused it, I thought, by taking my forty dollars and running out the back door.

“Go!” I demanded.

I drove him forward in the direction he knew he must go.

Though there was an atmosphere of defeat, the boy tried to be proud. He tried to brush my hand away from his collar, but he could not do so. He purposely walked slowly, defiantly, in a way that forced me to yield to his lead.

He led me up a narrow, spiral staircase. I followed eagerly. The stairwell was lined with lava-block walls and where it ended near the top of the bell house there was a small room. Inside the boy went to an old wooden cabinet, from which he pulled out a bundle of cloth. It was held together by old leather straps and copper clasps, and when he laid it on the countertop, unfastened the straps, and opened it, a strong musty odor filled the room.

His trembling hand pulled the cloth aside, exposing what it held, and then he stepped back and looked his hatred upon me.

It was nothing of significance. It was an old book; the cover of which was soiled and worn. The spine had some large cracks in it and the binding looked like it was about ready to fall apart. Inscribed on the cover, in ancient script, were the words: *Sagrada Biblia*.

“So where’s the pearls?” I asked.

“There are no pearls,” the boy said, his eyes looking a bit crazed. “I told you!”

For a minute I was silent – bewildered – then it slowly dawned on me what it was. There were no pearls. It was the old bible, the word of God; that’s what the boy had been protecting all along. Not a worldly treasure of pearls.

The boy’s eyes remained afire. Upon me he laid the hatred of every gringo who had come before me. And I am sure, if he had a dagger in his hand, he would have driven it into my chest to the hilt.

“Keep the forty dollars,” I told the boy.

I left the boy there alone in the bell tower, descended the spiral stairs, walked through the enclave, and out the huge front doors. It was dark now, and as I walked through the plaza, back toward my motel room, I felt a bit of shame. I am not a religious person, but the irony of it all had gotten me. Besides, the alcohol was wearing off. Now with sober clarity came the vision of who I was in the eyes of the boy: I was the villain who had come to steal what belonged to the church. I was yet another greedy American wanting to take what belonged to God.

I thought of the bartender too. What a joke he had played on me! He had conned me into buying five beers with a preposterous story! I had been so stupid!

And as I walked back to the motel, past the old cantina, I swear I heard laughter coming from it. It was probably nothing. It was probably just the wind. But I imagined it, clearly as if it were happening; the three big Mexican men still sitting at the table inside, and the bartender asking them: "So mi amigos? Do you want to see the treasure?"

And each time he would ask, the laughter would sing out, echoing through the narrow streets of San Javier; out through the graveyard where the old padres were buried and up into the bell-tower where the treasure was kept.



Paige McCreary
Deer Lights
Digital Illustration

Frank Scozzari

Lost to the Light

The reel spun futilely as the end of the film flapped repeatedly against the empty film gate. Below, a steady beam of light shone out onto the screen, featuring nothing more than dust particles flashing by, and through the keyhole from the theater seats in the grand old auditorium, came the grumbling sounds of patrons.

“Roll the film, damn it!” one cried out.

“Come on for God’s sake, start the movie!” yelled another.

But the old man did not awake. He lay still, breathing heavily, his head resting on his arm which lay on the table. In his mind was a vision of Greta Garbo in full *Mata Hari* headdress, dancing seductively before a mesmerized crowd. His ears were full of the sultry sounds of middle-eastern music and he could see the smoke rising from the incense burners in the nightclub’s elegant showroom. Dancing like a drunken elation in his head, Garbo approached the multi-armed deity, a statue of Shiva, and her hips began moving feverishly and the coin-laden scarf around her waist chattered with great intensity. The audience, consisting of bartenders, politicians, tourists, and military attachés, went silent with anticipation. Then she came right up against the statue, took her top off, and pressed her body into it. For a moment it was as though she was going to make love to it. Everyone was breathless. Then the room darkened and a cloaked woman dashed by, coveting Garbo from view.

“She’s not a spy,” the old man mumbled. “She is not the great enemy of France like everyone thinks! She is not!”

A loud bang awoke him. And when he lifted his head he saw the projection booth door slammed opened against the front wall. Through it came René, the theater manager, rushing past him like a madman.

“You imbecile!” he yelled.

René bolted for the second projector and clicked the ‘switch over’ button. Instantly the film began to roll and angled beams of light shone once again through the keyhole, bringing back to life the oscillating images of characters and the sound of their dialogue.

“Bravo!” somebody yelled from theater seats.

René came back to the first machine, turned it off, and pressed his palm against the lamp canister, but it was so hot he had to withdraw his hand quickly.

“Where is your brain?” he cried. He pushed at the old man’s chest; his eyes were burning. “What is it with you?”

In truth, the old man knew, he had taken too many naps, too often at the wrong times, and with greater frequency in the past weeks. It was a problem he could not cure.

“If you cannot do the job,” René cried. “I will find someone who can.”

The old man only looked up at René with sorry, puppy-dog eyes.

René looked around. The projection booth was in a typical state of disarray. There were film canisters lying on the floor, some with their lids off, candy wrappers shattered about, and a half-eaten sandwich dried and crusty from the day before, lying on the table. The trashcan near the door was full and overflowing.

“You can’t leave this place like this,” he said. “You can’t leave these cans lying around.” He gathered them up, put their lids back on, and stacked them in a neat pile against the wall. “You have to clean this place up! It’s part of your job! It’s your last chance. If you want to sleep, go home and sleep!”

The old man wisely remained silent.

After a few more minutes of huffing, René stood silently with his hands on his hips. He glanced up at the big wall clock. “It is the last showing. Can you handle it?”

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t forget to cap the film canisters!”

“I know.”

“And the lamps! Remember to shut off the lamps!”

He was referring to the time the old man had forgotten to shut off a projection lamp and burnt out an expensive bulb.

“Yes.”

“And lock up properly.”

“Of course.”

René took another glance around the projection booth. “Only three more months!” he said, shaking his head.

When he turned to exit, the old man mumbled something, inaudible.

“What?” René asked.

“Nothing.”

René hesitated at the door, but then left, closing it securely behind him.

Spencer Tracy would have never stood for that, the old man thought. Not for a second. He wouldn't have.

When the film finished, the audience slowly cleared the auditorium and departed out the front lobby doors. The old man watched them through the key hole until the last patron was gone. Then he canned the two film reels and set the canisters on top of the neat pile René had stacked against the wall. He tidied up the projection booth, swept it clean with a broom, hiding the small pile of trash in a corner, and he made sure the lamps were off. Then he exited, locking the projection booth door twice around with the key before descending the narrow staircase to the foyer. He swept up the popcorn and garbage scattered throughout the theater auditorium, dumped a garbage pail into the dumpster out back, and fixed the large theater curtain so no screen was showing. Finally he returned to the lobby, opened a wall panel and pulled down the switch that doused the large marquee light out front.

A lonely walk down a lonely street brought the old man to his dreary, one-room apartment. There were no windows inside; only a bed, a little table, a sink, a small closet, and a separate closet for the toilet. It was a place to lay his head and close his eyes, and he could imagine himself in another world; a cinematic world of swashbuckling swordsmen and adventurous sea captains, but in truth, it offered little in the way of sustenance and comfort.

He lay down on his shaggy old mattress to the sound of squeaky springs, and unable to sleep, he stared up at the dark, opaque ceiling.

“You are the beauty,” he said, speaking aloud to Garbo.

Not everyone could communicate with movie stars of the past. It was some kind of cosmic, telepathic thing that only he possessed, and he prided himself on this ability.

“I understand every word you speak,” he said. “I understand every move of your dance. It is you, yes? It is you who will save the world from itself? And not for country, but for love itself. Am I correct in my thinking? Of course I am.”

He pictured her clearly, as if she was standing there in the room beside him; her image as vivid and beautiful as she had ever been on the silver screen.

“If you want, I’ll help you. I’ll be your secret accomplice, your *attaché fidèle*. I know where to go, how to end it. I have seen how it ends, and we will end it differently. Together we will overcome the French military and German spies. Okay?”

He waited for her reply, but there was none. It didn’t always work, he knew. But this night, he was really hoping for some two-way dialogue.

Then he thought of René’s words and became depressed. “*Only three more months!*”

As horrific as it sounded, it was true. The era of film projection at the Arlington was coming to end. When he first heard the news, he didn’t believe it or accept it. It was not possible, he thought. How could an art form requiring such skill and finesse be replaced by a computerized robot? But the change was going to happen. He had even read about it in the papers. A new, digitized projector was to be delivered in the coming months and his skills of threading film and swapping reels was to become obsolete. As the silent era gave way to sound, the film era would go down to light; the light of new technology.

He looked over to his small table. There was the bottle of gin waiting for him. He could see it in the darkness. For over five years now had been there. It had been that long since he’d been away from the stuff. And if he returned to the sharp-tasting liquid now, he knew he would return to it for good – until the end. It was the great morphine, he thought. It was the anesthesia for life’s

tragedies; the sweetest of all escapes. And it was not unusual. All the stars had one in one form or another. For Ray Milland it was whiskey on his long Lost Weekend. For Richard Burton it was vodka and soda water, which he liked as much in life as he did in his on-screen rants with Elizabeth Taylor in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* And as for Sinatra, well, of course, he preferred a well-mixed cocktail with the merest hint of dry vermouth, although heroin was his fix in *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

But it was gin that Spencer Tracy liked best. Gin was his favorite, his one and only; the drink he used to kill the real-life pain of the ordinary man.

The old man closed his eyes and tried to sleep. And though he finally drifted off, his sleep was restless. On through the night he awoke often, and when he did he looked over at the table and saw the bottle of gin still there waiting.

The morning was usual, nothing different; a poached egg at the corner café, some time to browse the newsstands, and a long walk along the river. He kept occupied until it was time for work. That was his routine, anything to keep him from his dreary apartment. When the afternoon came, he made his way to the old downtown district. A long sidewalk led him to the vertical, art deco marquee of the Arlington Theater. The overhead billboard displayed the films 'Now Playing; *Beat the Devil* and *The African Queen*.

"Ah, it will be Bogie night," the old man mumbled.

He unlocked the front door, went into the lobby, and looked around. Everything was as he had left it the night before. He climbed the narrow staircase to the projection booth, slipped the key into the door lock, and opened it.

As always, the projection booth greeted him like the arms of a beautiful woman. Stepping inside always gave him a warm feeling, like a welcoming home. He smiled broadly. That is, until he saw the note René had left on the clipboard along with the daily features. It read: "Don't fall asleep! And don't forget to turn off the lamps!"

The old man tore the note off the clipboard, crumbled it up, and tossed it in the corner.

"He knows nothing of film projection! He is the boss of no one!"

He searched through the pile of film canisters, and when he could not find the scheduled films, he glanced around the room and located them on top of the projection table. Evidently René had placed the films there to make it easier for the old man.

“So now he thinks I’m not capable of finding the proper film cans?”

There were only four reels, which was good, he thought, only requiring two changeovers per film. Not like the old days when you had to do three or four reel changeovers for one movie.

He opened the *‘Beat the Devil’* canister; the one marked ‘one of two,’ and took out the reel. He flipped open the cover on the first projector, placed the reel on the sprocket, pulled out an arm’s length of film, and held it to the light. Once he found where the numeric countdown began, he threaded the film through the gate, running the machine just long enough for it to catch, then looped the end of it onto the empty reel and advanced the film to the opening credits. He repeated the process on the second projector, loading the second reel and advancing it to the switch-over cue.

“Life is an illusion,” he mumbled. “It is best to live it as such. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.”

He sat at the table and ate a sandwich. After forty minutes, he looked down through the keyhole and saw only one person seated in the theater auditorium. When he looked down a second time, the audience had grown by three. At a quarter to four, he pressed the mechanical button which opened the theater curtains. And when it was exactly four o’clock, he started the film, framing it first, sharpening the focus, and synchronizing the sound. When all was set and done, he sat at the table and listened, to what, for him, was a most beautiful melody – the sound of film clicking through a gate at twenty-four frames a second. It was a six-thousand foot reel, which meant he’d have an hour before he would need to switch over to the second projector.

Through the keyhole came the sound of Humphrey Bogart’s voice. Though he could not see the film from his seated position, he knew every scene, every film angle, and every word of dialogue, verbatim. He had seen the film a hundred times, maybe two hundred.

“What’s our wide-eyed Irish leprechaun doing outside my door?” Bogart’s voice asked. ^[1]

“Just wanted to have a little talk,” the voice of Peter Lorre replied.

“Okay, but make it fast,” said the old man quickly, stealing the line before Bogart could speak it.

“Okay, but make it fast,” Bogart then repeated on the big screen.

The old man chuckled.

After fifty minutes, he turned on the lamp on the second machine, giving it time to warm up. After another five minutes he began watching for the cue mark; a small circular flash in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, and when he saw it, he clicked on the motor of the second projector. And when it flashed a second time, he pressed the changeover button. Then he heard the splice go through the machine and the images from the second projector immediately took over, flicking out the black and white celluloid, without interruption, exactly where the first reel had finished off.

“Now that’s the way to do it!” he said. “None of this three, two, one,” referring to the numerical countdown seen onscreen if the cue mark was missed.

The old man chuckled, thinking back to a time when René had mistimed a changeover. He had been left to manage the projection booth for only a minute and still couldn’t get it right! And there was that awful gap of white screen between the reels, and the painful groans of all the theater patrons.

The old man clicked off the motor on the first machine and began watching the film through the keyhole. On screen now were Jennifer Jones and Humphrey Bogart, standing on the *Terrace of Infinity*, high above the Amalfi Coast. The cinemascope image provided a panoramic view of sea and mountains that stretched from one side of the screen to the other. It seemed to be filmed from the height of an airplane, which gave a real appreciation for the beauty of this place. And the dialog was the quick and clever, bringing a smile to the old man’s face.

“There are two good reasons for falling in love,” Jennifer Jones said. “One is that the object of your affection is unlike anyone else, a rare spirit. The other is that he’s like everyone else, only superior, the very best of a type.”^[2]

“Well if you must know, I’m a very typical rare spirit,” the old man said before Bogart echoed the same line onscreen.

“How long have you lived here?” asked Jennifer Jones.

“The longest I’ve lived anywhere,” the old man recited, again beating Bogart to the punch.

“Didn’t you ever have a mother and a father and a house?”

“No I was an orphan,” the old man said loudly. “Then a rich and beautiful woman adopted me.”

The old man smiled as Bogart repeated the lines onscreen.

It was like Sunday mass, the old man thought, easier than reciting lines from the good book. And as the movie progressed, the old man lost himself, as he often did, in the romantic action and intriguing storyline. The images on the screen danced in his head as vividly as if he were acting them out himself.

Now a trio of characters, Robert Morley, Peter Lorre, and Bogart, found themselves shipwrecked and washed ashore on a deserted beach. A hoard of horse-

backed nomads stormed down a hillside firing shots at them. Everyone was frightened, except Bogart, and the old man, who stood fearless in the projection booth.

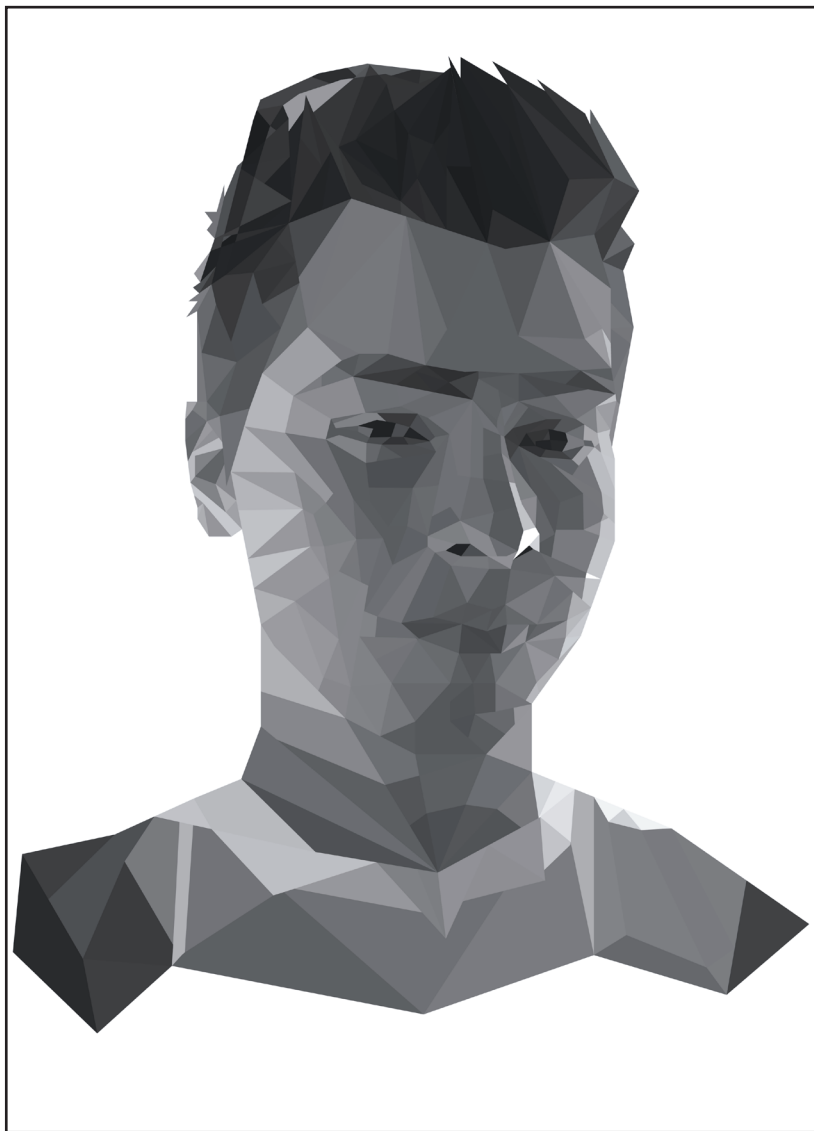
The old man raised his hands and said bravely, “Better get down everyone!”^[3] He made his voice sound tough and cynical.

Seconds later, Bogart raised his hands and repeated the line on the big screen.

“Africa,” the old man then said aloud as if he were speaking directly to the nomad chieftain. “It’s not a bad place to land. No customs forms to fill out.”

When Bogart repeated the lines, the old man chuckled.

The film finished, and during the intermission the old man replaced the reels with the second feature, *The African Queen*. He waited the customary twenty minutes for everyone to return from the concessions and then rolled the film. Once he heard the projector running smoothly, he sat down at the projection table and listened to its melodic sound.



Dakota Johnson
Self Portrait
Digital Illustration

“You are a good machine,” he said, patting it on its side. “You bring life to the ordinary. You create magic from nothing.” Then he sighed. “But like me, you are old and replaceable!”

He stretched his arm out comfortably on the table and laid his head upon it, and in his mind he watched the movie, following along as if it were playing in his head. He knew every scene, every word; all the facial expressions. The smooth clicking sound of film rushing through the gate, coupled with his cerebral reenactment, brought him to the place he loved best, his nirvana.

But he did not watch Bogart and Hepburn. He was with them in the boat, going down the Ubangi River. And he recited Bogart’s lines as if they were his own. And he watched Katherine Hepburn’s transformation from one who despised an aging old drunk, to one who loved. And now that she’d become smitten with this rugged old man, unkempt and capable as he, he accepted her expressions of adornment as if they were meant for him.

In his head, the reels spun forward at lightening speed. Before he knew it, Bogart stood with a noose tied around his neck being interrogated by a nasty German sea-captain; accused of being a spy for which death was the only penalty.

But it was not Bogart; it was the old man.

“Don’t give in!” the old man mumbled. He felt the ship rocking beneath him as if he were really afloat. “Be brave Rosie! Be strong! It is for love and country!”

As the large German vessel, the *Louisa*, drifted closer to the *African Queen*, the makeshift torpedoes pointing from the *Queen’s* bow closed in on its hull.

“Take cover Rosie!” the old man shouted, bracing himself for the explosion. “I’ll be with you shortly!”

Though the celluloid images danced vividly in his head, they had barely finished the first reel on the projector beside him. On the screen, the first cue marked flashed by, then the second, then the end of the film looped through the gate, and suddenly, nothing but a white stream of light shone out from the projector. And the groaning and booing from the audience was almost instantaneous.

“Roll the damned film!”

“Hey! Wakeup up there!” another screamed from the front of the house.

But the old man’s head remained down on the table, resting on his outstretched arm; his eyes closed and his expression intense. Even if he wanted to, he could not move. He had a noose around his neck, and the rope was pulling tightly.

“Be brave, Rosie!” he mumbled again.

Then the projection room door swung open with a bang, slamming against the forward wall, and in stormed René, as livid as he could possibly be.

“This’s it!” he screamed. “You are through!”

The old man lifted his head as René rushed past him and lunged for the changeover button on the second projector. He pressed the button, and instantly the images returned to the screen below.

“Thank you!” someone yelled from the auditorium.

“About time!” another screamed out.

“You are finished!” René shouted to the old man. “Get your things and leave!”

“What?” the old man asked.

“You’re fired!”

It took a moment for the old man to gather himself. He had barely stepped off the deck of the Louisa.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Get your things and leave! Now! I’ll mail you your check.”

“But I thought I had three more months?”

“Not no more. You are through, now!”

René grabbed the old man’s collar, lifted him from the chair, and using his grip, escorted him to his bag, which was against the wall. The old man picked up the bag and then René pushed him to the door.

There was nothing the old man could do. He was too dazed and confused to resist, and when he was heaved through the door, pushed out like a rag doll, he nearly tumbled down the stairs. He dropped several steps before he could

stop his momentum and regain his balance. Then he straightened himself, turned back, and looked up at René, who stood with both hands on his hips.

“Get out!” René yelled, pointing toward the front door of the lobby.

The old man continued down the steps, made his way through the foyer, and pushed his way out the front doors.

“He is a man without honor,” he mumbled to himself. “He is a man with no loyalty.”

As he walked down the street in darkness to his apartment, he thought of Garbo; her persona as *Mata Hari*, strong and defiance against all odds and in the face of certain death. Her image danced in his head, feverously; the coins of her hip-scarf chattering like wind chimes in a hurricane. Every movement of her body showed him her strength and will to overcome. *She is the bold and daring one*, he thought; the one never to give in to the misalignments and abuses of power.

Then, in his mind, he saw the bottle of gin awaiting him, there on his table in his dreary apartment, and the image of Garbo faded to black.

[1] [2] [3] *Dialogue from the public domain movie Beat the Devil, screenplay by John Huston and Truman Capote.*

TRANSLATIONS

Sergio D. Laras

Translated by George Eklund

Portrait # 1

That tree in the middle of the garden, what does it want?

Eduardo Lizalde

The tree in front of my window,
raised up before the people,
invites them to enter its house, close the door,
disrobe—completely alone—
and see their limbs challenge the grave.

It's then when they know
that from one moment to another,
upon sleeping,
green leaves will begin to sprout
and their arms, clutched upon the earth,
will yield to the root.
Someone will see them from the window
and discreetly look down
to see a sprout
growing between their legs.



Natalie Mineer
The Secret
Gelatin Silver Print

Sergio D. Laras
Translated by George Eklund
Portrait # 2

Your eyes, sharp needles
that pierce everything—
relentlessly break
that part of my body that is nameless
and that opens
and abandons the bud
with its petals now discolored.
Your dark eyes
like the earth tilled by the peasant—
strike a pose in me
and throw themselves into flight
like the swallow
showing how fragile is the branch
taking flight.

Sergio D. Laras
Translated by George Eklund
Portrait # 3

The movie theatre was dark,
My fingers horse riding within your sex;
I thought that maybe, when the light returned,
you might disappear;
and yet you remained there
like Venus
newly born in the foam.

Sergio D. Laras
Translated by George Eklund
Portrait # 4

A cat had died this afternoon.
Lying full length, immobile
and its eyes, scarcely open,
were replete with horror.

Slowly I cast it upon the ground
and upon seeing its body at rest,
I saw myself
seeing myself,
I saw my hands
flinging dirt upon my body
and imagined it was my death,
my own self I had buried.

Sergio D. Laras
Translated by George Eklund
Portrait # 5

I'll never manage to understand that mystery
that has flown to me in the form
of two children:

That high clarity in which life
tells us—even when we're distracted—
that something divine exists among the things
placed before us, waiting.

NONFICTION

Bethany Johnson

A Memory

A school library, small, unused and ignored—this is the image that has haunted my soul. The library was one of my two favorite places to be in high school, the other being a large wooden bench where my friends and I would sit and talk. The library and the bench are both gone now—the bench first, the library after it—unwanted spaces, removed and destroyed.

Amidst all of the pressures of high school, this little library was a secret, sacred place, free from persecution, free from worry. There was no librarian, no catalog and scarcely any order, yet I knew where most of my favorite books were. It was the one place where I could let go of my reserve and truly be myself, unrepressed and unrestrained. I could relax. I could breathe!

I attended a fairly small private school, with classes ranging from preschool to the 12th grade. The high school contained 50 students and only a select few of us were fully aware of the library. Some may say that the library's very existence was the high school's best-kept secret, though I would disagree. Students who wished to know about the library could have learned of it with little difficulty, if only they would have asked.

I view the library not only as my secret hideaway but also as a symbol of the general mindset of the school. Since its founding at the school's birth, the little library was neglected. Thrice, the library was used as a classroom but never was it made functional. In the years where the library was not used as a classroom, it was treated as a storage space and a makeshift office. The general outlook of my high school was an athletic one and having a functional library was never a priority.

More than once, I tried to rearrange the various books contained in that closet-sized room, a task that I enjoyed immensely but never completed. As soon as the books were somewhat organized, someone else would change their order. Perhaps whoever changed their order was also trying to create some organization, but I have my doubts. I felt, and still feel, that I was the only person in the entire school who truly cared for the library.



Abigail Grace Baggett
The Lass Encounters the Lady Within
Watercolor and Digital Illustration

My senior year in high school, the library was, for the third time, used as a classroom—this time for the new music teacher. I was the only high school student privileged enough to have a class with her, privileged enough to spend copious amounts of time in the place I loved so much. This was the pinnacle of high school enjoyment—to be in my secret place once more!

The music teacher, I believe, also enjoyed having the library as her classroom but not to the same passionate extent that I did. After flute lessons were over and, sometimes, during the days she was gone to take college classes, I took full advantage of the library. On more than one occasion, I found myself utterly distracted there, sometimes enjoying the adventures of an invisible teenager named Bobby in Andrew Clements' *Things Not Seen*, other times shuddering at the plight of the Baudelaire orphans in a volume of Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. This time spent in the library felt almost otherworldly, in a pleasant sort of way.

In time, some of the younger students desired to borrow the unwanted books. The music teacher and I devised a check-out system, where the students would sign their names and other information on a sheet of paper to take the books and sign their names again once the books were returned. Though this system was primitive, it was effective. In no time, the elementary and middle school students were taking the books and giving them meaning once more. This was the height of the library's existence. But it would not last.

Unfortunately, the decline of the library was just as rapid as its ascension. Graduation for me approached quickly, and the music teacher had to quit her job at my school in order to complete her student-teaching and earn her teaching certificate. The only adults that cared about the library had vanished. In time, the books were somehow disposed of and even the very walls of the library removed to expand the adjoining rooms.

My secret place is no more.

Bethany Johnson

The Feeling of Silence

“Hide-and-seek,” I thought I heard one of my kindergarten classmates say toward the end of gym class one day. I climbed into the hollow center of a large plastic toy that stood in the small gym that doubled as our church-school’s cafeteria. I sat there in the small, cramped space between the colorful panels of plastic, waiting to be found by a seeker. Ten minutes, or so, passed and I remained hidden. No one found me.

It was then that I noticed the silence, the absence of children’s merrymaking, the absence of the gym teacher’s voice, the absence of life around me. I climbed out of my expert hiding spot and found the little gym deserted. It was such a strange feeling, this silence. It was utterly different than what I was used to in the kindergarten classroom. I could physically feel the silence in my very core, entering through my skin and culminating in the recesses of my stomach. I did not scream or bawl like many of my classmates may have done in the same situation. Instead, I continued my silence as I, the lanky, pale girl with the long reddish hair, the girl that was neither a complete princess nor a complete tomboy, the quiet child, stood there completely alone for the first time.

I walked to the far end of the gym and through the large maroon set of metal doors that lead into the school. I went into the school in order to look for an adult who could help me, just as my parents had taught me to do. I walked quietly through the white hallways to the classroom where I spent the majority of my kindergarten days and found my kindergarten teacher inside. She listened as I tried to explain how I became separated from the rest of the PM class. After I finished telling her what had happened, she and I searched for my classmates, eventually finding them with the gym teacher in the entryway of the church.

I do not remember my kindergarten teacher telling me that it was my responsibility to keep up with the rest of the class. I do not remember being scared as she seemingly reprimanded me for something that was not entirely my fault, for something that she did not fully understand. I do not remember riding home in the car that day, sitting silently in my seat as my mom tried to get me to tell her what had made me upset.

What I remember most is the feeling of silence.



Billy Burt
Self Portrait with Dinosaurs
Gelatin Silver Print

Lindsey Roe

Memories

Memories are a funny thing. When you want to remember a specific, happy one, you try with all your might, and when you don't or can't remember, you get angry. But when there's that one incident, something that could have been prevented with a few extra minutes ... it's weird how it's that memory that you never forget, though you find yourself wanting to so badly because it was a day that you wish with all of your heart that you could change.

My first memory wasn't one of my teeth coming out or a happy Christmas or even when I went to the hospital after my stroke. It certainly wasn't my first day of school or my first trip to Myrtle Beach. That would all come later. It's freaky that my first memory from my childhood was a death.

It was a warm Friday night, May 21, 1998. The lightning bugs were out; the sun had just gone down. The smell of newly cut grass filled the outside air. Summer was just around the corner. You could feel the warm wind blowing on your face every night, like it always does on the dirt roads in small towns like Olive Hill. But we weren't outside that night. I remember all of these things as we opened the door for my aunt Polly.

Oh, how I *loved* Aunt Polly. I still do. She would always play whatever my sister and I wanted. We played Go Fish that night, like we did every weekend. My sister and I took turns playing with Aunt Polly. When it was my sister's turn, Mom came to take Aunt Polly's place at the card table. My sister wanted to play one of those ghastly, overrated Super Mario Bros. video games, one of the new ones back then, one with the steering wheel. Mom and I continued playing cards in the living room while they played video games in my sister's room.

The phone rang. We had a ringer so shrill that you could hear it from anywhere in the house. My mom went to the table five feet away from where we were in the living room and picked it up. Immediately after answering, she called out my aunt's name. A few seconds of talking to a neighbor of ours, and we were running out of the house, completely frazzled. I was just five years old, so I didn't know what to think. I just looked and remembered.

The mind is a great thing. It can do everything: it makes you talk, hear, it even controls your movements ... it can remember the greatest and worst times of your life. But it can't tell the future. For many years, I wished that on that night, somehow, I could have seen beforehand what was about to happen. If I could have told someone, would that have stopped it from happening? Maybe it would have caused something worse to happen. We'll never know.

In ten seconds we were in the car. About a minute and a half later, we were there, standing right in front of the wreckage. It happened less than a mile from our house, right there on Porter Creek Road. The police were already there, the firefighters just arriving. I didn't know what was happening but I knew it was something bad. When I heard crying, I knew it was sad. I remember looking at the wreck of the car that was once a pretty grayish blue. I heard my aunt cry for her, shouting her name over and over again, "Mandy! *Mandy!*" Then one of the policemen came over to her. He told her that her daughter was gone.

All she could muster in between sobs was, "And the baby?"

"The baby's all right, ma'am," he told her in a gentle voice.

Needless to say, we were really happy to hear that the baby was doing well and was still healthy. But this didn't take away the sadness of losing someone we were all so close with. And she was just eighteen, having had the baby only two months prior to the accident. This day left a hole in our family's hearts because of both the tragedy and the miracle.

You always think it's going to be someone young when it's a car accident. But the thing is, back then we couldn't afford to buy fancy cell phones or even the old Nokia phones. She wasn't texting or talking to someone on the phone. She wasn't drunk or listening to music or distracted and it wasn't self-inflicted. The car slid on some gravel lying in the middle of the road and hit a tree. That was it. A young mother's life ended because of some little rocks on a tiny road and a tree the exact spot that the car would be coming towards.

After the accident, we drove back to our house on the hill. Everyone seemed to be coming there, friends and family. I thought we were having a party, but then I saw everyone's faces. They were all crying, especially my Aunt Polly. I tried to cheer everyone up with some games but I might as well have been invisible. My mom took me away awhile later and had to give me a bath.

When I returned, everyone was gone. I was mad because I wanted them to play a game with us after they were done being sad.

I didn't know what death was, not at five years old. I thought that my cousin had just gone to the hospital to get fixed up and that they were all sad because of some bumps and bruises. I wish that had been the case. It's not easy to look back on that night now because when I do, all I see is a foolish stupid little girl who couldn't see what was going on. I know that children aren't able to grasp the entire concept of death, but I still see myself, begging everyone to play one game with me and then my mom eventually carrying me away so they could grieve and mourn our cousin's death in peace.

It's amazing that I can look back on that night when so many lives were devastated, and my first thought is questioning why I even remember it. It's not like I *try* to remember it. Sometimes I'll just close my eyes when passing the tree that killed her, and I will see and hear it instantly. Just like that, there it is all over again: the phone ringing, rushing to the car, the policemen, everyone crying. That is what's so hard for me: seeing everything play out, as if I'm going through it all over again.

Over fifteen years have passed since that horrific night. My brain refuses to forget and I wish it would so, so badly. I wish it never even happened. Maybe then everyone would always be just a little bit happier, perkier, cheerier. But as it is, everybody *is* happy. Not as happy as they would have been if she were still here, but happy. As happy as they can be, anyway.

All these years later, I still remember what my mom told me the first time I asked her why, if there was a God, He would take away someone so young with so much life left to live. "For everything there is a reason," she said to me. "God wanted her in His Kingdom so that He could love her as she loved us and was loved by us. Sometimes bad things like this happen, but there's usually good that comes from the bad." What she said made sense. Maybe it was decided by a higher power.

My mom's words always put me at peace with my cousin's death until a few years ago. I never stopped believing that she was in heaven until my mom told me when I was about fifteen that, if she wasn't a Christian or baptized, she wasn't in Heaven. I was mad for a long time that she up and changed her mind about that; I still am sometimes. We all have our beliefs and I choose to believe

the first thing she said because I can feel Mandy now, watching us and seeing what her daughter is growing up to be. I like to think that she's still watching out for everyone she loved.

We all moved on from what happened that night, although not completely. After all, some wounds never heal and most just leave a big, giant scar. As I grew older and smarter, something still didn't make sense to me. Why would God take a mother away from her child, a wife from her husband, a daughter from her mother? They say that bad things happen to good people. As much as I understand this stupid saying, I still have no idea what "greater reason" could possibly exist for taking someone so young away from the world. I guess I'll have to wait and see.



Rachel Adkins
Broom
Gelatin Silver Print

BIOGRAPHIES (AUTHORS AND EDITORS)

Sara Dalise Blackburn is from Pikeville, Kentucky. She graduated from the University of Pikeville in May 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in English and Art. Blackburn is currently working on a master's degree (English) through Morehead State University. She recently presented critical and creative works at the Sigma Tau Delta conferences in Portland, Oregon, and Savannah, Georgia; at the 2013 and 2014 Kentucky Philological Association Conferences; and the 2012, 2013 and 2014 UPike "Evening Literary Reading." Blackburn is a recipient of the 2014 Ruby Elizabeth Fizer Prize for Creative Nonfiction. She presented a 2014 Solo Art Show that depicted art based on her literary works and interests. The show was titled "The Art of Writing."

Rebecca Chaney is a native of Indianapolis, Indiana. She is a graduate student in the Department of English at Morehead State University. While Chaney considers herself a writer of short fiction, her current projects include poetry.

Ashe Chapman is pursuing a double major in creative writing and convergent media. She is a journalist for *The Trailblazer* and a member of Epsilon Mu. Chapman is currently working on a chapbook of poetry for a contest in hopes of breaking into the publishing world.

Melissa Dawn Conn was born and raised in Eastern Kentucky and currently resides in Olive Hill with her husband. She is attending MSU and hopes to achieve a BFA in Creative Writing with a minor in visual arts. Conn also writes for Midreel.com, where these poems are also published.

Dallas Cox is currently a senior at Morehead State University majoring in English education. Her poetry has been published in *A Celebration of Poets*, *On the Wings of Poetry*, *The America Library of Poetry: The Golden Edition* and *Inscape*. Cox believes language is the most vivid form of communication and hopes to continue working with words for the rest of her life.

Stella Rose Dacci is a senior in the creative writing program at Morehead State University. After winning the 2014 Fiction Award in *Inscape*, she joined the editing board and has had ink smudges on her fingers ever since. When she is not working with the written word, Dacci can be found kicking rocks by the creek, planning a hunt for Bigfoot or just generally wandering off.

James Day is a native of Lyndhurst, New Jersey. He is currently a language arts teacher and a first-year graduate student at Morehead State University, pursuing a master's degree in English. Day is eager to continue writing creatively, learning different forms of expression through the written word. A recent project includes the creation of a portfolio for a series of works in an advanced poetry writing course.

Nettie Farris lives in Floyds Knobs, Indiana, and is the author of *Communion* (Accents Publishing, 2013). In 2011, she received the Kudzu Poetry Prize. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Aspen Grender is a senior from Pippa Passes, Kentucky. He is a member of the Honors Program at Morehead State University and will be graduating in May 2015 with a Bachelor of Art in Philosophy. He plans to pursue a Master of Art in Religious Studies in the fall.

Jennifer Parker Gribble is a graduate student of English at Morehead State University. She currently resides in Salado, Texas, with her husband and their two dogs. She is a high school English teacher and a 1994 graduate of Texas State University with a B.A. in English and a minor in Art. Gribble enjoys writing, reading, photography and distance running.

Lauren Hamm is from Grayson, Kentucky. She is an English Literature major at Morehead State University. She writes poetry, short stories, and longer works and enjoys blog writing.

Damon Huff is a sophomore at Morehead State University. He is a convergent media major with a minor in creative writing. Huff hails from the tiny town of Salyersville, Kentucky, and is a published newspaper journalist and poet.

Michael Hutchinson is originally from Magoffin County, Kentucky. He currently resides in Morehead while finishing his degree. Hutchinson is a creative writing major and studio art minor who hopes to one day use each discipline to its fullest potential. He is currently focusing on his poetry and plans to begin sketching a series of illustrations to accompany them soon.

Michael Jarvi is a native of Louisville, Kentucky. He is a freshman at Morehead State University and is majoring in creative writing. He won the 2013 Secretary of State essay contest in Kentucky and also received honorable mention in the 2014 Kentucky State Poetry Society poetry contest. Jarvi recently finished a novella of memoirs and is currently working on multiple poems and short stories.

Bethany Johnson is currently a senior at Morehead State University with a double major in creative writing and Spanish. Her short story “Visiting Elena” was awarded the *Inscape* Fiction Award in 2012. When she isn’t working on her studies, Johnson enjoys having deep conversations with friends and attending prayer meetings at the Methodist Student Center. A devout Christian, she hopes to share her faith in Jesus with others. After graduation, Johnson plans to continue her education in a master’s program.

Hannah Nicole Keeton is a sophomore pursuing a major in creative writing and a minor in social media. In her free time, she likes to write on her novel or play video games. Keeton hopes to one day become a full-time author but, until then, she plans to become an editor for a publishing company.

Erika Kendall received her bachelor’s degree in English at Florida Atlantic University. She is currently working toward her master’s degree in English at Morehead State University. She was born in Miami to immigrant parents and her Hispanic origins strongly influence her writing. She currently lives in Satellite Beach, Florida, with her husband and daughter.

Sergio D. Laras is a poet and publisher from Cuernavaca, Mexico. He is an editor at Simeiente Press. These selections, translated by George Eklund, are taken from Laras’ volume, *Genesis*, published by La Hogaza Press [2012].

Jerica Lowe is a creative writing major from Aquidneck Island, Rhode Island. She is currently a senior with one semester remaining before graduation. Lowe enjoys almost all books but has a particular love for fantasy novels. She is terrified of performing readings and has lots of respect for any talented author that speaks effortlessly. She hopes to one day write a compelling western RPG for Bioware, while wearing a pair of ridiculous pajamas.

Benjamin Lee Martin is a mechanical engineering major currently attending Morehead State University and desires to become a published author. Martin is on his third book of a fantasy/science fiction series called *A Crown of Iron*. Martin has been an avid writer since he was a freshman in high school and has been working since then to bring his dream of the book series to life.

Chelsea Mayse is a native of Morehead, Kentucky, but would have enjoyed being raised in Amsterdam, Rome or Florence. She is passionate about her work with a thirst for life and everything it has to offer. Mayse is currently writing a book titled *The Invisible Eight* and another that is untitled but undoubtedly has to do with mermaids. There is a half-written novel named *The Enigma* stuffed in her desk somewhere, too. She has written a novel, *Chiller*, which is being reviewed upon request by the senior editor of Simon and Schuster. It will have three more sequels, which are currently in the works. She also enjoys writing poetry. Mayse is pursuing a double major in creative writing and philosophy.

K.M. McCann is a graduate student in English literature at Morehead State University. Her nonfiction has been published by Black Balloon Press (*Airship Daily*). McCann is in the process of completing a novel.

Kip Nead is a graduate student in English literature at Morehead State University and has been writing poetry most of his life. He currently works in financial aid at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California. In previous careers, he worked as a stock broker, a mortgage broker, waiter, ski instructor, and owned a children's bookstore for six years. He lived in New York, Utah, Colorado and Hawaii, before settling in California 31 years ago.

Mick Parsons is a poet and a teacher who lives with the love of his life in Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of *Fragment of Unidentifiable Form*, *An Uncommon Book of Prayer*, *Living Broke: Stories*, an e-novella *In The Great World (Small)*, and the chapbooks *The Crossing St. Frank*, *Whitman By Moonlight* and *Endnotes to the Deep Atlas of Time*. His work has also appeared in *The American Mythville Review*, *Antique Children* and *The Licking River Review*. He also sporadically maintains a blog.

Rachel Pelgen is pursuing a double major in theatre and English with a minor in creative writing. She is originally from Fort Thomas, Kentucky. Currently, she is working on a collection of poems.

Phillip C. Ratliff is a native of Ferrell's Creek, Kentucky. He is a graduate student in English at Morehead State University. His prose has appeared in *Now And Then*, *Wind Magazine*, *Best of Wind Magazine*, *Byline Magazine* and *Journal of Kentucky Studies*.

Lindsey Roe will complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing this coming December and hopes to either pursue an MFA or obtain a writing job and write for herself. Roe is a big fan of movies, as well as TV shows in general. Roe hopes to write a screenplay or novel, go to Hollywood, and see her work on the shelves of all major stores sometime in the future. In her free time, she likes hanging out with her family and friends and writing stories.

Frank Scozzari lives in Nipomo, a small town on the central coast of California. He is an avid traveler and once climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his short stories have appeared in numerous literary journals including *The Worcester Review*, *The Emerson Review*, *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Tampa Review*, *War Literature & the Arts* (U.S. Air Force Academy), *The Bitter Oleander*, and have been featured in literary theatre.

Dr. Cassandra Smith is a native of Los Angeles, California, but lived in Stone Mountain, Georgia, for 16 years before moving to Mount Sterling in 2011 to teach at Frenchburg Job Corps. In 2012, she accepted the program director position at Morehead State University-Montgomery County Adult Education, where she established the Adult Basic Education and Literacy Council to create a legacy and organizational growth. Before moving to Mount Sterling, Dr. Smith taught accounting at Atlanta Technical College for four years and Georgia Perimeter College for three. Smith worked in private industry for 10 years and owned an accounting business for seven. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from California State University Dominguez Hills (1989), a Master of Business Administration from Keller Graduate School at DeVry University (1999), and a Doctorate of Business Administration from University of Phoenix (2011). She enjoys reading, zumba, spinning, yoga, beaches and black history.

Lindsey Stiles is a junior at Morehead State University with a major in English education. When she isn't studying, Stiles enjoys being with friends and family. Her favorite writers are Robert Frost and Henry David Thoreau, and one can often find her curled up with their poetry. She also loves exploring nature, particularly by hiking. After graduation, Stiles plans to teach high school English while working on her master's degree. She wants to impact the world by showing God's compassion, love and kindness to others.

Samantha J. Wilburn is a graduating English major with a minor in industrial engineering. She is currently working on a short story project set in Japan's Edo Period.

Adam Garrett Williams is currently working on a master's degree in English literature from Morehead State University. Williams lives in Orlando, Florida, and is working on completing a collection of short stories and poetry.

BIOGRAPHIES (ART & DESIGN)

Rachel Adkins is a convergent media major at Morehead State University.

Abigail Grace Baggett is an art major at Morehead State University, whose work is dedicated to the communicative power of art through design and narrative illustration. Baggett displayed work in the 2013 and 2014 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, and she received a first place award in the three dimensional category. Baggett also had work published in the 2014 issue of *Inscape*.

Sarah Barrett is an art education major and a senior at Morehead State University. In November 2014, she received a second place award for one of her gelatin silver print entries at the Gateway Regional Art Center's *Juried Student Art Exhibit* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. She is currently pursuing photography projects that expose the human form with the intended message to be true to yourself and be comfortable in your own skin.

Aj Bauer is a third year art education major at Morehead State University and an alumnus of the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts.

Erika Bias is an art major at Morehead State University. Her work consists mainly of illustration and graphic novels. Bias' work appeared in the 2012 edition of *Inscape*, and she received a second place in art award in the 2013 edition. Her graphic novel, *Angels Among Us: Volume 1*, was exhibited in the 2014 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky and included in MSU's *Best of Sophomore Show* exhibit in 2013.

Maria Lind Blevins is an artist pursuing her Master of Arts in Art Education at Morehead State University. Her artwork explores the subject of identity through symbolism related to gender roles, social class, race and sexual orientation. Blevins' ceramic work currently showcases both industrial and organic textures to represent the spectrum of masculinity and femininity present in one's selfhood. In 2014, she was awarded a second place award in MSU's senior exhibition and Blevins received an honorable mention in the 2014 *Inscape* publication.

Billy Burt is an art major at Morehead State University, whose work is heavily inspired by nature, television and other things that crept into him at an impressionable age. Burt has not won a single award for his work aside from the reward of creating something, which he figures is pretty cool anyway.

Austin G. Casebolt is a junior art education major at Morehead State University and a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon.

Emilee Craig is a senior at Morehead State University. She will be graduating in May 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in Art with a focus in graphic design. She recently presented two graphic design pieces in the *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Craig is the President of MSU's Photography Club and Director of Communications for the campus chapter of AIGA.

Lauren Eastep is a freshman double major in art and biology at Morehead State University. She enjoys working with a wide variety of media and subjects, from watercolor children's illustrations to digital realism. This is Eastep's first time entering her work in an art publication competition.

Kirstin Hardin is a junior at Morehead State University. She enjoys making surrealist art that challenges the way everyday life is perceived. Hardin displayed work in the 2013 and 2014 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, winning an honorable mention in 2014.

Cecily Brooke Howell is a graduate art student at Morehead State University focusing on printmaking. Her artwork has been recognized with numerous awards, and Howell has presented pieces at multiple venues, including The Arts Center's 3rd *Annual International Print Exchange* in Troy, New York; The Sketchbook Project's *The Print Exchange 2014* in Brooklyn, New York; Southeast Missouri State University's 2012 *Mid-America Print Council*; and the Kentucky Arts Council's 2013 *Kentucky Crafted* in Lexington, Kentucky. Howell will begin Kent State University's MFA Printmaking program in the Fall of 2015.

Kristin Howell is an art major at Morehead State University with a concentration in graphic design. Howell focuses her artwork around the human form, usually the female form. Her current body of work deals with pushing boundaries by overlapping different subject matter. Howell displayed work in the 2013 and 2014 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, winning first place in the photography category in 2014. She also had work published in the 2013 issue of *Inscape*.

Sarah Nicole Jackson is an art major at Morehead State University. She captures the emotions of her community and channels them into her intimate artwork. Her work challenges individuals' emotional insecurities and forces them to be expressive. For three consecutive years, since 2010, and long before she began her college career, Jackson displayed her work at art exhibits hosted at MSU. Currently, she is taking art classes in order to make a career out of an activity she loves.

Dakota Johnson is an art major at Morehead State University, whose work is generally concentrated around graphic design. He enjoys both viewing the digital artwork of others and working with digital media himself. Johnson tends to incorporate graphic design into digital concept artwork—particularly character design and portraiture.

Paige McCreary is an emerging artist from Harlan County, Kentucky. She is working toward completing Morehead State University's Bachelor of Arts in Art program. With traditional and digital illustrations, McCreary creates anime-style characters inspired by nature, fantasy and pop culture. Her works have been displayed in MSU's sophomore exhibit, The Artist Collective's exhibit in 2014 in Morehead, and the 2014 *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. McCreary hopes to one day create and publish graphic novels but, for now, she focuses on experimenting with and improving her illustrations.

Natalie Mineer is a business major at Morehead State University with a general specialization in marketing. While her main focus is business, she feels a connection with photography and pursues that love just as much. Mineer recently accepted a position with the Walt Disney Company's College Program, where she will be a Disney cast member from January through June of 2015.

Scout Odom is a sophomore at Morehead State University majoring in theatre arts and is a member of the Honor's Program. Odom's work is primarily realistic and documents her life, including expressive self-portraits, candid family moments and illustrated snapshots of memorable events or emotions.

Julie Robinson is a returning Morehead State University student, who previously earned an Associate of Science degree. She became interested in photography in the fall semester of 2014. Taking a basic black and white photography course invoked a great appreciation and passion for the art of photography in Robinson. She believes it allows an individual to experience an event without being present and it is open to each person's unique interpretation.

Mike Sealand is a multi-dimensional artist, who brings his talents from painting and ceramics to his newfound love of photography. He enjoys using dramatic light and a unique perspective to create compelling portraits. Sealand is a senior at Morehead State University. He is an athlete and a cheerleader who loves the outdoors. For Sealand's future research in photography, he is considering using nature in combination with storytelling and portraiture.

Meggan Sloas is an art education major at Morehead State University, whose work generally focuses on wildlife. She displayed pieces in the 2014 NSEW: *What Grew Me* exhibition at Middle Tennessee State University's Todd Art Gallery; the *On the SoFA: State of Fine Arts 2014* exhibition at Georgetown College's Anne Wright Wilson Fine Arts Gallery; and the annual *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky from 2012-2014. In addition, Sloas' artwork was published in the previous three issues of *Inscape*.

Gilbert Sutherland is a graduate student in art at Morehead State University, who focuses on printmaking and ceramics. In 2014, he displayed his work at the Gateway Regional Art Center's *Juried Student Art Exhibit* in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky.

Michael Wallace is an art major at Morehead State University with a focus in graphic design and photography. *Crevasse*, his digital photography print, received an honorable mention in 2014 in the *Juried Student Art Exhibit* at the Gateway Regional Art Center in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Wallace's work revolves around the outdoors and tourism, promoting outdoor and eco-friendly businesses. It is not uncommon to find him 12 miles upstream in a kayak or hanging off a cliff with a camera in hand, to deliver a sense of exploration and adventure through his photographs. Wallace is currently working on a series about Eastern Kentucky Waterway Pollution.

Julie Willian is studying art and design at Morehead State University and will be graduating in December of 2015. She is a portrait photographer, using natural light to bring out the beauty of the individuals who hire her. Currently, Willian is photographing weddings and developing her love for typography in her free time.



Inscape is a Morehead State University publication with a long history of cutting edge visual and literary art. Media and genres of work range from prose, poetry, short story, long narrative, non-fiction and creative essays to photography, printmaking, drawing, painting, sculpture, design and digital art.

The Department of English offers MSU students the opportunity to submit work for publication. Students may submit poetry, fiction, non-fiction, translations or drama. The works are reviewed by a panel and top selections are included in *Inscape*.

The Department of Art and Design offers students two opportunities to have their work juried for publication. For every issue, jurors review the competitive pool of submissions for both the cover design and the visual artwork published within *Inscape*. Their selections help form a unique and diverse issue of *Inscape*.

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