

Studio One

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College of St. Benedict | Saint John's University
www.csbsju.edu

College of St. Benedict • 37 S. College Ave. • St. Joseph, MN 56374
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From the Editors

Studio One is a literary and visual arts magazine published annually by The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University. First published in 1976, *Studio One* showcases high-quality poetry, prose, and visual art, both from members of the local community and contributors nationwide.

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We are proud to present Volume 39 of *Studio One*.

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Poetry

Eve

She's no super market apple,
waxed and polished
to look good under fluorescent light,
bruises and flaws hidden; tasteless
as photo-shopped women in the tabloids
at the end of the check-out line.
She's a freckled, dimpled country girl,
naturally pretty in sunlight
like an apple on a back yard tree,
sweet, but a bit tart at the same time,
an apple that holds the knowledge
of good and evil and vacillates between,
delicious and tempting,
the offering of a serpent with good intentions,
the apple of its gleaming eye.

-Larry Schug
Avon, Minnesota



Untitled Movement
-Shelby Kitterman
College of Saint Benedict

A Rabbit from the Hunt

Hurry, hurry, mustn't be late!
For if I am, I'll be irate!
I dash and dodge all through the wood
I must respect my time, I should.
I hear the horses with their neighing,
And awful dogs with noisy baying.
Oh no! I think. Oh no indeed!
The hunters mounted mighty steed.
They have no respect for time.
They give no credence to clock's chime.
The dogs will catch me, surely will.
My pocket watch says quarter 'til,
But with the added speed of terror,
My calculations are in error!
I will arrive long before tea.
How happy will the others be!
But if I'm caught I will be late,
And if I am, I'll be irate!

-Malouq Vastour



Dog Days of Summer
-Chelsi Webster
College of Saint Benedict

Afterthought

for Stefan

When the angel calls
will you be ready
or will you be in the condo
by the water's edge, sun
peeping over the horizon,
wind five knots out of the south,
an easy breeze and the light
getting brighter in the eastern sky
then it hits you, slowly at first
and in a way
you don't quite understand—
a tightening in your chest,
difficulty drawing the next breath.
Your mind on so many things:
your son looking for work,
your other son finding work
that you know is just
one small step
in his life plan, and your wife
of all these years in the kitchen
brewing a fresh pot, humming softly
to herself.
In an instant the earthly life
you've grown
to appreciate, to love actually
in its many shapes and forms,
slips away.

-Marc Swan
Portland, Maine

ALL OF SOMETHING

For my grandmother.

She wanted to take the Jewish
out of me
as if she could pull ribbon
out of a braid.

She had that sad look
when she shook her head:
I just wish you were all of something.

But I was a sign
of her shame—
her daughter

who ran off with a Jew
who gave me my curly hair,
broad nose.

My grandmother loved me
in spite of herself
pretended I was pure,

dreamed my mother
had married a hometown boy
like the one she was engaged to

when she packed her trunk
with plaids and cashmere
and went off to college.

The one whose diamond
she gave back,
the one she left

and broke her mother's heart.
Sometimes I wanted to erase myself
take back that diamond

tell my mother she'd made a mistake
tell her I forgave her for having me
Pick up that other life, I'd tell her

Start over.

-Lee Varon
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Anasazi

Mesa castles in the sky
Where paintbrush blooms and eagles fly.
A people's passage marked in stone;
Artifacts of flint and bone.

Cliffy cities—vanished host,
Sanctum haunt of hawk and ghost,
Beseech your mummies rise to tell
The secrets time has kept so well.

Shadow dwellers, do you know
The coyote cries – the winds still blow
Like spectre voices from the past;
Your dreams are gone—the relics last.

Ancient builders of the rock,
Do you leave your stones to mock?
Anasazi, could it be—
Your silent ruins...a prophesy.

-Dr. C. David Hay
Terre Haute, Indiana

Clouds

It's fitting I think
to slip off my shoes,
curl my legs into my chest.
not tightly,
just enough to slide onto
the second shelf of clouds—
sounds ethereal,
but it isn't. It's
a three-shelf cupboard,
shelves wide enough
for a human body curled
as I mentioned
to slide into,
to roll onto one side,
slip the inside latch
and find a solace
only found within small
dark spaces
where the mind has no
room to expand, merely
to compress and think
those astonishing thoughts,
relive those touching
memories we thought
were lost, regained
in this small dark
space.

-Marc Swan
Portland, Maine

Cubicular Memo

The oak that shaded our office window
has dropped its finest limb—the one that kept
the two o'clock sun from making our screens
unreadable. Come Monday they'll chainsaw
what's left of it down. Let's lament its demise
for all the tragic, old self-serving reasons.
We oughtn't miss such a chance for regret.

Had that seed been borne to the cache
of a different squirrel, the weck you see
before you might have grown toward love
or even fame in some Kinkadean grove
that shaded generations: meadows of buffalo,
farmboys resting from work on the rock wagons,
an Amishman watering a brace of Belgians.

Or it could've, carried to the heart of a woods,
been grounded in a church of its own kind,
lived its century surrounded by its kin,
safe in a place without sprinklers or wind,
endured a quiet life in the relative bliss
of oakness, held in the support and boredom
of membership, growing old, gnarly, confident.

Well, enough of that. The big damn branch
cracked right off and split the damn trunk,
and now they'll cut the whole damn tree down.
I'll put in a request for some better shades,
more opaque, and, given the efficiency we love,
have them installed in six or eight months.
G'bye, tree.

-William Jolliff
Newberg, Oregon

CUTS BRIGHT

The wizard tree—
gnarled, bulged and twisted
with all its wisdom packed
behind bark draped
like magical robes—
was smote by a chain saw
to rid wizen limbs
from the sturdy core trunk
leaving fresh cuts
bright against its anonymity.

-Diane Webster
Delta, Colorado



Last One Standing
-Chelsi Webster
College of Saint Benedict

DAILY FARE

I chose oatmeal this morning because I always choose it;
it's a marriage really, a ritual, something I substitute
for prayer and good hygiene and civic pride
and responsible, disciplined behavior.

I don't smother my oatmeal
with these extensive extras, then top it
with fruit and nuts and vitamins and righteousness.
Oatmeal is a food of my ancestors, some of them,
Scots buried in churchyards I can only imagine,
speaking with a burr I can hardly decipher,

but, god, you know they loved their oatmeal,
you'd have to, to make haggis out of it,
the world's most maligned food, except for
Rocky Mountain oysters and no doubt
some obscure delicacy from New Guinea,
cow's bladder marinated in raven guano
and topped with especially prickly thistle.

No, I eat my oatmeal straight, no chaser,
no expectations, just the satisfaction of saying Hi
to the ancestors and nothing more,
a perfect food to eat alone, in silence,
while waiting for the brain to clock in,
suit up, pick up that scary, searing blowtorch

and begin shaping the cold, hard steel
of morning into something with holes in it,
maybe a moon, some stars, a stealthy fox,
and an expanse of something uncharted,
the windswept, quivering heath.

-Will Walker
Provincetown, MA

Deirdre

The pup romped through the roses to greet her,
old blue slippers in its teeth,
its bark and her laughing
etching the moment
in memory:

 car at the curb,
mimosa tree,
 her sister
behind her
peeling a tangerine....

 But it doesn't keep:

Pups chew up hoses, get hit by cars;
children buy dresses and bathing suits
 and worms
spin mimosas into clouds of pink bramble

like the dreams
that daughters seek
from others: lovers,

 teachers,
 friends,

while fathers like me
bend beneath pictures
they can never quite hold
—or set free.

-Bob Stout



On Ice
-Rita Thomas

[!]

More like a roman mace aimed
Right at a human head
Than like a chinese brushpen
Dripping black ink when held straight up
You were born with joy, but has grown
To be the vaguest bang in today's world:
Without a written explanation, or a
Tangible situation, no one knows if you
signal warning, surprise, anger, hatred
Happiness, love? yes, or no?

Indeed, no one can tell when the emotion is
The strongest, when the mark stands
Totally on its own, or beside another letter

-Changming Yuan
Vancouver, Canada

GIVING BLOOD FOR POETRY

-For Sylvia Plath, & all

How much blood would you donate for a poem?

For a few drops, you could earn a great first line, one that
pulls the reader in like a net and never lets them go.

A few ounces might be worth a well-written simile,
perhaps an original metaphor, a stained
line,

or two.

A quart would earn you a whole stanza,
the images trickling toward insight.

For another cupful, you could have a powerful ending line,
one that resonates and makes the reader's internal tides slosh back
and forth with wonder.

Or you could donate even more: two quarts, perhaps, for a fine
sonnet or sestina. Three quarts for a long elegy that brings stinging tears
to the reader's eyes.

Then there are writers who would give everything for poetry, those
who would donate the body's full six quarts
for a paper-thin truth.

Those are the true poets,

those donors who would open the gates to let it flow from
their thirty-seven thousand miles of capillaries and arteries
to bleed on the page,

until the heart—saying everything it needs to say—is emptied,
until it pumps nothing but air, and

the poet lies pale and drained on the floor, until all that's left
is this poem, these red, smeared
beautiful, pulsing words.

-Bill Meissner
St. Cloud, Minnesota



Nuke
-Rita Thomas

Intermezzo

The *intermezzo* is the music,
the dance between the acts;
the pause suspended
between the notes, as a sparrow dangled
in the sky by a gusting wind;

the respite, the breath; caught in the song;
the fissure between the first brushstrokes,
the mad, obsessive desire for inspiration,
and the hanging of the canvas,
the heady glory of the gallery;

the moldy fragrance between
the voluptuous decay of winter
and the dreamy pining of spring;
the lulling descent of a shard
of snow, a chip of crystalline sky,
to its billet in the drift below;

the limbo between signing
the paper for a sergeant's approving
smile and that first killing;
that cruel space between giving
your life and taking another,
all sanctified in impeccable camouflage;

the gulf between the thumb and the button
that releases the missile, that harsh epistle;
that alacrity between wing and earth,
between the rocket fireworks—
ooh! Ah!
and a local, family-size apocalypse;

the instant just before
the pretty, pink pill touches
the tip of the tongue,
a warm, juicy peach in the summer,
just before the chemical nirvana;

that abyss between yearning for death
and the relentless acquiescence of life;

the hesitation between a whim
clattering in the head and the clumsy
words formed at the mouth;
the panging chasm between when the eyes meet
and the fingers shyly interlace;

the *intermezzo* is the humid zephyr,
the *entre nous*,
between our lips just before the kiss;
between that tender spot,
that ingenuous cleft of your thigh,
and the moist, throaty ecstasy of abandon;

the *intermezzo* is the crevice of anticipation
where beauty abides, fleeting and innocent,
that weighty sleep between the days,
that aching lovely gap,
that throbbing, purplish bruise
between our first, naked spasms
and our last, rattling breath.

-David Sapp
Huron, Ohio



Duomo–Florence, Italy
-Melissa Bradley
College of Saint Benedict

GUIDE ME FORWARD

Alone

I wander through
fan-shaped fronds
cheeks caressed
by butterfly wings,
my hands brushed
with lips whispering,
a palm across my back
guides me forward.

Forward

toward water
splashing through stones—
pooling, reflecting,
gravity lured
through next obstacle course
to gather again and again...

Warm mist tickles

my face with desire
to strip free my clothing
and devour each mist morsel
like a sunflower to sunshine
until my eyes open,
I breathe deep the green,
and I know I am home.

-Diane Webster
Delta, Colorado

MEDIUM

A wooden canoe with its varnished ribs, for instance.
Where arrre you? Loon calling across the lake.

Kevlar or epoxy can be beautiful,
the lack of weight on shoulders.

It is good to make a craft that will carry
over lakes and rivers.

I should have worked with wood.
Just that the guys in shop class seemed so dull.

I know a man whose father was a millman.
He would come home smelling of whatever wood
he was working with that day.

My friend and his brothers and sisters learned
the smell of cherry, walnut, pine, oak.

I could carve a spoon so the grain
would show across the hollow.

I could make a table for you to sit down to,
that we could converse across.

Maybe the canoe factory in Peterborough
is taking interns.

There would be no question of what I meant,
no misinterpretation, embarrassment.
A spoon, or a canoe.

-Alison Hicks
Havertown, Pennsylvania

MONET'S WATER LILIES—MOMA

There is no other reason for your coming here.
It was not by accident, you did not come—
crosstown in the rain, purchase a ticket
and enter through security into this lightsensored,
well-guarded room to stare
into a phantasmagoria—by mistake.
You came here deliberately, surrounding
your body with these walls' water lilies' lushness,
forcing your calm to face off the decadence
of a Friday-afternoon-lunch-crowd tour.
You must have wanted it badly, to breathe
a suppressed and saturated air, wanted
to take in the possession, monstrous,
a dumbed and drunk pallor, the lingering
aftermath onto a mess of surfaces, drenched,
not water or sky but the feverish sweat
of a masterpiece, the trembling of a torpor
that stirs pond water through the broken
skin of canvas and flower carcass,
a stagnant opening purging the sicknesses
of the heart. These lotuses float
on dream-induced eyelid shallows, on stems,
fighting off the higher powers, roots entangled
and tightening in your arms, their underwater
blossomed petals rotted in the waste of a paradise.

-Saudamini Siegrist
New York City, New York



Wishes
-Chelsi Webster
College of Saint Benedict

Mother Milkweed, November

Whispy white hair blowing wild
as milkweed silk,
more beautiful than she's ever been;
she thinks back to the May of her life
among black-eyed susans, blue-eyed grass,
chamomile and clover,
how she held a chrysalis then,
as only one who's been chosen
by a fluttering, floating life
can hold a fluttering, floating life.

-Larry Schug
Avon, Minnesota

Prayer Wheels Spin

Prayer wheels spin,
spin, spin, spin
in the thin Himalayan air;
rosary beads rattle
in a dim cathedral nave,
in lined, weathered hands,
clack, clack, clack;
the rug to Mecca unrolls,
sacred road paved again
and again and again.

The devout shuffle
in a fog of vaporous incense,
round, round, round
mute, painted stone,
inert prophets and saints;
holy men draped
in splendid, embroidered vestments,
douse bowed heads,
blessed, blessed, blessed,
and light candle after candle,
flame after flame after vapid flame.

The pious wearily, relentlessly
chant, chant, obsessively chant
from scroll and scripture pages,
turning, turning, turning, endlessly
chant over the *maya*—
the many things, measure,
tabulated, computed, bisected, analyzed,
canonized into exquisite ritual.

And still and still and still
And still there is *dukkha*—
and still birth and death
sup in our kitchen and
sit on our porch, rocking,
rocking, rocking, rocking,
back and forth,
back and forth.

-David Sapp
Huron, Ohio

Reflection on a Starry Night

Driving south on U.S. 285
between Antonito and Tres Piedras,
Van Gogh's eyes reflect the night
in my rear-view mirror.
Vincent's in the back seat
leaning his one ear against the window;
he appears to be ill, dizzy
from watching the universe spin.
I ask if I should drive him to a clinic—
Taos isn't far out of our way.
No. No, he says,
afraid I might become hypnotized
by what I see in his eyes,
Just watch for elk
crossing the goddamn highway.

-Larry Schug
Avon, Minnesota

Skin

I was smooth, white, warm milk,
thick, heady cream decantation,
poured into this skin of mine,
unchipped, florid, howling pitcher.

I was a downy, baby bunny pelt,
but this pink hide never fit,
a husk wriggling and fidgeting
with every skulking breath;
no respite.

I was a young, hairy beau,
a skin stretched tautly over
itching muscle and bone,
steel epidermis, polished auto body,
a waxed metal rind wrapped
around revving, puerile motor gears,
peeling across an asphalt thigh.

I was a plastic scabbard sheath,
ribbed and lubricated bark
dissuading me from intimate
lapses and too eloquent caresses.

I was a Greek hero in
lustrous bronze patina, then
a tarnished, hollow warrior
collecting bleeding cuts,
pithy scars; hard, callused
dents and rust, dead crust;
and bruises, brilliant pupura,
in the gleaming, blue,
indigo, violet, aquamarine.

All became archaic myths
worn, old yarns scratched
in calfskin parchment codex,
ponderously heavy in museum dust.

And now this skin hangs
about me, a battered remnant,
lanky, passé shirt,
threadbare, baggy trousers,
frayed at the cuffs.

-David Sapp
Huron, Ohio

SUNRISE

He'd like to skip this part,
but the same thing calls out
to all of his names
in the late, wet morning,
muddied by his yearning
for a blanket in the drafty January,
eating biscuits in his sleep,
begging for napkins to sop up
the broken glass in his knees.

He has always stood on this place.
Smoke and grease, sand and gravel
from his feet to the horizon.
He'd have gladly dropped
his stake in these grimy games
if he'd had the chances
he could have sworn he'd earned.
Every morsel burned,
every glass obscure,
every day a disease,
every night a cure,
every dawn a reinfection.

-Jesse Minkert
Seattle, Washington



Nº5
-Shelby Kitterman
College of Saint Benedict

The Dark Nomad

I am crisp and tranquil

When I ache with shivers

I collect the warmth of the luminous bodies

Fluttering about that box they call home

I do not hear the things they speak

Oh, in the counterfeit company

Of artificial bulbs, ivory chandeliers

They gasp and fall on one another

Clanking their wine glasses

Pecking upon venomous lips

I hear only the pulse of the night

My moon is my master

Out here I conduct

The chant of the crickets

The subtle swell of my droning breeze

Purring through the sycamore trees

-Andrea Ross
St. Cloud, Minnesota

WHAT ONE DAY TELLS THE NEXT

Before sleep I tidy up, wash dishes, invite
tomorrow's breakfast in, set up a little shrine
to cocoa and coffee and oatmeal, while upstairs
sleep awaits, where dreams spirit me through
the mansion of my many years, ransack
hidden closets, resurrect so many dead—surprising
how lively, and so well—mix scenes so vivid
you'd never guess they're from school yards
where I haven't skinned a knee in fifty years.

I am hapless there, unsurprised by talking dogs,
weightless and then unable to stay aloft, telepathic
yet tongue-tied—and, worst of all, without memory,
waking with no recall, only able to walk downstairs
and see the signs I set up for myself the night before,
the pots and dry dishes that say nothing has changed,
my appliances still heat and cool and toast
and peel, just as they did before I sailed away
on my epic pilgrimage of sleep.

-Will Walker
Provincetown, MA



Untitled
-Nicole Kelly
College of Saint Benedict

Prose



On Stormy Days
-Ngoc Hoang
College of Saint Benedict

A Short Swim; Or, How an American Behaves in Northern France

No one in Calais liked my French, although they certainly did not dislike it either. Rather, they viewed my language with a sense of worry that they could not, for all their linguistic precision, quite put into words. Clearly, they appreciated that I spoke French; nearly everyone I encountered made a point of showing appreciation for my ability. Waiters, bus drivers, and receptionists all treated me with a peculiar respect when I addressed them fluently in their own language, but none matched the police. From the look of surprise and relief on the face of every officer I addressed, I inferred that the police force in Calais had a great deal of experience with non-French speaking foreigners. This did not mean, however, that I was particularly beloved in Calais. Calais is not Paris, and the residents there are not used to having foreigners stay in their city for prolonged periods of time, and thus viewed my continued presence as a sort of nervous oddity, a thing to endure for what would hopefully be only a short while.

But while the residents of Calais may have been a bit mystified or perhaps irritated by the fact that an American had lingered so long in their city, this was not the real issue. My greatest offense was speaking their language. Infested with tourists who spoke little or no French, Calaisiens spent what seemed like a great deal of their leisure time playing games with unwitting Anglophones. I often witnessed one called “les mots faux.” The game was simple—a group of Calaisiens, usually young males, would approach a group of tourists and ask, politely, if they needed any help finding their way around the city. The tourists almost invariably did, and they would do their best to respond in French. No matter their response, the boys would “correct” their French, unwittingly filling the tourists’ vocabulary with obscenities

and sexual puns, that they knew would eventually be repeated elsewhere. They took great pleasure in this convolution of foreigners' French.

This was not possible with me. My experience with native Francophones made me relatively impervious to their word-play. Naturally, this bothered them greatly. I was very much an American, and yet I had managed to penetrate their complex, idiomatic language, which served as their last, best defense against an invading army of foreigners. In response, they relegated me to the position of transient Frenchman—I was privy to their meals, their culture, even their personal conversations, but all on the silent condition that I would, after a short while, be on my way.

I certainly did nothing to reassure uneasy Calaisiens when, three weeks after my arrival, I decided to become a criminal. Of course, I didn't see it that way at first. I was simply "exploring." During my stay I had managed to resist things I thought of as "tourism," in hopes that I would avoid the stigma attached to the crowds gathered around the massive, Renaissance-style Town Hall, or those who paused to murmur pseudo-intellectual comments before Rodin's *Les Bourgeois de Calais*, which stands in the town square. One aspect of the city was, however, irresistible to me—le phare, the lighthouse. Calais is a town built entirely on shipping, with a series of large, congested docks along the coastline, an area nearly entirely disregarded by foreigners. Just past them is an old lighthouse—small as lighthouses go—and in a state of disrepair. It is a workmen's lighthouse, not intended to be climbed on family vacations or plastered onto the front of postcards. Although it requires a bit of trespassing, it is possible for one to swim out to it, and even to climb a little ways up its side, where a small ledge provides a seat from which, a polite French waiter had told me, one might glimpse the white cliffs of Dover without so much as a pair of binoculars. This, I reasoned, could not be tourism. Anything that required the climbing of a fence and swimming through one of France's busiest ports would not be found in a travel guide or hotel brochure.

Getting to the lighthouse required me to walk along a rather long stretch of dock. I marched past an endless line of ships, first the oldest, the hulls of which bore the rust of years of oceanic travels, and eventually the newest, which gleamed in a bright mid-day sun. The two classes were separated by a series of thick ropes, which alternated from red and blue to red and white. I had not walked long before I noticed the stares. The towering ships created a gallery of sorts, down from which the sailors peered at an obvious foreigner who, to the best of his ability, was casually strolling through their workplace. Clearly, I was dressed wrong—corduroys and a sweater were not the uniform of the Calaisien dock-worker, and despite what their advertising campaigns may wish to portray, Sperrys were not the shoe of choice among any of the sailors. A few yelled things in Spanish and Portuguese, and I wondered if I should call back in French, or perhaps even in English. Eventually, one of the workers on the ground called to me directly, speaking in familiar Northern French.

"T'es perdu? Je te montrerai le C-V"

"Non, Non" I responded. "Pas perdu. J'fais une promenade."

He looked puzzled. "Sur les docks?"

"Oui, sur les docks. Au phare."

He laughed at this. "Le phare est là" he said nicely, gesturing towards the "other" lighthouse, a large brick skyscraper that dominated the skyline and served as one of Calais' most popular tourist attractions. "Tu dois le visiter avant tu quittes Calais."

I smiled back at him. "Non, non, une autre" I began to say, but paused and instead mur-

mured “Ouai, merci” and continued down the docks.

The lighthouse, once I finally reached sight of it, was farther out to sea than I had imagined. Not being a particularly strong swimmer, and fully aware that the water would be rather frigid, I hesitated for a few moments on the edge of the rocky coast at the end of the docks that served as a makeshift beach. I do not, even now, remember getting in the water; my only recollections are the cold, and the fact that the water seemed sharp, different from swimming in the Mediterranean in the South or even the Bay of Biscay in the Southwest. The water, it seemed, was unaccustomed to my presence.

I had left my pants on (figuring, naturally, that one cannot very well explore a lighthouse without trousers), and by the time I managed to drag myself onto the island’s craggy shore they were filled with water, which required me to remove them and wring them out on land. I do not know if anyone saw me, nor what their reaction would have been to the sight of a young man, clearly a stranger, standing in his underwear a few hundred feet out from shore. I do know, however, that it was at that moment that I felt irrevocably alien to that place, a feeling that was at once both oddly comedic and unflinchingly somber.

My pants sufficiently dry, I turned towards my next obstacle—the fence. It wasn’t a terribly high fence, but since I lacked shoes and was yet to catch my breath following the swim, climbing it was a formidable task, and by the time I had reached the other side my feet were scraped and I was a bit dizzy from being winded for so long. At the base of the lighthouse, I took a few deep breaths to clear my head, and then began the climb up a series of rusted metal rings hanging precariously off the side. The rings groaned beneath my weight, but held nonetheless, until I finally reached my summit—the three by three ledge just underneath the lighthouse’s uppermost window. I regret not planting an American flag.

What the waiter had told me about the cliffs of Dover was true; they were beautiful, even without binoculars. The ivory ridge seemed to exist on its own, a single chalky bastion of the English language, visible, but much too far to swim to. I was contemplating taking the ferry across la manche to visit the cliffs for a while when I heard a female voice from the docks:

“Monsieur” and then again louder, “Monsieur! C’est interdit d’aller à l’île. Vous devez revenir, maintenant.”

I turned to see a younger woman, no older than 30, in a uniform I did not recognize. It was not the uniform of the Calasien police, but she wore a badge and utility belt in the manner of someone with authority. Despite it being the early afternoon, she shined her flashlight towards me as she spoke.

“Monsieur, vous savez pas si l’île est interdit? Il y a une clôture.”

For a few seconds I stared at her blankly, wondering if this woman had any prior experience apprehending damp, shoeless Americans for trespassing in old lighthouses. My first words surely did not ease her confusion:

“Mes chaussures—là, sur les rochers” She walked over to my shoes and examined them, as if she had encountered them at Printemps.

“Je les aimes” she said, “Quelle marque sont-ils?”

“Ils s’appellent Sperrys” I responded. “Chaussures pour les bateaux.”

While she examined my shoes, I made the cold swim back to shore. This time I elected not to wring the water from my pants. She returned my shoes to me and walked me back to the edge of the docks. The dockworkers had gone home, and the sailors no longer leered at

me from above, and I found the docks a much more peaceful place than before. As we walked we spoke French, and a little broken English, until we reached the town square, and turned in opposite directions. She waved and smiled, and I assumed that this was not the French manner of putting someone under arrest, so I continued back to the one-room apartment above a small restaurant that I called home. Walking in, I noticed a sign in the lobby:

“Ce Soir: Huîtres au Buerre”

“Dis,” I said to the young girl working the counter, “Ce sont bonne, n’est-ce pas?”

“Yes,” she surprised me with her English, “You must try some before you leave.”

-Kevin Windhauser
Saint John’s University



Paris, France
-Melissa Bradley
College of Saint Benedict

You Always Disappoint

Simon was looking at Bronzino's *Portrait of a Young Man*, when Gemma arrived leading a tour group. He caught her eye and smiled as people gathered around the painting.

Gemma said, "Note the cool detachment on the man's face, the sophistication of the pose and the fine clothes. He renders judgment on us. But the carved grotesque heads on the table and chair are like masks. Bronzino's symbolism tells us that the man plays a role, and his haughtiness dares us to penetrate the enigma."

Simon wallowed in Gemma's melodic Italian accent.

He walked up to Gemma when her talk finished. He introduced himself and said, "I apologize for listening when I didn't pay for your time. May I buy you lunch? I have dining privileges upstairs."

"You're not shy, are you?"

"Some opportunities are once in a lifetime."

"Really?" She tilted her head at him.

"Look, it's just lunch. You have to eat. *Per favore.*"

Gemma laughed. "*Va bene.*"

Simon arranged for a window table that overlooked Central Park. Bright orange, red, and yellow leaves signaled a change in the season.

Gemma said, "I've just arrived from Florence. The Metropolitan and the Uffizi exchange personnel. How long I'll stay is open."

"You don't seem excited?"

"Well, it's a change."

"Let me guess. An unhappy love affair?"

Gemma sat back. "He loved the mirror more than me."

"Sounds like an idiot."

Gemma toyed with her green salad.

Simon said, "Let me show you New York."

She looked at his hand. "You're married."

"Like a suit of concrete."

"Then why not divorce?"

"We have kids. They're at a delicate age."

"And does your wife know you see other women?"

"We don't discuss it. She has someone. She doesn't think I know."

"And I thought Italians loved intrigue."

Simon laughed. "We'll go to a Broadway show and have dinner afterwards."

"What will you tell your wife?"

"You're a client, and I'll be quite late."

"You're very sure of yourself."

"In some things."

Gemma put down her fork. "Okay, but just a show and dinner."

After they made love, Gemma turned her face. Simon sensed that she had tears in her eyes.

He put his lips to her ear. "It's a sin to be lonely in a city of eight million people."

“Some sins are mortal.”

“Don’t feel guilty. When I told my wife I’d be late, the libido rose in her voice. She’s in bed with her boyfriend.”

“Do you sleep with other women for lust or revenge?”

“It’s not that way with you.”

“Sure.” Gemma got out of bed and wrapped herself in a hotel, kimono robe.

Simon leaned on an elbow. “Give me a chance, and I’ll prove it.”

Museums, Chelsea art galleries, and trendy restaurants in Manhattan evolved to Westchester woods amid crunching leaves in loam-scented air, and Long Island wanderings on blue-gray, planked docks. Gemma’s scent was white chocolate and mandarin. The nape of her neck was warm to Simon’s lips.

Gemma brought her sketchpad and recorded landscapes, or weather-creased faces of fishermen. On a good-light afternoon, Gemma made rhythmic strokes on her pad. She turned the portrait toward Simon.

Simon’s eyebrows rose. “Well, he’s handsome, but it doesn’t look like me. If it’s a rival, I’m jealous.”

Gemma smiled. “It’s Raphael. He had a long affair with a woman he wouldn’t marry. One night, after they made love, he fell ill and soon died.”

“Poison?”

“Perhaps she told him they were through.”

Simon snuggled close. “Aren’t we having fun?”

Gemma’s eyes wandered. “Yes.”

“But?”

She shrugged.

The first snow chilled the sidewalks. Gemma and Simon sat at a wooden table in a small trattoria in Greenwich Village.

Gemma sipped a glass of Brunello. “The Uffizi would like me to return to Florence.”

Simon put his wine down. “Don’t go.”

“When will there be an us?”

“If I walk out now, Elizabeth will turn the kids against me.”

“I’ll stay in New York for something permanent.”

Simon took Gemma’s hand. “Please, give us more time.”

“I’m stuck at the office.” Simon sat on a quiet Central Park bench with his mobile pressed to his ear.

His wife said, “Don’t forget the charity event at Carnegie Hall. Pick up the dry cleaning on your way home. It’s the dress I’m wearing tonight.”

Simon looked at Gemma’s words on the mauve writing paper. He said, “I need to go.”

Funny, he thought, Gemma wasn’t there, yet he still lied to Elizabeth.

He read the words again. “It’s become too painful... I’m returning to Italy. Please don’t try and find me.”

The paper had the scent of rosewood.

Simon left the bench and walked through Central Park.

On the path he neared a cop with a boyish face. The policeman peered at him.
“Excuse me sir, are you okay?”
Simon stopped. “Yes, why?”
“You have tears in your eyes.”
“It’s the wind.”

Simon arrived at his upper west side Brownstone after dark.
He stepped into the vaulted entranceway. Elizabeth sat in a straight-back chair in the living room. She had on a black slip, bra and hose.
She rose to her feet. “Where’s my dress?”
Simon’s shoulders sagged.
She said, “You always disappoint,” and strode back to the bedroom.

-Joseph Giordano
Austin, Texas



Wedding Nightmare
-Rita Thomas

The Wagner-Berger Prize for Excellence in Creative Writing

In 1987, Patricia and Leonard Porcello endowed this prize to honor Patricia's parents, Louis and Mary Wagner-Berger, and to support college women who are interested in writing short stories and novels. It is designed to encourage and reward excellence in creative writing at the College of St. Benedict.

The Wagner-Berger Prize for fiction is the first scholarship of its kind at the College of St. Benedict. It is a scholarship awarded annually to the CSB student who submits the most original, previously unpublished short story. All submissions are judged by a committee of English Department members, and the winner receives an award of \$1,000. Studio One is honored to publish this year's winner, CSB senior Victoria Borchardt.

White Shoulders

She smiles when you walk in the door, you her only daughter. She has perched herself as well as she can on her pale, orange little couch, your first pathetic attempt at quilting tucked delicately under her knobby knees. *Mary Tyler Moore* is playing on the television, and when she laughs, she almost looks like Mom again. You've come to make her breakfast, to run her errands, and drop off more medicine that you know she will not take. Also to check and see if she's found a new hiding place for her cigarettes, but you'd rather sell your soul than let her know you've stopped believing in her.

While you're in the kitchen, she asks about you and your husband, how you are getting along. "We're fine," you say, unwilling to share Jim's possessiveness with your dying mother. She asks how the baby is, if you still feel sick in the morning, if she can do anything at all for you. She so badly wants a grandchild. "No, no! Everything is just fine," you say, "Don't worry." You would never tell her you've lost it, and hopefully she'll be gone before she discovers your lie.

~

Her body is a mass of decaying tissues. No one knows where the cancer started; she was too far gone by the time they diagnosed her. Ovaries, kidneys, breasts, pancreas. It had already consumed her, so it has failed to matter where the disease birthed itself. All that really matters is that she has her painkillers, that someone comes to change the hospital bed, and that she never sees your frustration at what she has become. The woman called Betty is gone, gone the way you knew her.

~

You knew her as magic. She was little more than a child herself when she rode horses and jumped picket fences; she competed in rodeos during the Depression when her grandmother beat her with cross words for the sake of a torn white dress. She ran away young, married your father before she should have, never completed her high school degree. She wore a black cocktail dress to her own wedding.

She was a waif of a woman by the time she had you, too small in body and mind to be the grown up you needed her to be. But she would tumble through the grass like a fairy gymnast, cartwheel until you grew dizzy watching her, and fall to the ground giggling. She would take you and your brother to the aquarium and stare at the colorful scales with just as much awe as you did. On holidays, she would wrap the entire house like an enormous present, and make a special cake for every Christmas, Valentines Day, and Labor Day that came along. She made up your games, bought your dog, and pretended never to notice when you dipped a finger into the cake batter for a taste. And always, she smelled of *White Shoulders*, the golden bottle of scent handled as preciously as a heartbeat.

~

But it wasn't always fun. She drank. Heavily. She smoked. Incessantly. In the mornings, the air would be thick with smoke as she scrambled eggs and brewed coffee, a cigarette grasped between two red lips. At night, she would have two or three cocktails to lull herself to sleep. She took "uppers" to elevate her moods and "downers" to bring herself back. She didn't know how pathetic it all made her, and she didn't know that she didn't need them.

~

She forgot your eighteenth birthday. No cake. No card. She *made* herself forget. The

night before, the two of you had argued about something that didn't really matter, and she had *made* herself forget your eighteenth birthday. There was no room for anger, so you just closed the door to your room and cried. It was your father who came to comfort you, to say he loved you and that your mother was so very sorry for forgetting.

You cried into him, "How could she forget?"

How could your mother forget?

He didn't have an answer, and she never apologized.

~

And once you found out she was sick, that she had been slowly killing herself with the cigarettes and booze, you realized that there was no saving her. She had killed herself; she had decided to leave you. No one ever taught you this delicate form of etiquette. Do you still call her "mom" when she's abandoned you?

She needs more of our time than you can give and more love than you have the capacity to feel. Your brother is missing in action and barely stops by long enough to take out the trash, and your father, even though he is still in love with the memory of her *White Shoulders*, has his divorce and has flown the coop. It's all up to you now.

~

You carry in the tray of eggs and bacon, scrambled and burnt, the only way she'll eat them now. Her grin widens, showing some of that old spirit between browning teeth and two red lips, as you set the tray gently on her lap. You turn to the morning news, pull a small folding chair to her side, and position the blanket around both of your legs. She smells nostalgic, like nicotine and *White Shoulders*, and for a moment you feel that old love and put your head on her shoulders.

"I miss you," you say.

She smiles and kisses your head. She strokes your hair like she used to do when you were little and having a nightmare. "I'm still here."

~

In a month, she will be gone. You will pack up her clothes, neatly, as though someday she will come back for them. Your brother will come to take out the trash. Your father will send flowers. And when the time comes to finally say goodbye to her shell, you will unleash all of the anger you never let her see. You will shut yourself in the bathroom with your first attempt at quilting stuffed into your face and breath in the *White Shoulders* so deep you grow dizzy. Some day, you swear, you will tell your daughter about her grandmother, the good and the bad, and you will swaddle her in *Elizabeth Arden* and your own bright pink lipstick and promise to never leave.

-Victoria Borchardt
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Studio One Guidelines

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