

# Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing

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Volume 13  
Issue 1 4/01/2015

Article 18

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2015

## Home Improvement

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### Recommended Citation

Dooley, Katie (2015) "Home Improvement," *Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/fishladder/vol13/iss1/18>

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*Katie Dooley*

## Home Improvement

You can rip out the inside petals of a peony  
and the shadow will stay the same. I spent too much time  
with myself and soon my hair was missing, my shadow  
changed. I didn't notice. My hands looked like bruised  
apples, my memory expanded to the size of a swollen  
heart. Graveyards were comforting to me. Your face  
was an antidote against the magpie colored sky  
of the afternoon and I forgot what it felt like to breathe  
through my own lungs during the hottest parts of the summer.

You were made of violets and pink tulips that grew  
too large, their stems stretching, bloated, missing the sky;  
my forgotten notebooks collected raindrops. I drew  
flowers and faces like my hands were going to be cut off—  
all pens run out of ink eventually. I rode my bike through  
novels, skipped stones through lines of prose. You coughed  
up poems in your sleep until they choked you. There is always  
someone with worse problems than yours until they sprout  
voices and tell you you're doing it wrong.

You didn't plant hydrangeas until afterwards and I'm still sorry  
about how I forgot to water them. I'm worse at keeping people  
alive than plants. Nothing hurts as much as it used to  
until I remember it, blossoming and rotting in the same year.  
I think everything has to end, even you,  
especially you. I still tossed rocks into your garden for years  
and cried when bees were killed. There are things that take the edge  
off but I've gotten too good at balancing on the edge. I'm sorry  
you turned into the hole in the wall that we keep covering up with furniture  
instead of getting it fixed.