

# Studio One

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Volume 40

Article 1

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2015

## Omnibus Edition, Studio One 2015

Studio1 Literary Club  
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# Studio One

2015

Volume 40

College of St. Benedict | St. John's University  
[www.csbsju.edu](http://www.csbsju.edu)

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## From the Editors

*Studio One* is a literary and visual arts magazine published each spring by the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University. Its mission is to give new and/or established writers a forum in which to present their works. The magazine's focus is poetry, short fiction, essays, and all forms of reproducible visual art works. Submissions are open to all students on either St. John's or St. Benedict's campuses and to the general public regardless of regional, national, or international location.

In 1976, a student named Clare Rossini had the foresight to create a new magazine for publishing the artistic works of authors and artists living in the surrounding area. As Rossini wrote, "Art is the life current of the community. It is a source of pleasure and pride for us; it unites us with our human predecessors and successors. Art is no luxury; it is a vital human activity. By publishing *Studio One*, we wish to support the members of our Minnesota community dedicated to that activity and to make their art available to those for whom it was made." While *Studio One's* reach has extended greatly since its founding in 1976, the current Editors-in-Chief have striven to publish a selection that still supports the mission written by Clare 40 years ago. Without Clare's efforts, we would not be presenting the 2015 edition of *Studio One*.

*Studio One* would also like to give thanks to our staff advisors, Matt Callahan and Rachel Marston, along with all the faculty of the CSB/SJU English Departments, Mark Conway of the Literary Arts Institute, Greg Harren and Sentinel Printing, all our contributors, and all those who submitted their work. Special thanks to CSB/SJU's Undergraduate Research program for the grant which enabled *Studio One* to increase the 40th Anniversary print run.

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**The Wagner-Berger Prize for Excellence in Creative Writing**

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## Until Race Intervenes: A Review of *Citizen*

Claudia Rankine

Graywolf Press 2014

Number of pages 169

Cost \$20.00

*Claudia Rankine, whose latest work, Citizen: An American Lyric, garnered numerous accolades over the past year, came to CSB/SJU as the 2015 recipient of the College of St. Benedict Literary Arts Institute's Sister Mariella Gable award. This award, named for an English professor who taught at CSB from 1928-1973 and inspired many students and authors, is given each year to a work of literature published by Graywolf Press. CSB/SJU welcomed Rankine to campus for class visits and a public reading in January 2015.*

When Claudia Rankine visited my class, she asked us to try and remember the moment we first realized we had a race.

“You’re a human until race intervenes,” Rankine said.

As college students, we were no strangers to discussing race relations, a subject that is almost automatically paired with racism (though Rankine was sure to tell my class that race and racism do not equate to the same thing). But putting the question like that—when did you first realize you had a race?—changes things. Much like *Citizen* challenges our conception of race in America.

*Citizen* intentionally positions and repositions the reader through the use of the second person “you”. The “you” fluctuates between the collective you and the individual you, becoming the actor as well as the speaker. The voice is vivid and unflinching, though you want to flinch. The voice is the advocate, the witness, the victim. It is world-weary, it is innocent. Distancing and intimate. It refuses to conform to just one standpoint, and so it gives life to all varieties of experience. “You” forces readers to question, where exactly are they landing?

*Citizen* is a collection of everyday injustices black Americans face. Rankine collected these micro-aggressions from her own life, her friends’,

popular culture, and the evening news. The instances detailed by Rankine are specific —someone who cuts to the front of the line because he didn't see the black woman waiting there, public transit passengers unwilling to fill the empty seat next to a black man—but they speak to a universal experience:

You take in things you don't want all the time. The second you hear or see some ordinary moment, all its intended targets, all the meanings behind the retreating seconds, as far as you are able to see, come into focus. Hold up, did you just hear, did you just say, did you just see, did you just do that? Then the voice in your head silently tells you to take your foot off your throat because just getting along shouldn't be an ambition. (55)

*Citizen's* “you” cannot simply be a human because the reality of being black in America is inescapable. Race intervenes, causing a rupturing of sutures, a pulsing of blood, a gasp of air—a violent moment of awareness.

What the “you” accomplishes in words, the images accomplish as well. The photo of white people gathered around a lynching tree, an image Rankine said she has had in her head forever, is a prime example. It is a canonical image of racial hatred, but it was deliberately altered to create a new context and given new meaning in *Citizen*. The hanging black bodies were edited out. Rankine said, “Once you saw those bodies, you wouldn't see anything else,” and she wanted to “redirect the gaze from the trauma of lynching to white spectatorship.” Rankine forces readers, of any color, to consider their part in a system that allows racial injustice to remain. She exposes the ways in which race intrudes upon humanity.

*Citizen* has impact. The identity of “you” may be unsolidified, but you—you as reader—understand. You understand because Rankine's words are so potent that she does not need to explain every exhaustive detail. But more than that, you understand because it is all so familiar, the violent tension between black men and police blared through the TV, accidental racist language in a conversation with a friend—“this is how you are a citizen” (151). *Citizen* forces readers to consider life in light of race.

Rankine's work brings to life the immediacy of everyday racism, racism so often unconscious or unsaid, and asks its readers to carefully consider their experience of race—and their humanity.

-Tierney Chlan  
College of St. Benedict '15



## Rabbit Hole

dropping to my knees the younger me  
had looked into weedy ground  
to see rabbit holes,  
the industry of insects,  
the families of plants,  
hidden things—  
I stared at the smaller and smaller world  
growing larger until I understood  
the impact of steps upon the turf,  
the unavoidable losses of my take and their give,  
“pardon me” worth nothing,  
better to piss in the field,  
I thought, standing at impossible heights,  
I can never see the balance of it  
or know what the plants said or understand their pain,  
yet I hoped for a life for myself  
and sensed the stepping it would take,  
a girl, marriage, the toys of man—  
the damages to be done traded for a life well lived—  
funny how little it bothers me now.

-Bruce Bagnell  
Berkeley, CA

## Getting Over

It is not enough  
to touch and check,  
to open and close  
doors in Morse code.  
It is not enough  
to shake words  
like rain out of your hair.  
You have to wrangle and tame,  
become a sitter to what  
could tear limbs and pare bones.  
Set yourself up for the kill  
with a razorblade laugh  
and chained feet.

-Valentina Cano  
Miami, FL

## Santa Fe

Windows darken around the Plaza.  
Turquoise and silver vendors,  
wood carvers and chili pepper merchants,  
leather workers and weavers  
close up shop as the sky purples and blushes.  
A solo trumpeter blows his horn from the band shell,  
on his knees as if offering a prayer,  
then leaning against the wall like a casual smoker  
in a 1940s black and white B movie,  
sending his music, plaintive and poignant,  
into the rarified ether of Santa Fe  
while turistas, foot-weary, over-stimulated and overspent  
sip twenty dollar glasses of Bordeaux  
on the balconies and verandas of chic restaurants,  
paying no attention to the music filling the air,  
though it would expand inside their hearts,  
a gift of bittersweet melancholy,  
if they would allow it entrance.  
No money floats down to the trumpeter's upturned Fedora,  
as if his music provides mere ambiance,  
not the song the holiness each moment sings.  
It seems poets are the only people who cry  
when a trumpet blows blue notes at gloaming.

-Larry Schug  
Avon, MN



**Flowers Placed Outside the Home  
of Dante, Florence, Italy**  
-Katelyn Peterson  
College of St. Benedict '16

## **That Summer in Toronto**

I pressed my ear against the wall  
to better hear the couple next door  
arguing in the middle of the night,  
then returned to you in bed lamenting  
like a mourner at a funeral, “I can’t  
stand it, I can’t stand it,” but managed  
to fall back asleep, anyway.

After one dinner, we soaked the black  
paper mache salad bowls in the kitchen  
sink overnight so they disintegrated like  
cardboard in the rain, then we unsuccessfully  
searched China Town for a set to replace  
them. With dentist dread, we called  
the couple we’d sublet from. Even though  
they were nice about it they did inform us  
that the bowls were a wedding present  
and told us that we could leave  
the replacement check on the left side  
of the mahogany entrance table.

Later in the summer, your Australian  
best friend, Ian, and his girlfriend came  
to visit from Montreal so we brought  
them to the department reception with  
your summer colleagues. When I introduced  
Annick as French, everyone simultaneously  
felt warm so they moved to the balcony  
except for the four of us who remained  
standing around the table nibbling celery  
and carrot sticks dipped in that onion/sour  
cream mixture I still like so much.

After Annick returned to Montreal on Monday, it seemed that Ian talked his whole remaining three days: about his travels in Zaire, his parents in Sydney, his engineering job, Annick, and, like a self-centered teen-ager, never asked me one question about myself, while you assiduously taught your course at the University of Toronto and I listened like a recording device (I realize now). I cooked liver with green peppers from that Time/Life Middle-Eastern cookbook with the sliced pomegranate on the cover, but, although Ian had three helpings, I never cooked liver with green peppers again.

-Jan Ball  
Chicago, IL



**Intro-Spection**  
-Rita Thomas  
Longmont, CO

## Crater Lake

Sometimes you know you were right  
all along but you doubted, doubted  
because sometimes appropriate  
humility demands doubt. That's not

faithlessness. Faithlessness is a failure  
of heart, maybe a failure to long  
for the things that are the reasons  
for the deep phenomenon of longing.

When you see Crater Lake the first time,  
really see it, when you crest the rim  
and stare down into the caldera,  
you know what you knew was true:

there is a water that is just that blue,  
a lake that makes any metaphor  
for the deep pools of any love go pale,  
that proves the world you live in has an eye.

-William Jolliff  
Newberg, OR



## Masterpiece Theater

I thought it was love  
You gave me a satin  
Wedding from my flat dream magazine  
Later tied the sash at the back  
Of my yellow dress  
Then bent my head  
For an aching pink strand of pearls  
At the dinner table you slowly  
Moved my chair in as if I were a child  
Such charm was ether  
My worries fell like petals at my feet  
Picking one up I felt infinite luck  
So pure and white with the snap  
Of my last hung linen sheet  
Now weakened by chemo I looked  
Into the glare of my hospital window  
I had fuzz on my head like a little old man  
The nurses whispered behind masks  
I tapped lime jello to test my appetite  
I asked you one evening  
To bring over my zebra slippers  
You said there had been a glitch at work  
Tired, *Masterpiece Theater* was on  
I knew then I could leave you

-Judith Levison  
New Hope, PA

## **The Qwerty Keyboard**

Genetically predestined for the academic stream in high school, her Advanced English, Latin and World History courses impractical according to her parents who insist she study typing and shorthand, she memorizes the loops and dots of Gregg like an Arab kindergartener learning to read as well as practicing her typing: tap, space, tap, space, on the business department's new electric typewriter ad infinitum to improve her speed, foregoing fumes of sulphur, chlorine and hydrochloric acid in the chem lab, pulleys and centrifugal force in physics, as well as surfaces, lines and angles in trig, unable to fit the sciences into her schedule packed with extra business courses. Years later, she sits before her Dell computer; fingers butterfly across the keys, reach over to "delete" without looking, adept as a billiard player banking a shot into the side pocket, just the right angle in the knuckles, the right amount of pressure in the fingertips, wrists arched as precisely as when she learned the Qwerty Keyboard.

-Jan Ball  
Chicago, IL

## Emily as We Never Learned Why the Scar Stopped

The story is almost always  
about when the cut started  
to make the pain directional

& if either of us cared about  
what divided flesh, we would  
give each other a damn break,

but since we want most to know  
what stopped the knife's edge  
from tearing across the vital

points, we continue to press  
each other on the details  
of who put the bottles

of whiskey underneath  
the furnace unit. Was it her  
as a threat? Or was it me

when I used to threaten  
everybody? If they were mine  
I maintain, they would empty.

-Darren C. Demaree  
Columbus, OH



**Artist Delving into Her Craft**

-Ernest Williamson

Columbia, SC

## Lament of the Broken Windshield

Follow me, I wanted to say to my driver,  
though I don't know where I'm going.  
I look to see, but my broad eye is spider-webbed,  
like paper cuts on glass.

The lights, they pass overhead, always green and  
red. I can't pause to look. Forward,  
I think, before I crack any more, before I  
crumble onto my driver's dashboard, spill  
into her lap and make her bleed,  
and make her cry.

My driver believed she could go anywhere, leave  
her life behind her with its dark and crumbling corners.  
She could go anywhere, she thought, until  
the map closed in on her with its wrinkled face,  
until a tiny pebble nicked  
me, and branching line suddenly crisscrossed her transparent world.

Now she drives hesitantly to the other side of the tracks, leaving behind  
luring signs for KMartWal-MartTJMaxxKohl's,  
all the people rushing there, but not her.  
She steers me into a cool dark garage  
where broad glass faces, stacked in piles in a corner,  
stare at me.

And then I'm lifted out, replaced. Replaced.  
It stops her bleeding.  
I'm tossed to a pile in back, where I cry crystal tears,  
and the only thing I can see  
are all the cracks in the sky.  
And she drives by, heading toward the edge of town,  
where the horizon never blinks,  
her vision so clear again that she never even gives me  
a side glance  
as she passes.

-Bill Meissner  
St. Cloud, MN

## **Politics**

The beautiful waters  
Of the lake  
Hide the coil of serpents  
Swallowing one another  
Under the still surface

-Ann Schaenzer  
College of St. Benedict '15

## Sangre

Speak up or you'll be falsely represented,  
By those who turned their back on their past,  
And fall into place, like They always intended.

*Los que escogen olvidar,*

*En lugar de arreglar,*

Because what goes on does not affect them.

What chance do we have?

When the whole world is against us?

Not only those who are different,

But people within our own *raza*?

They succumb to what the media portrays,

Act, dress, and talk like the tv does.

Pretending to be better than us,

Gladly stepping on their *propia gente*.

But keep standing there *perro*,

Cuz your time is almost up.

Keep running your mouth,

Because we are about to shut you up.

*Me rompo las venas,*

*Mientras te rompo el osico*

*Para que mires la verdad,*

*Que sangramos lo mismo.*

-Guillermo Blanco  
St. John's University '15



## Peeling

after ten years she has left  
so I paint over  
her cat's scratches on the windowsill,  
food stains on the kitchen wall,  
the acts splattered around in the bedroom,  
and unmentionable errors in the bath—  
a clean start will be at hand soon,  
and after the last brush strokes,  
I will peel the masking tape,  
looking for the end that is under all the rest  
so it all comes up in one long pull,  
piece after piece wadded up,  
sticky in my hand before I shake free of it,  
the house's memory erased,  
but not mine.

-Bruce Bagnell  
Berkeley, CA



**Humidity Fog**  
-Rita Thomas  
Longmont, CO

## **Under the Willow**

Under the willow  
we sat as children  
shaded from the sun-  
built castles of dirt and red clay  
crushing them with bare feet.  
We snuck kisses  
behind grown backs.  
While they prayed for their sick  
And forgot their rosaries.  
Under the willow  
we fought wars  
with plastic soldiers.  
Ice cream dripped down thin hands.  
Ants gathered-  
we killed them with sticky fingers.  
Cheek turned to beard.  
Chests became breasts,  
fingers grew thick and calloused.  
They pulled triggers.  
Men gathered.  
We killed them with bloody fingers.  
We returned to  
the willow.  
We sipped on sap.  
Intoxicating.

We pulled her branches apart,  
used them to build lives.  
We stare out of windows,  
watching our children play.  
Without her shade.  
Splintered and dying.  
We can't sit  
under the willow  
no place for our sick  
or our rosaries.

-Jack Paal  
St. John's University '17

## Map Reading

Our fingers guided us along  
road lines and river turns,  
through crayon-colored suburbs  
urban sprawled across our laps.  
Seat buckled a comfortable distance  
from the foreign land  
where adults always sat,  
we were unable to navigate  
their conversation's terrain, yet,  
listened to the sky parked  
in its place, watched  
the landscape drive  
reverse in the opposite lane,  
our lives with just a few miles  
to arrive at the age imagination  
is neatly folded and stored away.

-Murray McCartan  
Richfield, MN

## Learning to Kayak

Like the Inuit boy, stitched  
roll-tight by a proud mother  
into the cockpit of his hunting bark,  
sealskin stretched around a whalebone frame,  
before you can brace the swells  
that have come a thousand miles to meet you,  
before you can even launch or land,  
you must learn to idle  
in what elders called the soup,  
hold fast in the liquid wilderness  
brewed by the shore and its nearest wave,  
last to feel the earth and give up shape.  
Bow pointed fiercely into the break line,  
here you must find the fluid switch  
between headlong plow into the final spill  
and full-out backstroke against the undertow,  
make short work of comings and goings,  
until your body and its body are drunk  
with the ways of swash and backwash,  
after long days of trial, hardly paddling at all.  
Here is the furious lull, the simmering meal,  
the endlessly rocking means to all ends,  
where the current is lost  
and the moon has let go of the tide.  
The ocean at samba, the surf's foam baton.  
Stay here as long as you can.

-Ken Haas  
San Francisco, CA



**Pixie Forest**  
-Rita Thomas  
Longmont, CO

## **The Polar Vortex**

Chianophobia means  
fear of snow. I try  
to imagine it and don't  
quite get there. Oh, this  
record breaking winter, record  
gone for January, fingers frozen through gloves  
walking just one block.

The snow was beautiful,  
how it fell so quietly,  
how it decorated dirty New York,  
gave it a brief reprieve  
from ugly sidewalks,  
next day turned to gritty slush  
and struggling at hazardous crosswalks.

It's started to snow again.  
I wanted to call you, Billy Tide,  
and tell you I'm afraid.  
How quiet it is when the  
snow falls. The silence once begun...

-Susan H. Maurer  
New York, NY



## Periphery

When the bore needle left my father  
one last time, he grew taut, and full lunar.  
Transcendent, his body wavered in the satin  
as if confused on the proper manner of falling.  
Closing his eyelids, I remember feeling safer,  
his eyes surrendering to the ocular darkness  
behind them, their jasper descending from view  
with more authority than the rest of him.  
This was my first annihilation: his lips  
open like a wave. But try as I might,  
I never seem able to stop him. And lately,  
everything seems to hinge on the next attempt:  
another fistful of your soaked hair,  
our double image shaking from the water  
imperceptibly, lucid and dissolving  
in every direction. *What happens when we spill  
together?* you ask, standing so close to me  
I wonder why you dare to speak in plural.  
But how do I answer the voice emanating  
from the steam? Or admit how your weight  
against my shoulder blades terrifies me?  
Or how your hips disappear like my father  
when they hit me: as if multiplying against my body,  
the scent of clematis clinging to my skin  
like secondhand smoke, like shame.

-Dimitri McCloghry  
St. Augustine, FL

## Ketos

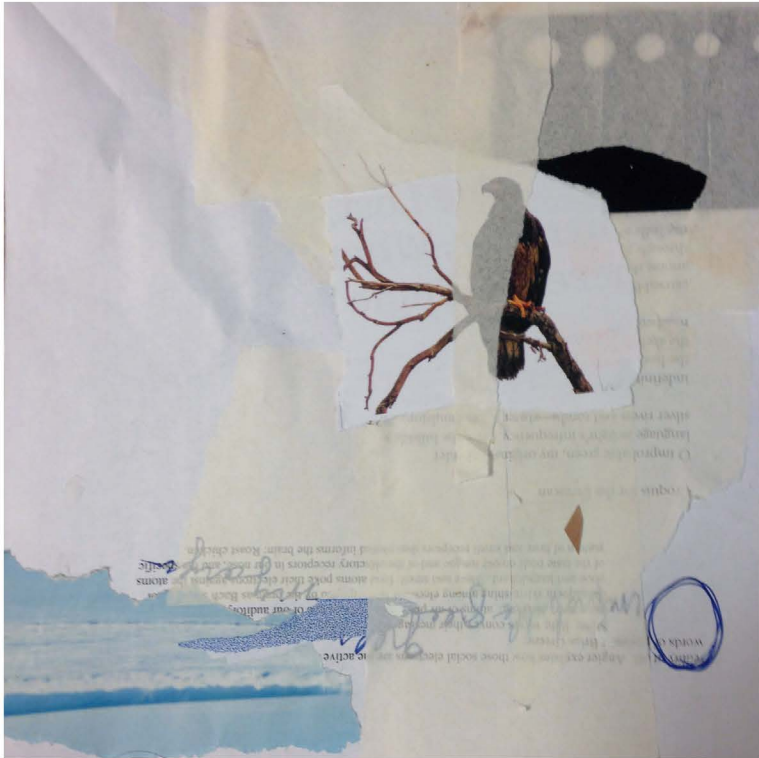
The motel room evanescent from  
the bourbon, phone insisting to be  
put down, the moment sewing my body to it  
as if a minor miracle, somewhere your lips say  
*I know it's not what you want to hear—*  
and I stand there thinking of your relation to time:  
pausing, as if the tiny breaking of your body  
needs a day to heal from its disruption.  
*—but I've found someone.* There is anger in how  
you tell me, but there doesn't need to be:  
we're all a walking river, some of us with agency,  
some of us without. But when he took every precaution  
to learn your body, the vandal of your soul ripping  
what was left, you swallowed him completely,  
devoured him whole. *And he makes you happy*  
I finish for you, knowing another man vanished  
in the monsoon of your body. *If only I did* staggers  
into the receiver. Every span of water, a mercy.  
Every gale of skin, an innocence, as if it knows  
our rapture always comes to find us.

-Dimitri McClohy  
St. Augustine, FL

## Two Crows

circle each other  
in flight,  
one carries a burning ember  
in its beak,  
the other,  
a blue and green marble.  
far, far away  
a flock of crows so large  
the sky is black  
with feathers,  
carry diamonds  
in their beaks.  
you can see the diamonds  
but not the crows,  
not even the crow  
carrying the marble  
where you live.

-Larry Schug  
Avon, MN

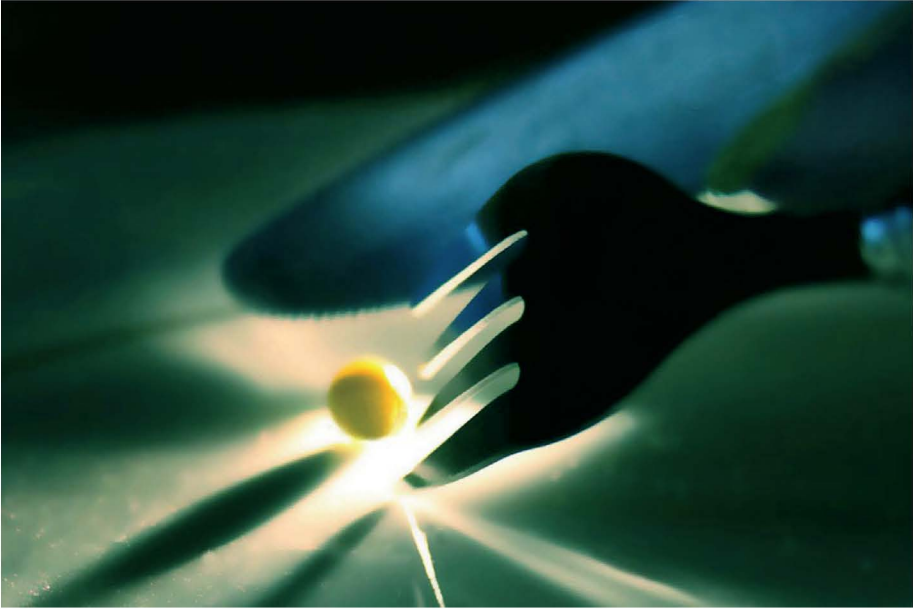


**Untitled**  
-Maureen Alsop  
Palm Springs, CA

## **Moons**

The moon grew in his eyes,  
spreading itself as thin as glass.  
An eclipse of white  
against his pupils,  
turning the humming night  
into a desert of false light.

-Valentina Cano  
Miami, FL



**Think**  
-Rita Thomas  
Longmont, CO

## Self-Improvement

My Daddy believed in self-improvement  
so he made me swim ten thousand miles  
He believed that because we were genetically linked  
he owned my strength  
Then he drove me home in his bright blue Rambler  
He was wearing a white button-down sport shirt  
black slacks  
shiny black shoes  
and was humming—  
*I've got a mule Name is Sal/ Fifteen years on the Erie Canal*  
*She's a good old mule a good old pal/ Fifteen years on the Erie Canal*  
He turned to me and said  
This car meets my every specification  
There was something fluttering in the back seat  
but I didn't turn around because I was still bound  
in the ropes my Daddy had wrapped around me  
The Rambler's engine went taptap taptap taptap taptap

-Mitchell Grabois  
Edgewater, CO

## **On a Fine Morning**

Doctor and nurse huddle at the end of her bed,  
talk in serious whispers.  
They're not discussing ball-games  
or the weather.  
It's all to do with charts,  
some in folders,  
some on clipboards.  
Always the same conclusion.  
A nodding of the head.  
An increase in one dosage.  
A decrease in another.  
She'd leave the room if she could,  
leave them to parse her insides in peace.  
But she has to pretend she doesn't hear a thing.  
If only she understood Latin.  
And she hates it when they use the word "She."  
But then they're done,  
both turn their attention to their patient.  
A smile is called for apparently.  
It must say so on their charts.  
"A fine morning," says the doctor.  
The day, apparently, is not suffering.  
At least until its tests come back.

-John Grey  
Johnston, RI



## Stars

Not the eyes, only the blinking:  
just faces turning back for goodbyes,  
then floating down the jetway—

not massive spheres of gas  
exterminating themselves  
with millennia of longing.

As a child I could believe them  
moth-holes in the velvet veil  
that shuttered heaven's shine.

Then they were the diamond set  
for all the love in the world,  
every brace of teenage lovers

the whirling binary pair.  
Now they're the running lights  
of ships bearing hard away

to nowhere, never too slowly,  
but never fast either, only  
the fitting speed for stars and ships

which never quite speak but,  
for all their wordy flickering,  
keep their dark insistent silence.

-William Jolliff  
Newberg, OR

## **Before She Handed Me a Dictionary**

She told me  
That my quick temper  
Makes me appear to be  
Very Truculent.

I told her yeah  
“I drove a sixteen  
Wheeler for ten years.”

-Don A. Ryan  
Chicago, IL



**Cold Catches Pollution**

-Rita Thomas  
Longmont, CO

## **Back Home**

Back home among  
dirty cars and white  
grass, we watch our  
breath join gray clouds,  
warmth something earned  
between cold treks  
to cars and doors  
and stores crowded  
with muffled people  
looking for something  
to fill their mouths,  
clog their arteries,  
and explain why  
vacation is somewhere  
we escape to come  
home to all this  
frozen mystery.

-Richard Dinges, Jr.  
Walton, NE

## Hush

*Hush little b— don't say a word.*

Steady breathing and remaining calm,  
while reclining back, feet will be placed  
in Stir-ups to allow physician  
to examine the—*Mama's  
gonna buy you a mocking bird.*

Medication administered reduces possible pain.  
Local anesthetic will numb the cervix.  
Possibility of full sedation,  
so prepped patient—*won't sing,*  
*Mama's gonna buy you a diamond ring.*

Tenaculum claps to press and hold  
allowing for formation of cannula  
and steady dilation of cervix  
to create a larger—*ring turns brass,*  
*Mama's gonna buy you a looking glass.*

When wide enough for operation,  
long plastic tubes will be inserted,  
and the suction device will be turned on,  
so the placenta—*gets broke,*  
*Mama's gonna buy you a billy goat,*

The fetus will slowly be broken down  
and extracted through the tube.  
A final sweep of the uterus  
will make sure remains—*don't pull,*  
*Mama's gonna buy you a cart and bull.*

Remains of pregnancy will be disposed of.  
Slowly sedation will wear off  
and patient will be asked to remain  
reclined to recover and not—*fall down,*  
*You'll still be the sweetest little—in town.*

Expected Length of Procedure: 10 to 15 minutes.  
*Hush.*

-Emily Schoenbeck  
College of St. Benedict '16

## **The Dance Swallowed**

those costumed dancers,  
the music and chants swirling into their bodies,  
the emotions glistening,  
I was sitting too close, and  
it was all flung onto me,  
the life spoken of  
hardly watchable in comfort,  
but I fell inside,  
and after  
I asked her feet how she felt  
and found  
it was I who was naked, not them.

-Bruce Bagnell  
Berkeley, CA

## Shackles

I know where I am: I'm in the cave  
where the dark is really relative,  
for I study shadows that would have  
us placid, and I know they give  
us a sense of security that isn't real.  
Well, not quite know, it's more like what I feel.  
And from a distance, breezes blow  
and whisper of an Elsewhere with a Would  
so clearly that all my cellmates' refrains  
convince me that there never were chains!  
And this becomes the only thing I know:  
that all my greasy dreams of rainbows could  
be real—or realized—and that I should  
have taken off my shackles long ago.

-James B. Nicola  
New York, NY



## Visit to the City

the city is spread out in front of the fireplace,  
the soldiers frozen stiff, surrounding the citizens,  
fire trucks and rocket ships scattered around  
while a bear sits atop a skyscraper—too large—  
the story is hidden,  
it will take the child to explain the illogic of it,  
that mixture of fantasy-magic not yet scoured out  
by caustic adult soaps,  
which is why I always use baby shampoo:  
it is gentle on the mind, I say to the guy on the train,  
and he looks at me before changing his seat;  
obviously he is not a poet.

-Bruce Bagnell  
Berkeley, CA



**Perpetually on the Wire**  
-Megan Lundquist  
College of St. Benedict '16

## Foolish

A tap on the shoulder.

“Excuse me, Bailey? I need to talk to you.”

The voice of Mrs. Doose, the middle school counselor, takes me by surprise. There are only twenty minutes left in the school day.

“You might as well pack up your things,” she says, her voice tight in her throat.

My heart knocks against my ribcage. My stomach drops like an anchor. Even though I’m only 14, Mrs. Doose and I are practically best friends. I babysit for her regularly, and she loves to joke or chat with me when I pass her office between classes. She has never once looked this serious in any of her conversations with me.

Something is wrong.

As I gather my books and zip up my backpack, my mind is racing. Last I knew, my grandparents were all in good health. My two brothers were both safely in school. My dad was at work, and my mom was working from home. What could have happened?

“Follow me,” Mrs. Doose says.

I trail her out of the computer lab where my technology class was taking place. She walks briskly down the hallway, always a step ahead of me. She doesn’t say a word, and she doesn’t look me in the eye. Suddenly I’m coughing, trying to catch my breath. I didn’t realize I was holding it.

We pass Mrs. Doose’s office, which is both concerning and confusing. We pass classrooms, the library, and more offices. Everything around me becomes a blur, and I nearly trip trying to keep up with her.

Eventually we reach a foreboding black door at the very end of the hallway—a door I hardly realized existed—and she motions for me to enter the room. “Officer Albers would like a word with you,” Mrs. Doose says.

She quickly closes the door behind me, leaving me in the world’s smallest office with the world’s scariest police officer.

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The barren white walls of the converted closet-office immediately close in on my small body. The room is cold—far too cold for April, and the only light within its windowless walls emanates from a plastic lamp on the laminate desk. Even the lamplight seems cold as it casts a bright glare on Officer Albers' bald head.

“Miss Zallek,” Officer Albers says after a prolonged moment of silence. I look him straight in the eye, searching for any signs of concern or distress. His beady eyes stare me down, and suddenly mine are incapable of blinking. “You are here because we believe you may have information about an incident that took place last night.”

An incident?

“At approximately 10:35 p.m. at a private residence in Mankato, Minnesota,” he says without taking a breath, “two cars were vandalized by what we believe to be a group of adolescent and adult individuals.”

It takes me a moment to register the words coming out of his mouth. I stare at him, perplexed. Last night? Vandalism? Me? Suddenly, it hits me. I understand everything that's going on, and a warm surge of relief gushes through my entire body. Why, this isn't about a family tragedy or a horrific accident or any of the other terrible things I had imagined! This is simply a big misunderstanding. Officer Albers' closet-office suddenly seems to grow three sizes bigger, the lights become brighter, and my heartbeat returns to a calm, steady pace.

“Sir,” I say, a broad smile spreading across my face and a chuckle escaping from my mouth, “I can explain.”

Officer Albers leans across his desk, one eyebrow rising up onto his glossy forehead. He is clearly curious to see what information I am willing to offer up so readily.

“You see,” I say, collapsing with relief into the chair across from his desk, “my family gets really into April Fool's.”

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I go on to explain the history of pranks my family has played on one another over the years, which most commonly occurred between my immediate family and my dear uncle Mark and his family. I tell Officer Albers about everything from the more mild shenanigans, like when we

put hot sauce in my uncle's post-workout drink, to the more elaborate endeavors, such as the time my aunt and uncle wrapped my entire bedroom in Saran Wrap or the time we dragged furniture onto their roof.

"We are very close," I say, "but we show our love by making fun of each other." I try to explain that family doesn't take anything too seriously, especially ourselves. The basic rule of thumb is as follows: if we don't make fun of you, we probably don't like you.

"So you see," I continue, motioning across the desk to Officer Albers, "yesterday was April first, so my family and I were morally obligated to do something to my uncle and his family."

I laugh as I say this, inviting Officer Albers to join in with me.

His eyes narrow.

"We know the code to his garage," I continue, slowly, hoping Officer Albers will soon start to catch wind of how funny this, "so we 'broke in' last night and filled my uncle's and my cousin's cars with thousands and thousands of Kleenex tissues. Then we wrapped the cars in Saran Wrap, and then we covered them with Post-It notes." I snicker as I say this, remembering how ridiculous the cars looked when had finished the "evil" deed. By the time we had finished, the cars were unrecognizable; they looked more like first grade craft projects than automobiles. I would later learn that my cousin's car left a significant impression on the neighborhood that day, leaving a trail of pink and green Post-It notes between their driveway and his high school.

"I know it might sound crazy," I add, "but it was all in good fun. Nothing we did could have caused any damage, and we only did it to make my uncle laugh."

Officer Albers takes a painfully slow, deep breath and removes the stiff wire-rim glasses from his face. "Miss Zallek," he says in a low voice, wiping the glasses with his sleeve, "I don't know about you, but I have never considered trespassing and property damage to be a laughing matter."

For the first time in my short little life, I'm at a loss for words. I've always been a good kid—a chronic perfectionist, in fact, with an arguably unhealthy straight-A addiction. Officer Albers wouldn't even

know my name if I hadn't been the one to ask him to chaperone school dances—dances which I had planned as student council president! Clearly, I am anything but a scofflaw. If anything, I'm a bit of a dork.

"I'm going to need you to give me the names of everyone involved in this incident," Officer Albers continues. He pulls out a pen and a yellow legal pad from his desk and stares me down over the top of his glasses. The 3:00 bell rings and I hear the muffled sounds of middle- and high-schoolers racing to leave the building. I search Officer Albers' face for signs that he might let me leave, but he doesn't blink.

It's clear that I have relinquished my rights to personal freedom.

As panic makes itself at home in my body, I start to mutter the first few names I can think of. "Um, my dad was there. Mark Zallek. And my mom was there too. Nancy Zallek," I stammer, suddenly a stranger to the words spilling out of my own mouth. A sizzling bead of sweat plummets down my chest as my mind races to figure out what to do, what to say. I am a good kid, and no one has ever prepared me for this kind of situation. Is this legal? Am I supposed to call a lawyer? Suddenly I'm kicking myself for spending my youth watching Friends instead of CSI or Law and Order or anything that would help me in my current situation.

"My brother, Taylor Zallek," I hear myself saying, as if I'm not in control of my own mouth anymore. "And my brother Brett Zallek... but he's only ten! He didn't know what he was doing." I hear my voice becoming higher—more pitiful and pleading.

The phone on Officer Albers' desk rings and I jump. He looks at it, annoyed, and stops taking notes to answer it.

"Mhmm, mhmm," he mutters into the mouthpiece. "Yes, she's here. Okay. Thanks."

Click.

Clearly "she" is me, but I don't know what anything else he says could mean. Was that another police officer? A judge? A local news station wanting information about the straight-A teen who's gone rogue?

Officer Albers continues to press me about each detail of the night before—what time we left, what we were wearing, what materials

were used. My brain feels like a scrambled egg as I try to rack my memory for every aspect of the night while simultaneously trying to prevent a nervous breakdown. I wring out every last detail from my memory. I describe every Kleenex, every roll of Saran Wrap. I begin to wonder if this is what running a marathon is like.

Leaning back in his chair, Officer Albers gently sets his notepad on the desk and looks me over with his x-ray police vision. “Miss Zallek, I appreciate your cooperation. However, I must ask you one last question.”

I brace myself, gripping the handles of my chair with my sweat-laden palms. At this point, I’m not sure I can handle any more.

“So,” he says, clasping his hands together over his protruding belly, “...are you sweatin’ bullets yet?”

For the second time, I am speechless. What? What does he mean? Is there something I’m missing here?

My cell phone beeps. I assume it’s my mom, concerned about why I’m not home from school yet. I look pleadingly at Officer Albers, and he motions toward my phone. “It’s okay. You can answer it.”

I reach down, my hand shaking, and open up the flip screen. In bold black letters my phone tells me that I have one new text message. I open it up, and discover that it’s not my mom. It’s a text from my uncle Mark.

One word. Lowercase.

*“gotcha.”*

-Bailey Zallek  
College of St. Benedict ‘15

## On the Town

There is much less traffic than he had imagined; thought it would be much livelier than this. It's Thursday night, after all. Figured people would be out, flooding the bars, getting drunk. Yet there he waits, sitting—all by himself. Only on occasion do people pass by, and this is making him uncertain that he is in the right place. Maybe there is some new joint, perhaps out of town a ways, attracting the crowds he cannot seem to find. With this insecurity, he is now briefly considering the possibility that people do not even go out for fun, anymore. He doesn't, not really.

But it is a cold night. "People must just be at home," off the streets. For some time now he has been lonely, but as of this particular evening no longer desires to be. Having grown tired of remaining sealed in his room, he is content with his decision to 'get out,' regardless of the weather.

As he would not be found dead looking as though he was without dignity, he dressed in all black. He does not wish to look a mess, and believes this will help him to better blend with the night-scene.

But this doesn't matter anyhow, of course, because this night is slow. Still, he is trying so desperately not to lose hope. Incidentally, this is the first time he has known the feeling since he had first realized. So he is savoring the sensation, with no regrets about his resolution to move on, finally.

Patently he is waiting—positioned with strategy, intentions of encountering just the right girl. He does not desire his night to be ended by some lame happenstance. He is a dreamer, likes to picture vividly in his mind the young lady who might graciously drive him home. He considers her profession, where she may have attended graduate school, what her name might be.

Up until this very moment, he has only ever had visions of women. But just now, in this instant of visceral rapture, the fantasy of a man seizes hold of him. His imagination is coloring the desire evermore irre-



sistible with every passing moment. Someone tall. Powerful. He is realizing he has but not one good reason to want anyone but a man—somehow the thought had never before stricken. “What good had a woman ever done him, anyhow?” he reflects. It seems bigoted, to him, to think that he might have closed himself off to an entire gender, almost half of all humans.

The idea of bigotry begins to inflame him. “How foolish people are!” he screams, almost audibly. He wants nothing more than to be hit. Hit right then. He physically pines for the sound of breaking bones, the crunch of Breaking Bones—popping, one, one after another.

It is these sudden spells of hysteria that had for so long kept him in, though he found he was often able to recompose himself. And that’s what he does. In fact, he finds doing so much easier tonight, which he is pondering, idly.

He is smiling, as he spots the beautiful, silvery truck. “A fine vehicle.” He knows it is him who he needs. Wincing only a little, he listens with a deep longing for his awaited ‘crunch.’ But the crying of the tires and asphalt grant him not even this satisfaction.

So there he lay, on the town.

-Cole Minkel  
St. John’s Univerity ‘15

## **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 Marissa Deml.

## Later

Milly washes and dries her hands while twisting her neck to read the instructions on the cardboard box for the third time. She always thought pregnancy tests took three minutes, but the instructions tell her to wait five. “Probably more accurate,” she mutters to the box. Pinching the box between two fingers, she turns it parallel to the counter’s edge, then slides it square into the corner. The test waits patiently, a clean strip of white centered on top. With a bit of toilet paper, Milly wipes up the lavender-scented scum under the soap dispenser and the minty crust under the toothbrush cup. She smoothes the wrinkles out of the hanging towels. Four minutes and forty-five seconds.

It took the microwave in Milly’s childhood home two minutes and forty-five seconds to pop a bag of popcorn. Mom would always make Milly and her sister tidy up as much as they could during those 165 seconds before movie night. Milly’s sister would go for the crumb-covered counters. She had three years of hand-eye coordination development to lord over Milly, and she was proud of her mastery of dragging a washcloth in a snaking line to scoop up all the “mouse food,” as Mom called it.

Milly preferred the living room. She believed having someone see her clean spoiled the purity of the results. She wrangled toy horses and red Lego blocks and Barbie clothes, carefully combing the speckled shag carpet with her fingers after she’d cleared the toys away. She knew Mom would swear if she accidentally stepped on a tiny pony hairbrush. In the corner of the room was a low table where Milly dumped her armfuls, enjoying the chaotic but now contained pile of plastic baubles. Folding blankets was a tricky task for her child’s wingspan, but she compensated by setting the throw pillows at pretty angles, imitating the cover of Mom’s magazines. In two minutes and forty-five seconds, Milly’s sister would jump onto the couch and negate Milly’s work, but the process remained sacred ritual.

Milly leaves the bathroom and walks down the hall into the living

room, catching a whiff of the previous tenants' habit of burning incense. She moved into the one bedroom apartment only two weeks ago. The walls are sparse. Almost nothing has moved from the exact position it was placed in after being taken out of its box.

Milly swings her arms back and forth, snapping her fingers and looking around. Mark's gloves are lying on the floor next to the couch, but she does not touch them. Instead, she turns to the bookshelf and starts pressing on spines. Most of them are already flush to the back of the shelf but a few slide farther in with a pleasing chunk. Chunk goes Jane Eyre, chunk chunk two translations of The Odyssey, chunk the Thomas Pynchon, a present from Mark whose spine never got cracked, chunk chunk the pop fiction Mark liked to say he was going to burn one day.

A vision of a very different living room lights up in Milly's mind. Her coffee table is full of chubby plastic toys with teeth marks. Baby books are stacked on the lowest shelf, books about fruit and bears that talk. A pile of clean but long-cooled clothes takes up half of the couch, little white socks slipping off onto the floor. The baby bobbles in a Johnny Jump Up in the doorway, its face a blinding blast of white light.

Milly shakes her head, but slowly slides the books off of the bottom shelf and stacks them on top of the bookshelf next to the bird clock, the kitschy type that emits a different bird song every hour. Mom gave it to her. Three minutes.

Before the bright vision fades completely, she goes to the kitchen, takes out paper and a pencil, and writes down what she sees: Door locks. A breast pump. Bottles. Shoes so tiny they look like sample models of the adult shoes. A play pen. A mobile hanging from the ceiling fan, never used because of its steady, maddening click. The mobile has stars and birds, Milly can see, lots of blue.

That doesn't seem right to Milly, because girls run in her family.

Two minutes. She shoves the list away from her. It bumps into Mark's travel mug, which falls onto the floor with an angry metallic sound. Milly leaps up and swears at the splatter of coffee. Usually the pad of paper would not have hit anything, but Mark came over two days ago.

Mark leaves behind objects like the previous tenants left their incense.

“You left your gloves here,” she said to Mark on the phone yesterday. She was sitting at the same table, filling in her calendar for the coming months. Dentist 2 PM in blue. Water houseplants in orange. Jeannie and Michael’s Wedding in pink. She had not asked Mark to be her plus one.

“Have fun with that account, that lady deserves to get hit by a train—what’d you say, Miranda?” He was calling from work. He always called her from work. He also always called her by her full name.

Milly drew a tiny red X on the day she should have gotten her period. Three days ago. “Your gloves. And your mug. You left them at my place.”

“Yeah, I’ll pick them up later—no, I’m serious, she’s a complete bitch.”

The splatter of coffee has oozed under one of the chairs. Milly blinks, and the coffee pales, turning into something white and mushy. The chair is green now, with a red tray on which two chubby hands smack a bowl up and down. White mush flies almost as high as the ceiling.

Milly turns away from the coffee, the mush, to make tea. When she makes tea she feels like she is pretending to be the type of woman who makes tea in times of stress, rather than actually being her. That woman has an exotic, but not illegal pet, like a lizard, and she paces when she’s overwhelmed, instead of lying on the floor staring at the popcorn ceiling. She doesn’t have popcorn ceiling, she has skylights. That woman wakes up craving a cigarette, but heads for the tea kettle and the jars of loose-leaf tea instead. Milly has never smoked, and she uses an electric kettle. A lot of her tea has been pocketed from hotel breakfast buffets.

The electric kettle whirs steadily as it heats up. Milly can see the clock on the microwave out of the corner of her eye.

The green numbers shift. Zero minutes.

She doesn’t move, except to pluck a teabag from the oversized jar on the counter. She starts to tear open the paper square, but stops, staring past it at a different tea bag that, unlike the one in her hands, reads

“caffeine free.”

Tea has caffeine. Pregnant women can't have caffeine. Caffeine, or lunch meat, or alcohol. No emptying litter boxes. No soaking in hot tubs. No breathing paint fumes. What about residual incense fumes? The coffee splatter is the color of dried blood. Could you absorb caffeine through your skin? Milly opens the fridge and pulls out white wine, deli turkey, and diet soda, goosebumps popping up on her arms. She wants to throw them out, but she can't until she looks at the test. Two minutes past now.

The coffee must be cleaned up first, with a wet rag. On her hands and knees, Milly can see the dust and mouse food under the cupboards. Seven minutes ago she wanted the test to take only three minutes, but now she wants it to take three hours. She would wipe up all the dust and crumbs, organize the pantry, wash the rugs and the sheets, vacuum the carpets, sweep off the balcony, sort out the old clothes she no longer wears, fluff the couch cushions, scrub the tile behind the toilet, drive to the store for the items on the list on the fridge: crackers and toothpaste and bacon and cream cheese. Then she could be ready.

The coffee-stained rag makes an ugly wet sound as it lands in the sink. Milly allows herself one last diversion. She washes her hands as thoroughly as if the coffee really had been dried blood.

As she turns around, Mark knocks on the door.

He said “later” yesterday, so Milly reasons this is only fair, even as her limbs turn cold.

“Later as in tonight?” Milly said yesterday, squeezing the phone between her cheek and her shoulder as she hung her completed calendar back on its nail.

“Tonight? No, probably not tonight.” One of Mark's coworkers yelled something that made him laugh. “Don't worry, I've got her under control.”

“Well, tomorrow I have some errands to do.” She pressed the tip of her finger against the calendar, covering up the red X, then took it off.

“Miranda. I'll figure it out.” His voice moved away from the speaker. He was looking at his phone, reading the length of the call, Milly

knew. “You know I’m not supposed to take long calls at work. I’ve gotta go.”

The electric kettle bubbles quietly, then clicks once as it powers off. Milly stares at the door, not breathing. The bright-faced baby in the high chair looks at her and opens its mouth to babble for more white mush, but Milly moves into the living room before it can cry out.

To get to the bathroom, she must pass by the front door. She edges around the couch, stepping over Mark’s gloves. He knocks again, louder, and Milly feels her phone begin to vibrate in her pocket from his call. The buzzing seems loud enough for Mark to hear, so she slides the phone under one of the throw blankets, muffling the sound.

She steps past the end table, and down the hall she can see the speck of white on the bathroom counter that is the test. She is an arm’s length from the door, but she has to look down to keep herself from noisily tripping on shoes. Mark must be able to hear her heartbeat.

“Miranda?” The knob clicks as he tries it, and Milly freezes even though she knows it is locked. She shuts her eyes, her face bright and hot. If she opens the door, she has to explain the test, but if she explains the test, Mark can look at that white stick first instead of her. He can serve the child more white mush, and bring Milly a cold can of soda to press against her cheek.

Milly has a vision of Mark balancing the white-hot child on his hip as he rinses out bottle after bottle, milk splashing bright in the metal of the sink, but the scene wobbles, darkens.

“I know you’re in there, I saw your fucking car outside!”

The vision melts away. Milly’s mouth is open, her tongue poised against her top teeth—liar, it’s in the garage!—but she stops herself from yelling and moves away from the door. The child is sleeping in the bedroom, glowing like a night light as she passes by. As she takes the final steps to the bathroom, the things at the edges of her vision blur. Her framed diploma, the crack in the bathroom doorframe, and the gray hand towel all prepare to be transformed, to be given new meaning by the results of the little white stick. The bathroom walls are painted an indigo shade called “Pacific Plum.” Today the dark color feels as bright as a late

summer sky. The white scoop of the sink is like the sun.

She blinks, and she can hear her eyelids fluttering in time with the drum of her heart.

Plus. Like Jeannie and Michael's invitation said: plus one. Milly plus one baby.

Pregnant.

She sits down on the edge of the tub, as if already bearing extra weight. The smell of the lavender soap turns into the creamy smell of bath water. The bright child splashes behind her, fingers squeaking against the sides of the clean tub. Without looking, Milly reaches her arm back and touches the top of the little girl's head, strokes the downy hair that is warm and wild and alive.

-Marissa Deml  
College of St. Benedict '15



# Submission Guidelines

## Submission Address

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Deadline: January 31 for spring publication. Reading and judging period is between late November and February. Results will be sent by May.

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