

# The Messenger

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Volume 2010  
Issue 1 *The Messenger*, 2010

Article 6

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2010

## Not Busy Being Born

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### Recommended Citation

Donaldson, Julia (2010) "Not Busy Being Born," *The Messenger*: Vol. 2010: Iss. 1, Article 6.  
Available at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol2010/iss1/6>

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# Not Busy Being Born

Julia Donaldson

Retirement meant a lot of things for Harold. It meant losing his house in exchange for an apartment above his son's garage, with rent better suited to his new soon-to-be-corpse status. It meant losing the days of the week, every week. Mondays were identical to Thursdays. They were now just hot heavy humid slabs of time. What he gained in return were his son's repeated urgings that he do something. Harold was now a cat sleeping too long in his son's favorite chair. He was lazy and he was a nuisance.

**10** To combat this, Harold signed up for a class at the learning annex. Every Tuesday or possibly Thursday he showed up at a room filled with several other near-corpses and a single almost-corpse who was a good enough artist to earn this teaching job he had certainly never wanted. There, Harold would be instructed to draw an object. One day it was a pineapple, the next an apple, and the next class, since the instructor seemed to have forgotten his fruit, a set of car keys.

Everyday Harold started by drawing a single line lightly on the page, as he assumed most artists did. He would then sit back in his chair and examine his work. On the first day he realized the line looked more the trunk of an elephant. He erased it and started again. This one looked fiercer, with a slight curve on the bottom, like puma ready to pounce. He erased the line again; feeling the paper grain get rougher as his hand furiously deleted this mistake. He drew again, this line too fluid, looking like his Aunt Ayda dancing after too many cocktails. Again, erased. Every class was the same. Not always elephant, puma, Ayda. Sometimes it was desk lamp, seashell, or pinky toe, airplane. Usually, right before he got it right though, it was Ayda. Drunk, dancing, Ayda: the already-corpse.