

JOURNAL TWENTYTWENTY

PROGRAM FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC • UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

2018
VOLUME SIX

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Volume Six, First Edition, First Printing, March 2018.
University of Colorado Boulder Imaging Services.

JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY is made possible thanks to the support of the Program for Writing and Rhetoric, John-Michael Rivera, Director; start-up funding from Susan and Dick Kirk; grants from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program: Director Joan Gabriele and Assistant Director Tim O'Neil; the Center for the American West: Patty Limerick, Faculty Director, and Kurt Gutjahr, Program Director; and our Anonymous Donor. The University of Colorado Boulder's Student Organization Allocation Committee generously provides print marketing funds and production facilities.

Emeritus teacher Dave Underwood helped students with our original layout and design.

JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY publishes a print issue each year, and provides an online community for all genres of creative nonfiction at the University of Colorado Boulder. We acquire First North American Serial Rights. CU Boulder Undergraduate artists and writers of creative nonfiction interested in publishing in JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY may refer to our Call for Submissions page for submission guidelines.

Queries: JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY, Program for Writing and Rhetoric, UCB 317, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309-0359; or journal2020@colorado.edu. We are a green journal and prefer electronic submissions and correspondence. Printed on recycled stock and fully recyclable (including the cover). Single copy costs are \$12.00 per issue in the U.S. and Canada, and \$14.00 outside North America.

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ON JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY


by WILL BARDENWERPER

While researching **THE PRISONER IN HIS PALACE**, my book about the last days of Saddam Hussein and the soldiers guarding him, I was struck by how both the prisoner and his guards, despite being enemies, journeyed into their pasts to escape the circumstances of their present. Saddam, who had once had the power of life and death over 25 million people, and whose dozens of palaces dotted the countryside, had been reduced to a small concrete cell with a shabby outdoor “rec area” where he tended a few weeds he affectionately called his “garden.” The soldiers, far from loved ones at home, had the psychologically challenging mission of keeping the infamous man alive and healthy long enough to see him executed. Despite the odd circumstances bringing them together, they often huddled in the “rec area” on chilly Baghdad nights near an old space heater Saddam dubbed his “fire,” sharing memories that couldn’t be more different. But, in finding a measure of serenity through remembering, they found common ground even amidst the drastically violent conflict of their separate, inimical pasts.

Memory can be overpowering, indiscriminate between an infamous tyrant and young American soldiers guarding him. Many stories in this issue of **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY** explore memories, ranging from the melancholic to bittersweet moments of transcendent beauty. The memories evoked are sometimes blurred and resist easy compartmentalization.

Helen Stritzel’s “**SEASON’S GREETINGS AND FAREWELL**” recalls her childhood, poetically evoking changes of seasons: “Autumn has its own smell—it’s strange, how rot smells sweet in the autumn”—and lives: “Fragments of family still gather every year, but it tastes like another ending.” Andi Dulsky begins “**IF YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT STEREOTYPES**” by taking our hand from the opening line, guiding us through her sensations as she grapples with an overpowering and mysterious love. Her ability to “remember everything” conjures a dreamscape, but one shrouded in “a familiar haze . . . covering the edges and seams of everything that happened.” At once tormented and enchanted by memories both real and imagined, she observes, “I can’t say I see a future with you, but I can see a present.” Sometimes that is the most we can hope for. Finally, Maggie Ramseur, in her beguiling “**TO EAT A WHOLE RAM AND STILL BE HUNGRY FOR BREAKFAST**,” navigates some of the more sublime contours of memory, reimagining moments of transcendence on a summer trip to Alaska. She explains, in evocative, lyrical prose, how “thinking of it now, I can feel a tingle in my own thumb. An inclination to break. A desire to remain there, captivated by the potential of the land.”

These stories all wrestle with the way memories occupy consciousness, sometimes in harmony, and sometimes jostling for supremacy. Sometimes liberating and enlightening, there are other times when we risk drowning in these mental cross-currents. At times like these, there is value in recalling Maggie Ramseur’s “desire to clear my head of theories, and fill it instead with practice.” After all, as I conclude my book: “Time keeps ticking, until it doesn’t—for self-professed reincarnations of King Nebuchadnezzar, his innumerable victims, or those who stood watch over his final days.”

Will Bardenwerper has contributed to **THE NEW YORK TIMES**, **THE WASHINGTON POST**, **THE DENVER POST**, and **NEWSWEEK**. His latest book is **THE PRISONER IN HIS PALACE: SADDAM HUSSEIN, HIS AMERICAN GUARDS, AND WHAT HISTORY LEAVES UNSAID** (Scribner). 

FROM THE EDITORS

We at JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY are immensely proud of the work not only of our contributors, who have provided art and writing ranging from the whimsical to the profound, but of the combined efforts of all our staff to make the edition of JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY you hold in your hands a reality. Additionally, we have been honored over the 2017-2018 season to be able to give this work the attention and celebration it deserves, from the extraordinary photography of Daniel S. Workman to the lovely, incisive poetry of Dyllan Moran in “OBAASAN.” We Spring staff would like to thank the Fall Acquisitions Team for their judicious selection of strong and beautiful work. An immense thank-you goes out to the Spring Digital Production and Art Direction teams for the hard but rewarding efforts made towards production time, as well as to the Business Team for relentless dedication to the success of this year’s print issue. To our contributors—you were worth every minute, and more. ✎

JACKIE FARRELL, MANAGING EDITOR

There’s a reason why storytelling has held such a prevalence in each of the world’s cultures from their beginning. Sharing your own experiences or the experiences of others can be cathartic, and it can teach us a countless number of lessons. Working with JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY this semester was for me another reminder of the fact that everyone around me is immersed in a rich, unique life experience. Having the ability to help in sharing the true stories of other undergraduate college students has been an awesome experience, and the team looks forward to publishing more work in our next ONLINE ISSUE at JOURNAL2020.COM. Keep submitting pieces, keep telling your stories, and please don’t ever stop hearing what others have to share. Thank you to our readers and contributors for making this issue so fascinating! ✎

MICHELLE KUBICKI, EDITORIAL STAFF

The written word is one of the most powerful and sincere forms of art. It is inspired by the material of one’s interactions, experiences, and internal dialogue. The pieces we have compiled in this year’s issue of JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY each tell a uniquely compelling story about their authors and their lives. They have all been crafted through the rewarding and sometimes agonizing process of reaching back into the recesses of their memories, and shaping them into works of art. I hope that you will keep this in mind as you are reading these pieces and I hope that in your reading JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY, you are greeted with the same sense of pride in the amazing creativity of our student body, as I was. ✎

LIAM SONKE, EDITORIAL STAFF



GET INTO PRINT—OR ONLINE

All University of Colorado Undergraduate students are eligible to send in writing for consideration by **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY**. Submissions go through blind review by our Editorial staff.

We seek only creative nonfiction, in any of its genres:

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- Lyric Essay—the truth told with a poetic slant
- Travel, Food, and Sports Writing
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Artists

Send us your stories through artwork of any type—for consideration by our Art Direction staff, for publication in either our print or online editions. We especially seek multi-media work for our website, including but not limited to: video, animation, music for podcasts, etc.

Join our staff

Take the fall section of **WRTG 2090** (yup, for the journal production course, that's twenty-ninety) or sign up for a one, two, or three-credit **INDEPENDENT STUDY** in any semester with one of our Faculty Advisors. Independent Study is offered at both the upper and lower division level. We seek anyone wanting to learn Editorial, Art Direction, Digital Production, Podcasting and Video Production, or the Business and Marketing of a print and online journal of creative nonfiction—no previous experience required. A position on the **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY** staff will foster the development of strong job skills while learning about the exciting genres of creative nonfiction, and publishing the region's premier print and online journal of only creative nonfiction. We exist to serve and further a community of creative nonfiction writers (and artists) across campus.

Find us online at Journal2020.com



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TO EAT A WHOLE RAM AND STILL BE HUNGRY FOR BREAKFAST

by MAGGIE RAMSEUR

The best crepes I ever had were made by a Belgian hitchhiker on a farm near the adventure capital of Alaska. We had spent the better part of the day buried in the brush on Chilkat Pass with buckets, picking blueberries off the bushes, talking loudly to each other to make our presence known to any bears or moose that may be grazing around us. With the season just beginning, we needed only to tickle the branches to make the plump, sweet berries plop into our buckets. But the real treasures were the salmonberries, bulbous like raspberries but bigger, glossier, and sweeter, hidden on the underside of low rising scrub oak near the stream.

Foraging for salmonberries appealed to us especially because the flies were not quite as bad near the road, which ran alongside the stream. Hardly deterred by swatting, these ruthless flies danced around our eyes, dive-bombed straight into our ears, and explored our hair and our knees and our shoelaces. As if making their own presence known to bears and moose, they buzzed incessantly and incredibly loudly. These flies gnawed away at our peaceful perception of the morning, making

our shoulders roll up to our ears like nervous ticks, twitching the day away. But down near the road where the salmonberries grew and ripened quietly in the twenty hour days of the Alaskan summer, the flies were not so bad, and we could enjoy the view with pleasure and ease.

The Chilkat Mountains loomed in every direction, rising out of the river beds and slicing into the sky, their steep faces basking in the sunlight. Their snowcapped summits ominously called out to brave and reckless wanderers. Over the years, many Warren Miller films cast this threateningly beautiful landscape as their backdrop, a paradise to heli-skiers. Growing up in a suburb of Denver, I never thought I could love mountains more passionately than the Rockies until I came here. The Rockies are a boorish and barren comparison.

Once we had collected a dozen or so gallons of blueberries and devoured all the salmonberries we could scavenge, we loaded back into the pickup truck, parked haphazardly in the shoulder of the old logging road. Gretchen, the midsized white herding dog, stomped around on my lap, settling herself with her nose in the corner of the window. I looked over to my best friend, seated beside me in the backseat, both of us relieved to be resting after a long morning of fly swatting. As we rode back to the farm, we asked how a Belgian man ended up in Haines, Alaska. He said with a sincere smile through his charismatic accent, "I was hitchhiking through Canada, and when I got to Haines, I broke my thumb." We chuckled at the literal interpretation of his words, recalling our own hitchhiking experience from a few days prior; we knew that a hitchhiker couldn't very well flag down a ride with a broken thumb. Sally, the owner of the farm where we were staying, looked fondly over at her friend while adjusting her grip on the steering wheel. She knew full well that he had broken no bones in his hand, and that he had simply been captivated by the potential of the land. The urge to hitch a ride out just never came to him.

Back at the farm, he was like a twelve-year-old boy opening a new Lego set on Christmas morning. He needed towels from over there. Two planks of wood from the workshop outside. At least three big bowls. No, bigger than that. He assembled with fervor and precision. "This is the best way to destem berries. This way is the best way. I promise you," he said as he jerry-rigged the produce conveyor belt. We moved into position. He poured the blueberries out of the bucket onto the plank, which was covered in a towel, and leaned against a

chair so that it sloped gently to the floor. The berries rolled down the plank and landed in the big bowl on the floor. As they rolled, the leaves and twigs appeared on the towel, and we picked these things out of the way like chimps grooming each other. It worked as effectively as he said it would, and much more effectively than picking through the berries one by one to clean them. Soon we had several bowls full of pure, distilled blueberries.

He went to work in the kitchen, breaking eggs and whisking air into them. He leaned in to tell us the secret to better crepes, jutting out his chin and whispering it so as not to let the squash or the kale in the garden hear him. “The secret,” he enticed, “is a fermenting agent.” We furrowed our brows as he searched for beer in the refrigerator. Sally pointed him in the direction of some Kombucha. Shaking the jar in his eager fist, he exclaimed with a very European growl of satisfaction. “First rule of crepes,” he said as he bent over the cast iron pan warming on the gas stove, “the first one is always a pitch. It’s no good. Never eat the first crepe.” He flipped the contents of the pan.

Sitting around the wooden dining table, just feet from the stove, we ate crepes as fast as he could flip them for what felt like lifetimes. We stuffed them with zucchini from the garden and tomatoes from the greenhouse and cheese from the market. We blended the blueberries with sugar, pureeing them into a sweet, violently purple glaze. We also ate them plain, trying to identify the flavor of the Kombucha, which had miraculously disappeared in the alchemy of their formation.

Every moment of the trip was deliciously memorable like this. On our hike through the pouring rain to the summit of Mt. Riley, we ate smoked salmon caught by Sally’s husband on their commercial fishing boat and smoked by Sally herself. On the rocky beach where the cruise ships docked, we ate pizza from the Fireweed, a restaurant Sally supplied with farm-fresh ingredients. On the salt flats of the Chilkat River estuary, where the salt water mixed with the fresh water, we tasted last season’s currant jam with fresh eggs and fire-baked bread. And on the dock at mosquito lake, where leeches attached themselves to my best friend’s leg, we devoured two whoopee pies that we purchased from a young girl at the farmers market, who said they were her Amish great grandmother’s recipe.

Alaska is home to a wild breed of people. A tough breed of builders and farmers, broken-thumbed hitchhikers,

*“Never eat the first
crepe.”*

truck drivers, and dog owners. Wearers of worn hats and rubber boots, wildflowers soaking up the long summer sunshine, and sailors traversing on the winter's unyielding moonbeams. Fishermen and waitresses and gin bottlers and chefs and bakers. Mountain climbers and market goers. Adventurers. This land welcomed each of these characters, and each person who called Haines, Alaska home embodied not one or a few but all of these characters.

When I departed for Haines, I felt to be very much "just me". Although, surely I felt a bit of something more, too, or else I doubt that I would have made the journey. One afternoon, walking down the road back to the farm from Mosquito Lake (leeches removed by this time), I could not stop pondering the value of calculus. A year into my college education, I was well-versed in theory. A lifetime of American education drilled arithmetic and language into my head. But less than that, I think it bestowed unto me the skills of test-passing, note-taking, sitting still for eight hours a day, and turning in homework on time. On the side of the road in Haines, I walked with an empty resume. Despite my knowledge of things like calculus, I knew so little about the world. I hardly knew when blueberry season began, let alone how to sail a boat or construct a house or safely can currant jam without cursing myself to death by botulism.

Kneeling in the fertile dirt on the farm, I held new life in my hands. I laid it in the earth, firmly pressing the bed around it, securing it in this place of growth. The carrot plant, which I held as a sprout in my naïve hands, would grow in the dirt where I laid it. In the bed that I tilled. On this piece of land on this farm in this wilderness. In our gypsy wagon at night, we sipped chamomile tea by the light of the sun, fading glacially beyond the firs, as I wrote in my notebook these reflections.

I have been to the land of the midnight sun. I have felt with dirty hands, new life. A blank page. A tambourine. A collection of raindrops. A tin cup of tea. A red floral duvet. An uncomfortable mosquito bite. A forest of giant pine. A green window sill. A few citronella candles. A fried egg on a sandwich. A white blue sky at 9:30 p.m.

My friend who traveled with me to Alaska has since completed his culinary arts degree. We often recall a Russian inscription we noticed, carved above the door to the gypsy wag-

on. When we asked Sally what it meant, she said, “You can eat a whole ram and still be hungry for breakfast.” That was all she said. With our undying love for food, we accepted its literal meaning. With time, we accepted something more.

Thinking of it now, I can feel a tingle in my own thumb. An inclination to break. A desire to remain there, captivated by the potential of the land. Deeper, though, captivated by a potential of my own. A desire to clear my head of theories, and fill it instead with practice. To learn, by passing seasons, when the blueberries ought to ripen. ❧

*With our undying love for
food, we accepted its literal
meaning. With time, we
accepted something more.*



Tapioca Pudding

by Taylor Lucio

Grandma could barely talk and move. It was difficult to watch her grow weaker and weaker, especially when I was only eleven years old. The entire family loved her, and over a hundred people would gather in her tiny apartment. They all wanted to be there for her as she was dying, but their presence was hard for me.

During her last days, Grandma's small apartment was always filled with the smell of fried chicken. That's all we had for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We couldn't afford anything more. The adults had been at Grandma's house all day, so by the time I got there from school, there would be nothing left. My cousins used to eat tostada shells because they didn't have anything else. They would break the shells so we could share.

I learned how to take advantage of food whenever I saw it. At school, I took everything in the lunch line. It was a feast that tasted horrible. I always overate in case I didn't get to eat at home. I remember the lunch ladies handing out two hot dogs to each student, and how the preppy girls would make a face and put their second hot dog back. I would get those, too. My favorites were the strawberry ice cream and the PB&J sandwiches because they were the only real food.

By the time I was eleven, I weighed one hundred and twenty pounds, when most of my class were seventy-five to eighty pounds. I got bullied. Bullied for my weight, depression, and constant crying. “Hey, Taylor! If I put a cookie on your shoulder, would you struggle to get it?” “Oh, look! There’s the fat Mexican girl who can’t stop eating!” “You’re chubby.” “Look at how big that Mexican girl’s ears are... They’re huge.”

Even my friend Ayesha wasn’t the same. “Oh my gosh, Tay. Are you pregnant?” she would ask. I didn’t answer her. I couldn’t tell if she was trying to be funny or if she was serious.

I never told Mom about the bullying. She was already tired and stressed out. Dad was always working, so I couldn’t tell him. I stayed quiet. I never told my older cousin Darrell, even when he said, “Tay! If anybody picks on you at school, you let me know and I’ll beat them up!” I knew he would actually do it and I didn’t want him to go to jail.

My family members never knew about my incomplete homework and dwindling grades, or how my teachers were always yelling at me. Instead, I daydreamed in class, wondering what my life would be like if I lost Grandma. I was aware of the huge upcoming history project on Canada, but there was no way I was going to get to buy a poster board. I would have to take the bad grade. On nights when I would have to stay at Grandma Helen’s house really late, I brought my homework with me. But I could never concentrate because there were always so many people and I didn’t have room to write. The wall was too bumpy and the table was always filthy. I wrote my papers over the carpet and became frustrated when they were filled with holes from where the pencil would poke through. Grandma had only one pencil without an eraser. When her little green sharpener went missing, I would use pens, even when I knew my teachers wouldn’t grade any homework written with a pen. When I finally brought my own writing board, my little cousins destroyed it, thinking it was a toy. I gave up on homework.

One day, Drew was making fun of me in the cafeteria again. He and his friends were trying to get me to go out with a fat boy. To make matters worse, I slipped on chocolate milk and landing on my back in front of everyone. My lunch went flying and sent everybody watching into hysterics. I was still soaked in milk when I got to Grandma’s house that day. I found myself in the kitchen, looking for dinner, but food was scarce.

*They would break
the shells so we
could share.*

“Mom, what is there to eat?” I asked.

“Chicken,” she said, pointing without looking up. I followed her finger to find two giant boxes from Albertson’s on the counter. Both of them stank of grease. I opened the first one, only to find it empty. The second one was filled with bones. There was a single piece of chicken, but it had close to no meat and it was completely black. There was even a shriveled feather stuck to the top of it.

I sighed. “Mom, there’s no more.”

She turned around. “Well, I don’t know what to tell you.”

“Can’t we go get Chinese food, or something?” I asked.

“No! Don’t you understand that we have to feed all of these people?” she snapped. “Do you know how expensive that is? These people have to pay for Auntie Emma’s funeral and now your grandma’s, probably! Do you know how long it’s been since I’ve eaten? It’s been *days!* You’re just going to have to miss a few meals, too!”

I felt the tears coming. I muttered an okay. I decided to leave Mom alone. I sat under Grandma’s sink, behind the yellow curtain. I cried a little. I prayed and asked God to help our family. For Grandma and Auntie Keka and Auntie Vi. For supplies to finish my homework. For the bullying to stop at the school. For people to see me for who I really was, a silly girl who loved to collect pandas. Most of all, I prayed for food. Food not only for myself, but for my whole family. “Jesus, I’m hungry,” I whispered. “The kids at school are so mean at lunch, but I can’t help it that I’m starving. Please make them stop. I’m sorry for calling Megan a bad word. Please forgive me. And please give me something to eat. I know that you fed thousands of people with two fishes and five loaves of bread... or was it five... fishes and two thousand people? Or did two people get five thousand... no... I don’t know. But if you could do that, you can feed us. God, please give me something to eat. I’m so hungry.”

I crawled out from under the sink and opened the fridge. It was completely empty except for a container with three green beans in it, but they were months old. There was also a giant pitcher of tea labeled DO NOT DRINK. It was Auntie Martha’s tea that she was using to lose weight and we weren’t allowed to touch it. I opened the freezer. There was a tray of ice and a box of fudgesicles, but when I stuck my hand inside, it was empty. I wiped another tear from my eye. “Please, Jesus. I’m so hungry.”

I opened the fridge again, to find something I didn't see the first time. On the inside of the door, was a little container of tapioca pudding. It was the only pudding left, and there was no box from where it had originated. I snatched it out of the fridge and pulled the lid off. It jiggled as I did so. I had never had tapioca pudding before, and the texture seemed awful. But I didn't care. I licked the lid clean and grabbed a spoon. The first bite tasted heavenly—like vanilla but better. I ate the pudding as slowly as I could, devouring one sweet tapioca pearl at a time. They popped in my mouth. I didn't like the way they felt, but they brought joy to me. I giggled. I imagined God saying, "There you go, my panda girl! How does that taste? I bet you were hungry. I love you, my princess."

I ate the pudding for half an hour. When it was finally gone, I licked the inside of the container clean. I said a silent prayer of thanks to God. Then I curled up in a ball on the hard carpet and slept. The floor wasn't comfortable but that was okay.

I woke up in the middle of the night. Everyone was gone except for Mom, Dad, the aunties, and my cousins. My cousin Alex and I decided to go to Grandma's room by ourselves. He happened to be the cousin I was closest to, and we practically lived with Grandma because we were always at her house. Inside, we talked to her, not being able to tell if she was awake or asleep.

"Thank you for taking good care of us," Alex said with a serious face. He looked like he was about to cry.

"Thanks for being there for us," I said.

"Thanks for being nice to us even when we were bad," said Alex.

"Thanks for loving us," I added.

"We love you," said Alex.

Grandma looked like a skeleton, lying in bed with her eyes half shut and her mouth open. She weighed less than the kids in my class. Her ribcage went up and down as she breathed. She couldn't move or talk. Suddenly, her blanket went flying and whacked me in the face. I panicked. So did Alex. We looked at Grandma. Her face hadn't changed, but her whole body was exposed. She was wearing an oversized blue shirt and a pullup. Her legs looked like sticks. We assumed she had gotten too hot and threw her blanket off. We laughed in relief.

"I... I..." Grandma's mouth moved, and Alex and I stopped laughing. We stared at her with anticipation. "I... 1-1-

*They popped in
my mouth.*

*It was our home,
where God hides
delicious tapioca
pudding.*

l-luhhhh...” Her tongue was on the roof of her mouth as she struggled to get the words out. “I... l-l-love y-you, t-too,” she said. Then she started choking.

Alex and I panicked. We gently patted her ribs. “You’re okay, Grandma! You’re okay!” we said.

“O-o-okay,” said Grandma.

“Okay,” we repeated.

“Okay,” said Grandma.

“Is she okay?!” Mom burst through the door.

“Okay,” said Grandma.

“Yeah, she just choked,” said Alex.

“D- D- D-Doctors,” said Grandma.

We looked at her, confused. But then she smiled. She was talking about me and Alex. We were her doctors.

Mom had Pastor Brendan and Brianna over to pray for Grandma. When they walked into Grandma’s tiny apartment, they looked around in disgust. They gazed upon the faces of my relatives then looked at the size of the house.

“She lives *here*?” Pastor Brianna asked me.

“*Here*?” she repeated when I didn’t answer her.

I could only nod. I didn’t have enough strength to tell her anything.

“Wow. I didn’t know it was going to be *this* bad.”

I ignored her. Our neighbor Joe came inside. He wore the expression of—and may have been—an exhausted drug dealer, but he was our friend who used to buy us ice cream. Mom gestured for Joe to come in closer to see Grandma. When he did, he burst into tears and screamed, “Oh my god!” over and over as he bent down to cry next to Grandma. “Oh my God, Ms. Helen! My sweet Ms. Helen! Oh my God!”

I caught Pastor Brianna staring at Joe’s tattoos. She looked back at me as if I had to explain his life choices. I didn’t give her the time of day. She shared looks of shock and disgust with Pastor Brendan. When they finally started to pray for Grandma, I didn’t listen. Their prayer meant nothing to me after their stares and comments. I wondered if God would even listen to their prayer after the way they acted. I left the room in tears. I didn’t want to see them ever again. My young mind couldn’t comprehend the fact that adults could be so rude and judgmental. I thought only kids at school were mean. Grandma was dying right in front of them and all they cared

about was *where* she lived when I just wanted her *to* live. It broke my heart.

That night, I sat next to Darrell, who was like my older brother. He was fifteen years older than me and he was as comforting as a teddy bear.

“Did she die?” Darrell asked me when he saw that I was crying. Worried sick, I had never heard him speak with such a weak voice.

I shook my head no. I didn’t tell him the real reason I was crying. I was worried that the pastors would hear me. I didn’t have to tell him. He knew. He hugged me.

Grandma’s house was small, but it was clean. I practically lived there, and so did the rest of my family. It was our home, where God hides delicious tapioca pudding. A home, where Grandma could be surrounded with doctors who loved her from our hearts. It was where my cousins Darrell, Leah, Maiya, Alex, and I would spend time talking about Grandma. About the time she accidentally set the kitchen on fire and put it out before anybody found out. How she used to yell at the little cousins and spank them with flyswatters when they bugged her. How much we knew she loved us. We listened quietly to cousin Bob singing *How Great Thou Art* to Grandma. Darrell let me use the bottom of his T-shirt to wipe my tears. ❧

*In Loving Memory of Helen J. Martinez
November 7th, 2009*



English-Japanese-English: Life in Nikkei

by DYLLAN MORAN

“Debitive indicates an obligation to do something. In a culture such as Japan, with an emphasis on duties, obligations, and responsibilities, it is not at all surprising that there are a variety of means to express obligation. What is surprising, however, is that despite the cultural emphasis on fulfilling obligations, expressions of obligation are infrequent.”¹

「祖先の言の葉を学んだらいいと思う。祖先の言の葉を学んだ方がいいと思う。祖先の言の葉を学ぶ必要がある。祖先の言の葉を学べない？祖先の言の葉を学べよ。祖先の言の葉を学んでくれない？」

My grandmother grew up on an island in the middle of an endless sea.







THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN

by ANDIE DULSKY

Shards of glass were everywhere in the garage, hiding behind brooms, plastic boxes of Christmas ornaments, and her brother's bicycle. They nearly sliced the wheels of the Volkswagen bug and found new homes behind her mother's old gardening tools. She was sure that she had missed these. It was seven in the morning, and my mother was cleaning up the mess that her parents had made the night before.

Before the first shatter, she'd heard them fighting for hours. Then the next, and the next. She'd gotten up early to see what had happened, only to find her grandmother's china set smashed into millions of tiny pieces on the floor. She had cleaned the garage all by herself, and her parents hadn't seemed to notice. Or if they did, they didn't care to say anything. My mother lived in a world where silence was the necessary, and only, option.

When my older sister was born, my mother screamed so loudly that my parents thought something might be wrong. They had asked the nurses about this, and they said that they, too, had never heard one scream like that. The rejection of silence, I suppose, might have made my mother proud.

I have always been the more quiet of the two sisters, although I have always been encouraged to use my voice, to never shrink for any other person's sake. I'd like to think that when I care about something, I'm not so quiet.

When my mother was old enough, she moved to San Diego. She lived with her best friend, Elisa. Elisa was only 18, but looked much older, due to a difficult upbringing. She had a thing for older men, and dated one named Peter, who lived out of a van. My mother adored these two. With them, her day to day life became a haze filled with omelettes eaten on La Jolla beach, cigarette smoke so thick it was opaque, and spandex workout gear. It was the 1980s. She was entranced.

There is a sort of longing in her voice when my mother tells these stories, perhaps a yearning for the euphoric people and places. She loved the beach. She loved Peter and Elisa. When I asked about them, she wondered about their whereabouts, if Elisa married the last man she had met in her time with my mother, if Peter still lives in his van. I figure I get this from her—this longing for lost places and people.

My mother and father met at a gym in San Diego. She was studying to become a lawyer, sitting on a stationary bike and reviewing flashcards. He ran circles around the track until he collected enough courage to talk to her. I've never seen a purer expression of love than the two of them. But before my father was Chip, who has become nothing more than a ghost of the past. He was a man infatuated with the rush of poisons in his veins more than his own life. He promised my mother forever. He couldn't follow through. She was silent until the end—I can only imagine how she had stayed up at night waiting for him, in the same way that I did for a boy I dated when I was sixteen. Mine was never too far gone, but I was silent through it all, with bruised wrists and shattered hearts.

I often see this pattern of shrinking women, repressing their needs for the sake of men. I wonder if I get this from my mother, even though she has grown from her years of silence. She went on to become a lawyer, a teacher, and a mother. She went on to become an incredible role model for many. Yet the question of the incredible shrinking woman lingers in the darkness.

The shrinking woman hides behind bicycles and boxes of Christmas ornaments in dirty garages. She hides in the closets of sixteen-year-old girls who allow their boyfriends their bodies.

The shrinking woman will be there, unseen. I've known her for years.

My mother is happy. The days of sweeping garage floors for her parents are over. She has built a nest in Colorado with my father, where I spend weekends gardening and taking drives around the city with her. She and I are so much alike that sometimes it breaks my heart, for I know the pain that holds her. I know the gripping feeling of the ghosts that return in the night. I know that somewhere under her baby blue eyes and red hair is a young girl, still looking for pieces of china under boxes and car tires. ❧

*... her day to day
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tranced.*



Art by Daniel S. Workman



[040-BQJ]

by KATHRYN HERBERT

Zero

“Decades of increasing drug arrests has had no effect on reducing drug use and, in fact, illicit drug use has increased in Virginia in recent years.”

5

You wouldn't know it by looking at me, but I was charged with a class 5 felony.

Virginia refers the most school aged children to law enforcement officials than another of state. 16 in 1,000. 25% of these students are black, and 33% have learning or physical disabilities. How can we build a nation when we are putting shackles upon free minds before they can even drive a car?

16.5

Oh sweet, sweet release. I had never been so proud to call something my own. Amidst angsty teenage years repudiating the materialistic wasteland in which I lived, burying myself in volumes of Thoreau's thoughts and Whitman's prosaic ramblings, I found my escape. I'd journal into the early hours of the morning in an attempt to construct figurative "freedom." Now, freedom was tangible. It was real. As I settled into the driver's seat, cushioned by the fading fabric, there was only space for happiness. I did not notice the missing headrests. I did not notice the two-foot-long key scratches along the back door, accentuated by the mismatched paint job, a half ass attempt to cover a story never to be told. I did not notice the bright, "Milano Red" doors shrieking from years of rust with each open and close. I did not notice, yet, the broken A.C. compressor that I could not afford to replace. I did not notice the old stereo system, outfitted with a cassette deck and nothing else. I did notice, however, the long, yellow pinky fingernail of the shining, bald salesman as he talked about his jet skis with my father.

I was 16 and a half years old and I finally had my own car.

18.2

...§ 18.2-248.1 Except as authorized in the Drug Control Act, Chapter 34 of Title 54.1, it shall be unlawful for any person to sell, give, distribute or possess with intent to sell, give or distribute marijuana.

(a) Any person who violates this section with respect to:

- (1) Not more than one-half ounce of marijuana is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor;
- (2) More than one-half ounce but not more than five pounds of

marijuana is guilty of a Class 5 felony

(3) More than five pounds of marijuana is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment of not less than five nor more than 30 years...

Ok, I get it. I messed up.

25

She's seen more than I have, but together we've seen a lot. I cannot stand driving with the windows up. Even in the depths of Colorado's unforgiving winter, the windows are cracked as soon as those four tires get rolling. She took me places I cannot explain. Where freedom became more than a word on a page.

Seven days on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, sunburned and thirsty from scrambling along the trails, climbing down sedimentary cross bedding spanning literal eras in geologic time. I stumbled upon off trail petroglyphs with my three friends. Words lost meaning. We were humbled by those who had walked before us, lost in the stories the simple paintings told. There is a vastness that cannot be described, only felt, as you sit on the edge of what looks like the universe. The burning, orange sun slipping behind the horizon as you exhale the last sweet, smoky breath into the night.

Alone, and alive, in the Medicine Bow National Forest. Yellow Pine has become my escape, a small campground nestled among whispering trees, where hardly another soul can be found. Ponderosa pines and aspens older than me, I would bet. I perfected the subtle art of skipping town after the monotony of my customer service job ("Thank you, come again!") each weekend to return just in time for Monday's shift ("And how are you today, ma'am?"). Cruise control for a hundred miles north to reunite that big sky with my heart, yearning for the wide open, the freedom. Out there, there is no time. Just lazy days reclined in the makeshift bed that has formed in the trunk of my car. Nights of stargazing and prophesying on her cold, metal roof. Together we chased down Laramie Peak, the Tetons, Vedauwoo, and more. I do not need a map. These steps are ingrained in my being. Her front, left tire hugs the yellow line out of instinct, and nothing else.

26

Honestly, I almost feel sorry for the thief who stole my radio. Shattered glass and a dented dashboard proved the struggle that had endured, but in the end some lucky fool made off with a barely working, 15-year-old stock Honda radio. No auxiliary cord hook up. No CD player. Just a radio and a cassette deck. The midnight breeze mingled with the irony of it all. I should have known better than to park on 26th and Welton. Denver has seen crime rates skyrocket, and so I became another number in the data.

27

[Certain moments live on forever and change your path, change who you are. This is one of those.]

This still hurts to tell, and the words continuously elude me when I try to articulate what I gained and lost on the 27th of June. Nine unmarked police cars surrounding my dusty, little CR-V in a Lowe's parking lot. A simple handoff gone wrong. A cacophony of mistakes. Every ounce of trust draining from my body. Me, barefoot and high, with my best friend in the passenger seat, nothing but a pack of popcorn in his pocket. I realized my life was about to change. A lot.

I am a good person. But that day, the Commonwealth of Virginia labelled me otherwise. The cops laughed because my hands were so sweaty, the fingerprints would not take. I dumped the small inheritance my grandmother had left me, for school, into court fees and bail. I smiled my pearly, white girl smile. My lawyer happened to be good friends with the DA, and talked the detective down to a misdemeanor. I learned how easy it was to hate myself, hate everything I was.

I had nightmares about the black and white video replays from the cop's dashboard camera:

Swarmed, guns out, hands up, cheek on the hood, pat down, hands cuffed.

Questions, no answers, accusations, lines that did not connect,

The metal was so cold it burned, the walls smelled of
Something that cannot be named
Denying humanity, subjugation
Into words, into data, into
That which cannot feel
Pain, mercy, anything.

[Arbitrary power in the hands of//ego deprived vessels//red,
white, blue.

but they only see white and black.]

79

“The legislature enacted Virginia’s current marijuana laws in 1979.”

We are afraid of what we do not know.

“While marijuana use among black people was 24% greater than among white people, this does not explain why arrest rates in 2013 were 233% higher for black Virginians compared to white Virginians.”

The numbers do not add up. I begin to doubt who I am.

“Black Virginians were arrested in 2013 at 3.3 times the rate of white Virginians and accounted for nearly half (47%) of all marijuana possession arrests.”

Identity is undefined. Remove the shroud behind which you hide. These words are real. Your privilege grins knowingly back at your tear-stained eyes in the mirror. Now this face has a name.

[Black is black, white is white. Those are words, but we are people.]

80

The asphalt sinew that holds together the American Midwest—
Who else could take me to midnight railroad tracks in Nebraska,
through mechanical breakdowns and the sweet corn fields of
Iowa.

To the vinyl and plywood lined dive bars of Southern Illinois,
as I roll right along through my heritage: Ohio, Pennsylvania,
Maryland.

I-80 blends into the smaller fibers of the American muscle,
into the Old Dominion, the place they tell me to call home.

There is a heavily read collection of beatnik books in the back-
seat—

There is a girl, barefoot, looking out the window—

There is a way to rewrite your destiny—

Take the wheel and drive.

686

Virginia Senator Adam Ebbin introduced Senate Bill 686 in January 2015. He advocated for the elimination of a criminal penalty for marijuana possession. He advocated for change. Progress for a state still making decisions based on laws over three decades old. He was hoping to reduce racial disparity in the state's prison systems. But SB 686 was not passed.

The last available data shows that 77% of individuals incarcerated in Virginia are black.

Sic semper tyrannis. Thus always to tyrants.

173,056


What do you see? As you wipe aside the thin layer of dust that has settled on the review mirror. Your finger brushes against the tiny mantra taped in the corner [open yourself and let the universe fill you] as you rustle the strings of beads and dangling paper cranes. Things look smaller, less defined in the smudged reflection. You question what has been done, the unknown that gradually unfolds.

You, you alone have the power to take what the universe has given and reform, repurpose the shame into brilliance. Take small steps. Release your doubt and absorb the life emanating around you.

The mileage reads 173,056; the 6 paused halfway into the spin to 7.

Turn the key, and go.

infinity

“What is that feeling when you’re driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing—? It’s the too-huge world vaulting us, and it’s good-by. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies...” 



A FLAILING IDENTITY

“A third culture kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents’ culture. The third culture kid builds relationships to all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the third culture kids life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of the same background, other third culture kids.” —Ruth Van Reken

by ALIA CULBERTSON

When asked “Where are you from? No, like, where are you *really* from?” I can’t help but wonder a different question. What truly makes a person who they are? Many of us have heard the microaggressive comments from people who don’t understand the difference between home and ethnicity and why those aren’t mutually exclusive. You know the ones, those who ask questions about our identity, as if we are confused. I think it’s the phrasing of the question that really gets me the most, the “*really* from,” because if you want to know my ethnicity, just ask, and if you want to know the town I grew up in, just ask. While it’s almost laughable to be interrogated in this way, using questions you’ve never and most likely will never be asked, it’s also minimizing and invalidating of my identity.

Take me, for example, I'm Lebanese, Ghanaian and German, both of my parents were immigrants. I was raised in a separated home, where almost all of my culture of what makes me who I am, came from my mom's side. She was born in Ghana, where her mother, my *teta*, is from. She spent eleven years of her childhood there before moving to Lebanon, where her father, my *jidou*, calls home. After that, they moved to Lebanon, and why they moved *towards* the bombs during the civil war is beyond me. My mother spent some of her teenage years in Lebanon, before the bombs of the Civil War destroyed their homes along with their sense of security, causing her family to flee to Europe. I like to call this the Nader-Tabica Diaspora of February 1989. First they journeyed to Cyprus, by boat and then to Switzerland. After that, they did a stint in Germany by train and finally, in 1990 flew to London, giving 'trains planes and automobiles,' new meaning. It is in London and other parts of Europe that most of my family has stayed. An exception being my mother, who, thanks to her independent spirit, the same spirit the war almost stripped her of, went to America with the man who would later be my father.

"One thing to note about the civil war is that it wasn't constant conflict, rather a mixed experience of surreal times of 'calmness' mixed with period of bloody calamity." My mother shares that during the times where she and her younger siblings would sit in corners of buildings, surrounded by sounds and vibrations of bombs exploding, it created a pain that will never leave. A fear that causes you to hope and wish that God will hear you now. My mother writes poetry, she has repurposed and reclaimed this pain and puts into words what her mouth cannot always express. After teaching for years, something I saw to be so powerful that I followed suit, she has gone back to school yet again, this time for an MFA. She's been able to share her story in multiple literary journals, giving hope to those who've been in a similar position as her.

That I can tell firecrackers from gunfire. That I can only distinguish bombs from thunder when a whistle precedes the thunder. But that I think every thunder is a bomb falling and That I drop and look for shelter. That I am embarrassed that I jump at a loud noise. That I know I will not die as long as I can relive memories where I lived through death. That I know to open windows to avoid glass shrapneling the house. That the building in Lebanon did not have a basement. That I know how to fill sandbags. That I know what they are for. That the buildings on the street with sandbags are the ones with sons called to fight. That I know when

*I was a strong
willed tyrant of a
child so I saw an
opportunity and I
seized it.*

school will be canceled. That I remember we forget to protect ourselves from a bomb landing in the elevator shaft. That we assume if it happens we are meant to die. That men can cry. That I remember filling the sandbags that block the lobby entrance. That the tenants of the building crawl on the ground on mattresses wait for bombardment. That I want to live. That I remember the warning on the radio the day before. That we are warned.

The journey that I've taken with my identity since I was a child has been a long one. From comments to my sister, Yasmine, and I about 9/11 and how we're terrorists. From being labeled as Mexican without ever even taking the time to ask if we're something other than an assumption. A father telling his own daughter that she has a "big-arab nose," and calling every middle-easterner in a movie a "terrorist" or "towel-head." Desperate to visit the countries of the culture of my family, to strengthen my identity, to not feel like some hitch hiking traveler stuck between *almost* and *not enough*, my sister and I had to fight against the voices telling us that part of us wasn't valid, important or beautiful. The beauty in this pain though, is that I am a more sympathetic, gentle, compassionate person for it. And now, I hear stories from my youngest brother who is in 1st grade, of children criticizing his cold lunch, (as if hot lunch is really that amazing. You can keep your square cut fake cheese pizza, thank you very much) because it's something they've never seen. When they said *ew*, my brother told them *you're missing out, you should try it before saying ew, it's really good.* Why he isn't ashamed like I was can be explained with a variety of factors. The strongest one being that he isn't being raised in a broken home. My mother can instill the confidence, pride and culture to the fullest extent. There is no tension, no confusion. My carefully well thought out childhood approach to children teasing me had always been to cover vegetables in ranch and to throw it across lunchroom tables. This would result in a suspension, which I would argue was worth it, but his casualty-free way worked better.

Groundnut Soup, Kinkeh and Fried Fish with Shitoh, Waakye, Fattoush, Maamoul, Kibbeh, Bamyeh, Loubieh b'zeit, Fasolia and Falefel. Such sweet aromas constantly filled the house, citing my ancestors of whom sometimes I feel detached from, as if I don't have a connection to them. Roasted plantain and roasted peanuts are treats for me; when the mixing of oils and flavors creates a scent that wafts to me, I am reminded of my culture, the same one, but experienced in a different way. In Ghana, you're greeted with those scents of peanuts and plantains. Growing up my mother and

her sisters would enjoy plantains which were sold to them on the side of the street from vendors. They tell me stories of everyone always having, selling or eating food, food being carried on heads, food being carried in bags, food even being sold through car windows. Food, food, food, all the time.

My teta—my mother's, mother, my namesake—she passed away last year. My mom hasn't gotten over it and grieves every day, that she wasn't there to say goodbye. That she can't call her up when she forgets a recipe and ask for the missing step anymore. She takes her grief out on us and complains that we don't know how to cook our favorite meals. And because she's right—which she, contrary to her popular belief, isn't always—I ask her to teach me. To teach me how to cook, but I procrastinate that more often than not. But also to teach me how to love unconditionally, how to think critically, how to write poetry. And although I'd be lucky to have half the eloquence and power she pours into her writing, I give it my best shot.

A melting pot, mixed with spices, I watch my mother cook. My tongue has been watered down, and the spices disrupt my taste buds. I am the one asking to change the meal, who feels uncomfortable. A table still set, napkins in my lap. My ancestors whose name I do not know, take up the empty seats. They watch me in anguish and despair, while I stay farther back, I sit on the stop shelf with the rest of the spices my mother doesn't use when she cooks for me. Unused and closeted for society's sake, a decision perpetuated by me.

My mother used to smoke before she had me as a child, she quit, cold turkey, but in no way was it easy for her to do. And when I was born, before my sister Yasmine was even a thought, she smoked again before giving it up forever. I have this memory, I'm in our home and my mom had just went outside for a smoke and to talk to a friend. I was a strong willed tyrant of a child so I saw an opportunity and I seized it. With those five minutes of freedom I decided to dial 911 and then to quickly hang up. I thought that was the end of my *awesome* prank, but I was not aware cops will still come knocking at your door if you call them, and she was not too pleased with me once the red and blue lights started flashing outside. To this day, she says that when she smells a cigarette she can tell which brand it is. When I ask her if she misses it, she says no but if she were to try it today she would probably become immediately addicted to the fullest extent. Dirt, soil, chickens and their coop; if my mother or her sisters smells chicken or sees pigeons they are reminded of Ghana. I try to do the math on how often they must think of their home, as they live in



big cities, like London, where Pigeons basically call all the shots. The difference between the home smells and the cigarette smells are that the latter does not incite me to dial 911 and the smells of home don't exactly inspire my mother to immediately get on a plane to visit Ghana.

In 7th grade we were assigned a project on a country that we would want to visit. We planned our itinerary, schedule, places we would visit, and follow up with general research about the country. I did mine on Lebanon. I asked to visit Lebanon pretty regularly after that presentation but I would continuously be greeted with one of a few of her staple mom-responses. *"It's too dangerous still"* or, *"You're not missing much"* or the ever simple, always popular, *"No."* It's not that I can't go now, I know I'm an adult and have a passport of my own. Though the one time I joked about going on my own, my mother didn't hesitate to remind me how clumsy, forgetful, absent minded and overly-trusting I am, so I would surely die, something straight out of 'Taken'. However, part of the experience of traveling to Lebanon or Ghana would be to go with my family. Seeing it through their eyes, living for a second in their home, on the streets that have been bombed time and time and time again, eat from the streets they'd eat on, go to their favorite corner shops, visit relatives I haven't met but surely will connect with. I don't just want to go, to *go*.

Lebanon has existed for at least 7,000 years. For my jidou it's been 66 years, my mother for 44, and myself for 20. All three of us have experienced, or know *Lebanon* as something else. It means something to each of us in ways we can't put into words, and then there are similarities that bond us in ways we can't explain.

When they think of Lebanon, the memories are met with the scents of cinnamon and fried garlic. Lots of it. Growing up, my mother and her siblings would hang out with their teta Abla. In fact, they learned to cook the meals they taught me how to make, from her and their mom. My auntie leans over and tells me that she liked spending time with teta Abla because she would feed her, and she likes free food. In Lebanon, when they were kids, they would go on picnics and since they'd be surrounded by Pine trees, they would pick up the nuts had been shed, scoop out the seed and eat it whilst on their picnic. They would put it in their rice and cook it so it would soften and expand. In another way they'd also put these pine nuts in an oven for about 10 minutes to roast them to perfection. I've never had such luxury of eating food literally off the trees. The closest I can think of is when my home at in a small cul-de-sac named Curtis



Place, where we had berries growing on a bush outside. However, I'm pretty sure they were poisonous, or maybe they were just extremely sour; same difference. I guess we also had a ginormous Pine tree which shed needles horribly during the fall. Except in my case of these only thing I was able to do with them was to rake them off the lawn as punishment for throwing attitude at my mother. Which was often. So often that, honestly, they should probably thank me for keeping our yard so well kept.

My home is deeply connected with my culture and my ethnicity. Despite having not traveled to Lebanon or Ghana, it does not make my *home* any less intertwined with them. They were my mother's, cousins, aunties uncles' home. They've made what I know home to be, what it is. With them, they brought their cultures of Ghana and Lebanon with them, they integrated it into my life without me even noticing. In a way, I've never been without them and truly never will.

Growing up I was plagued with thoughts and voices, both external and internal, which were compounded by my dad's constant criticism and excessive punishments. In turn, I became filled with questions and doubts, rage and sadness. I was convinced that self-destruction was the only way to cope. I couldn't talk to my mother during this point in my life because I had developed a complex that my mother was the anti-Christ and because during every negative situation, my father would say I was "just like her," I resented the idea of ever being anything like her. Nothing brings me more shame than to admit that during my most impressionable age, I took this anger, this feeling of helplessness and anger towards my mother and put it into action. I scrubbed the sink drain with her toothbrush and then cleaned any visibly remaining *treats* from the sink so she'd never notice she was ingesting literal scum from the sink. She still found out years later. Mothers seem to find things out one way or another.


My mother's forgiveness for the hurt I felt towards her came from a place of pure love, a love I hope to share with my children someday. I was not deserving of it, I will never make right those moments of my childhood but I will continue to try. She even apologized for not noticing the pain the divorce had caused me, for the pain my father had been causing me and for not trusting her gut when she felt like things were off with me. They say secrets make you sick and it wasn't until my secrets of self-destruction made me sick enough that I had no choice but to ask for help. It was then

*They've made
what I know home
to be, what it is.*

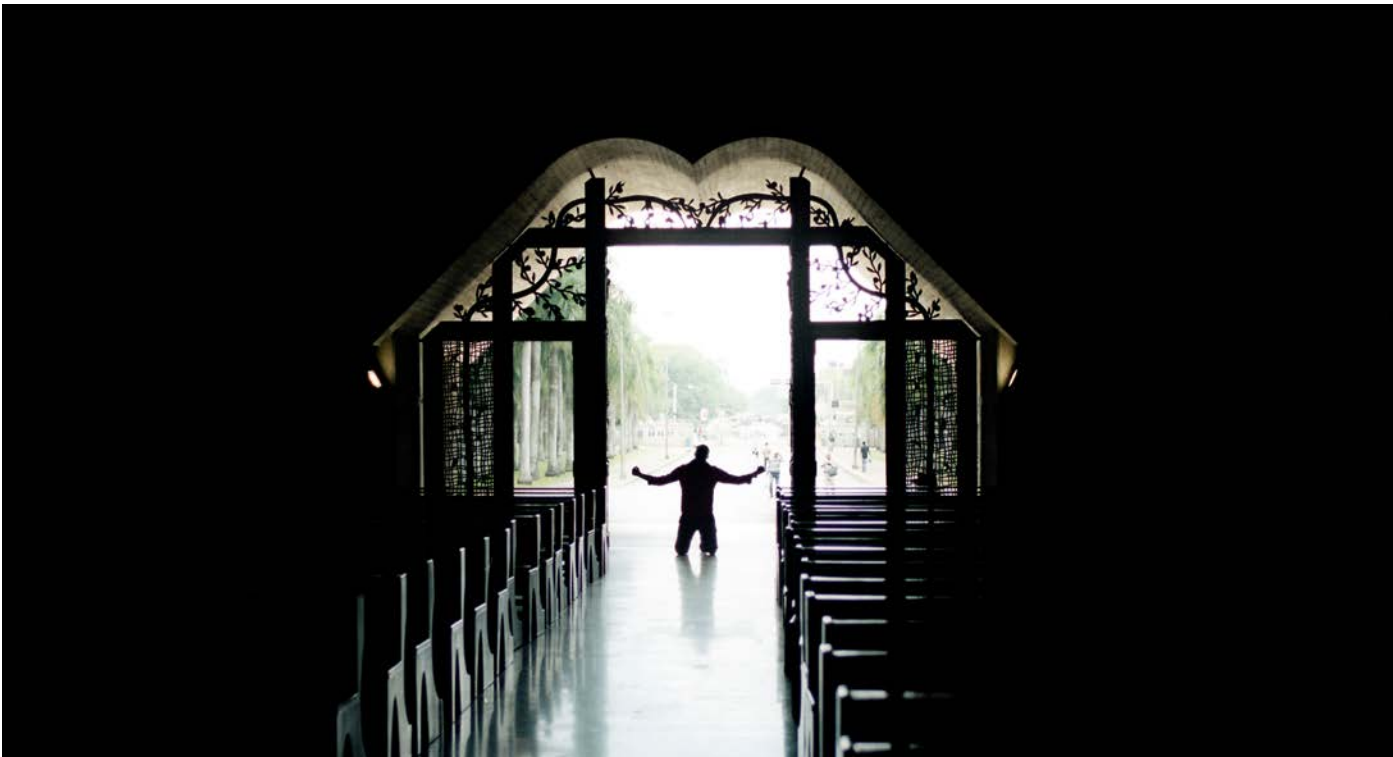
I realized my mother would always be the first person I would go to, my shoulder to cry on, the person who has and will always have my best interest at heart. That moment and every moment moving forward shifted our relationship completely.

Every day I am thankful my first home was my mother. That my source of strength is more than just my source. Family is an incredible gift that literally keeps on giving because you'll always feel a certain undeniable connection between you and this person, despite perhaps having never met them. In the way they move, in the way they talk, in their face, you will see your family and relatives and years of an unbreakable bond. It can only be described as a sense of familiarity that always stays with you. You'll smell your home in places you least expect it, so do you really need to physically travel to your place of origin to recognize it? Do you need a boarding pass to travel to your country? I don't think so. Because despite my many attempts to reject her at times growing up, my motherland has always claimed you, gently waiting for me to take a different trip; a journey towards acceptance.

"Maybe it's like family" my aunt tells me, "you love it, but you hate it." Perhaps it's the same way we feel about our hometown. We hate it growing up, then when you get older, probably in your last semester of highschool, you love it and begin to miss it. Or perhaps, it's the way you feel towards your own mother whilst growing up, saying horrible things you only wish you could take back, until you realize she's the only person who has always seen you as a whole person. Similarly, when you're a child or teenager sometimes you are ashamed of your culture, you want to blend in, you want to be friends with the girls who organize their friend groups together for Halloween costume plannings. Until you realize, trying to scrub away your identity, lighten your skin, bleaching your hair, in order to please others never works. (I never did any of those things, thank God my mother never allowed me to). At the end of the day, those girls still won't like you and you'll end up not liking yourself either. As you become older, the world becomes smaller and your differences become an exciting way to instill a sense of pride in yourself, regardless of having to answer questions like, "where are *really* from?"

So when you finally it again; that nostalgia of comfort, contentedness, satisfying your longing to be home—whether you find it in a person, in a food, in a face, in a smell—when you find it again, everything clicks, and you feel as if you've traveled home again. 

*Every day I am
thankful my first
home was my
mother.*



HAIR

by STEPHANIE A. WOOD

Falling out first her dad's then my mom's then his dad's & all of their hair was falling out & it'll make them better it said don't worry it'll all grow back they said & it was all falling out

Her dad never got the chance for his hair to grow back & they said it would still grow after they put him in the ground & I told them he was cremated & after all that I took her to a movie & we talked about what her wedding would be like without him there to walk her down the aisle & I pretended there was a heaven so I could tell her he would still be there watching it all & we ate popcorn & we made short videos & took silly pictures & she cried

Because of that I felt bad when they said that my mom was better & that we didn't need to worry anymore & I felt bad when my mom's hair grew back & I felt bad that I was happy & my dad stopped looking so tired & we got so many flowers we ran out of places to put them so we all had them in our bedrooms & it made my brother sneeze all night so I didn't sleep at all & I started to feel less guilty

Now his dad's hair is falling out & I worry about what it'll be like when he can't grow hair anymore & maybe they'll put *him* in the ground or cremate him or donate him to science or whatever else people do with their bodies now days & he still coaches soccer & hangs up their lights for the holidays & makes poorly timed jokes about dictators at dinner & it's only a matter of time until it's all over because the timer ran out a few years back

& all their hair is always falling out. 



Art by Jennifer Wang



BRIGHT SPOTS IN DARK PUDDLES

by JOE CONSTANCIA

In a driveway in San Angelo, Texas. My cousin Deryl and I are psyching ourselves up to do what we have been doing every day for the last four years. Some houses we visit are amazing, mansions on hilltops, castles owned by oilmen and politicians, many worthy of *Better Homes and Gardens*, but this was not one of them. Deryl and I have been in our work truck for the last fifteen minutes, smoking a joint and hoping through some divine process this house would spontaneously combust. Or maybe we could go to jail? Ohhh, jail would be the Taj Majal compared to this place, but no. Back on earth, our cosmic punishment was to go back under this house for the second day in a row to finish re-plumbing the drain lines underneath. With our heads hung low, we move at a snail's pace towards the door. For good publicity our company did pro-bono work for underserved parts of the community. A great idea on paper, a horrible ordeal if you are the one fixing the issue, to get to this

point, several other companies would have refused to, leaving Deryl and I, the only plumbers in town dumb and dirty enough to put ourselves in this shit-uation.

This job started out like the rest. Our perfected greeting was filled with southern pleasantries, and tastefully crass plumbing puns. It wasn't until we pried open the hatch that let us under the house that we had our sense of smell assaulted by that all too familiar smell of sewer water. Eight inches in fact, eight inches of bath, sink, and toilet water, plus everything that goes down the drain with it. All co-mingled together in a black sludge that made swamp water look palatable. Although this was not our first time in this predicament, one can never fully prepare themselves for this type of work. The quicker you start, the quicker you finish. We dive in. On our stomachs, face down, we army crawl through our version of Texas tea. It wasn't as easy as just getting under the house. We had to crawl to the very end, fifty feet, in a bog of various floating solids. The devil's sangria, as I later dubbed it. I try and escape to my happy place. That wonderful place in my mind I escape to in times like these. Only to find it in flames, shelled, nuked, de-atomized, just non-existent. I often hear people say, "Oh my gawd, I literally died inside." But those who really have never say it with that kind of jubilation. Personally, dying inside has always had an almost paralyzing effect. In this instance, I close my eyes and try and develop some kind mutant power that will transport me anywhere but here, but no. I open my eyes to find Deryl beating the hell out of an old, half broken sewer line, saying every curse word in the book, splashing the poo stew we are swimming in, everywhere.

After five minutes or so it was my turn. Deryl passes me the hammer and climbs out for fresh air. As I start beating the decades-old pipe, all I can do is mentally check out. I internally scold myself for not going to college, and for partying instead of being a more productive person. Thinking about every bad decision that has lead me here, followed by utter depression, was the usual sign I was near rock bottom.

"Kershbbbb."

Never believe things can't get any worse, because sometimes they do, instantly. The inconsiderate prick who lived in the house decided to take his morning constitution at the same time I started dismantling the plumbing under his house. What happened next is what we in the plumbing biz refer to as a *baptism*.

*The quicker you
start, the quicker
you finish.*

I took a full-on load of toilet water to the face, and worse yet, stabbed in the forehead by the dookie dagger this son of a bitch flushed.

“I need a vacation.” I thought as we drove home seven hours later, but that was never going to happen. In four years I had worked my way up to twelve bucks an hour, so we settled for the next best thing, dollar rum and cokes. We had several places we frequented, but we practically paid the rent at Bailey’s. Deryl fell asleep while pooping one night, woke up locked in the bar and enjoyed unlimited drinks and the jukebox for a couple of hours until he let himself out. While most people would never speak a word of it, Deryl came to work on time and was still drunk as all hell; his bragging came out as slurred mumblings. Stories like this were what we loved to hear, especially our boss, Quentin. He sent everyone to work except Deryl. Quentin thought the best place for Deryl was with him, and he took him to breakfast.



*As if they were his
dying words, he
slipped back
to sleep.*

The first day I met Quentin Bannister, he was asleep in his chair at eight fifteen A.M. I thought he had been hard at work, but turns out he was selectively narcoleptic. He was five-foot-four and well over three hundred pounds. He had fallen asleep with a lit cigarette in his mouth and had not moved since lighting it. This was evident by the asharette hanging onto his lip by some sticky lip crud he produced naturally. His chair was a bit big for him, because his feet weren’t touching the ground; his belly, it seemed, was the only thing keeping him up. His secretary, Mary Ann, was, and this is putting it nicely, a mean bitch. She shot up and out of her chair when I walked in and was giving me the stink face from the start. Mary Ann didn’t have resting bitch face, no, no, no. Mary Ann had full on active bitch face, the kind of bitch face that said everything coming out of your mouth right now is bothering me. When I inquired about filling out an application; she replied with an over the top eye roll and a deep sigh, she then began poking and prodding Quentin, nagging at him.

“Quentin... Q, wake the fuck up. This boy wants to work for you.” Nothing makes my blood boil more than being called

boy. Not that I was a man at that time like I thought. But this was also no time for self-respect; I mean where else was I going to make ten dollars an hour? Quentin grumbled to the tune of a teenager asking for five more minutes of sleep. I blew off Mary Ann's dickish attitude and introduced myself as a relative of Deryl's. He answered in nods and half-mumbles, never fully waking up or looking at me. That is, until he uncocked his head, lit another cigarette, and through the seven or so teeth he had left, he told me to come back the next day, and as if they were his dying words, he slipped back to sleep.



Deryl had long been a favorite son of Quentin. Q was famous for picking out strays he could bring into the fold. After a couple of years Deryl got his plumbing license, and Q like a mother bear shunning her cubs at a certain age, stopped taking Deryl everywhere with him. Deryl, who sounded relieved by this, was quick to brag how he was happy to stop hanging out with the boss.

One morning, the office computer was running slow. I found out that they were paying a guy seventy five dollars to come and fix it, and asked if I could look it over. All I did was defrag the damn thing, but you would think I had hacked the Pentagon by their reactions. Q, being overjoyed to save some money, took me to breakfast for the first time. I had never been so happy to skip work. I was the main "shovel hand" as the other guys called it. I called it being the shop slave. The anger and jealousy were visible from the other workers. With two middle fingers going in a piston motion, I wished everyone a shitty morning and that I would be thinking of them as I ate.

Q liked people with spunk, and it was alive and well in many forms around the office. Eating with Quentin soon became an almost everyday occurrence. For a time, I ate two meals a day with Q, five sometimes six days a week. Every now and then, we would bring along other people, and after watching their lack of manners and conversation topics, I can see why I was the regular. Tony, was one the regulars. He was Quentin's son-in-law, although not by choice. He knocked up Quentin's daughter, who by the way looked just like Q, while she and her then-girlfriend were trying to have a baby. Not being one to turn down a three

*Imagine someone
watching their
child being
eaten alive.*

way, not even a gross one, he was now stuck raising a baby and doing Quentin's bidding to make ends meet.

Tony would go in the back and talk to the cooks. He never washed his hands, and could be seen from time to time grabbing handfuls of grated cheese, or bacon straight off the flat top as he talked to the guys in the back. I don't think they cared for this much, but never said anything about it.

After breakfast, if there were no pressing matters, Tony and I would be "cleaning the barn." This was code for fucking off in the back. Smoking joints, tossing the football, and the occasional bomb making, were great ways of relieving stress and making the time go by. Not that we were free from plumbing, oh no. We just had better starts than the others.

One place Tony and I ended up on a weekly basis was Johnson's Funeral Home. The building was over a hundred years old, and creepy as hell, especially the basement. Tony was one of

those traditional Mexican dudes that was afraid of ghosts and spirits. I would wig him out by speaking in tongues and once locked him in the embalming room. He let out the loudest, saddest bawl I had ever heard, and when I opened the door tears had ran past his cheek as he called me every name in the book, but after a cigarette, I would give him an awkward tummy rub. I would tell him "If we can't have fun in a funeral home then where? He would say very disparaging things about my mother, and after agreeing with him, he would laugh and call me stupid, then we would be off on our next adventure.

Little ways to break the monotony, (and sometimes tension) were as essential to life as water. Other plumbers in town were some serious kiss asses, and we would rather sit on sandpaper dildos, than be that serious about life. At least once a week the phrase "Thank God it's lunch, now I can sober up." would be uttered. The aforementioned plumbers would eat at the same place at the same time everyday looking



dead inside. Sometimes walking into the supply house could be just downright hostile at times. Dirty glares from dirty people did nothing but egg us on. A douche bag whose name I can't remember once bumped into Deryl, looked him over and laughed in his face.

Unfortunately for this guy, we had gotten into fights for far less, and within the space of a breath, Deryl had this poor guy on the ground beating him like he was nothing, and to us he was. A good thing about our part of Texas was that this was not a police worthy event. Unless someone was shot, not shot at, our own vigilante justice was allowed. When I had started working for Q, I took crap from everyone. A crown of shame I wore for too long in those days, but it didn't take long to learn from these guys, that a night or month in jail was well worth proving a point.

When Quentin's mother died, he and I went to the bank to collect her final will and testament from her safety deposit box. After being told he would need a signed paper from an attorney, he went off. Quentin was not about to take this for an answer. After a swear riddled critique of the banker's managerial style, poor choice of clothing, and overall life choices; he still was told no. Quentin reached deep inside himself, not for internal strength, but for a loogie that could only be measured in quarts. He held aggressive eye contact with the poor sap who dared stand in his way, and unleashed the biggest vat of lung butter I had ever seen.


Q never broke eye contact, and the look on the banker's face is something I will never forget. Imagine someone watching their child being eaten alive. I had the same look, but only on the inside. Grotesque by all standards but ours. I kept my cool and gave the same stone face look I had somehow maintained. By the time his gaze made its way to me, you could see in his eyes, he didn't sign up for this shit. He stood up walked out, and in under two minutes had the safety deposit box in hand. He also brought in a young intern who was there to clean up Quentin's mess. The person I am now would really have felt for this girl, but in that moment I felt nothing for her.

In fact there was probably a great lesson to be learned in that moment. I don't know what that lesson was, but like that puddle of phlegm on the desk. That was her cross to bear. What I got out of it was that there are certain procedures that must be taken when dealing with documents involving others, and respectfully following those rules makes for smooth, consistent,

service. But, if you're in a jam, and no is pretty much your only answer you are going to get, why not get creative? Shame and pride go hand in hand, and sometimes it can be to your benefit if you don't bother with either. We kept our serious business faces on until we got back to the truck. Once inside we simultaneously cracked up. I called Q a genius, and he shrugged as if it happened all the time, and who knows, maybe it did.

The naive version of myself who walked through those doors died a while back. There wasn't an exact moment; like evolution as we know it, it happened over time. Looking back, those bad experiences were good experiences in disguise. If you can take a step back be honest with yourself, and your situation, then you've gotten a lot farther than some people get. These days, I push a cart for a living. By Bannister standards I've made it.

A few hundred offices a day, I stop and talk to enough people that most folks see me as not productive. Every now and again I run into that stereotypical professional. Well dressed, educated, sitting in an air conditioned room. They are stressed and unhappy. The spreadsheet in front of them isn't adding up. They have to go to a meeting being catered by Half Fast Subs, again. Some don't have time to avert their eyes to show their full annoyance with me. I guess sometimes seeing a person seven seconds a week is just too much. Everyone has their trials and tribulations, but first world problems like these merit no sympathy from me.

Everyone goes through phases when they are cast in the proverbial muck. Some choose to wallow and become stagnant, staying in the muck longer than necessary if not forever. But if you can get your ass in gear, realize that the moment is going to suck, bite your lip, and get yourself out of that situation, the rewards are life changing. At the end of the day, the misery from crawling under those houses was always overshadowed by the feeling of ecstasy that that came from crawling my way out. 



SEASON'S GREETINGS AND FAREWELL

by HELEN STRITZEL

September

As a reliable indicator of a season, many organisms use day length (photoperiod), which seems to be physiologically encoded in their circadian clock.¹

It arrives—no one sees but everyone knows from the streaks it leaves. It's a shift in the universe—quite literally, a rearranging of the planet's position.

When I was younger, my mind used to go numb with lack of stimulation during the last dregs of summer. Those were the days after my siblings and I had successfully staged our rebellion against summer workbooks to “keep our minds fresh,” but before I was old enough to get a summer job. My classmates were predictably and dramatically devastated by the end of their lesson-less days, but I was ready for the smell of pencil erasers and chalk dust. The

1. Hitoshi Okamura, “Physiology: Brain Comes to Light,” *Nature* 452, no. 7185 (March 20, 2008): 294–95, <https://doi.org/10.1038/452294a>.

familiar stirrings in my mind thrilled me. I usually got a cramp in my hand during the first week from using those previously dormant writing muscles. I usually got drunk on possibility. Who would be my friends? Would I like my teachers? What would I learn in my classes? Even the first equations of precalculus fueled this inquisitive fire. Robert Frost and the English Civil War stoked it to a roar.

The pinnacle of the autumn was my birthday. September 12th. Not technically autumn. Autumn starts on the 22nd of September. But then again, who could call September 12th summer? I came into the world eight days too late to have a pool party for my birthday and 10 days too early to claim fall with any legitimacy. And I was *bitter* that I couldn't have a pool party. I dreamed of the perfect party, fueled by *Barbie* media and *American Girl* party planning publications. I wanted to freeze berries into the ice cubes for the party, even though we had a fridge with an icemaker. I wanted to have balloon curtains and clever games like spin the bottle (I did not know how to play this game). But most of all, I wanted myself and all of my friends to enjoy every second of it. As we were prepubescent (human) girls, obviously that was not going to happen.

So every August, I went about the grave business of party planning. My saintly mother patiently tried to help me recreate the party I anticipated, often with an impressive amount of success (the sushi making party stands out—thanks, Mom!). Still, they never quite lived up to that sparkling image of a *Barbie* birthday. Also, preteen girls can be very mean. An unfortunately high percentage of my birthday parties ended in tears. Even now, I always feel a twinge of disappointment on the passing of another year. The glow of the buildup always gives way to the dull reality of just another day.

*I went around the
grave business of
party planning.*



October

*it was the light
that you will see at evening on the side of a hill
in yellow October¹*

In Colorado, true fall comes in October. The trees are raucous, turning shocking shades of red and yellow. This absurd carnival of color makes me want to twirl and sing like a crazed Julie Andrews

every time I step outside. And the sky—the *sky*. Something is telling me to look towards the heavens until that precious blue withers to wintry grey. The sun is sweetly gentle at noon, then abandons the earth to the sharp snap of cold at dusk. Summer nights are no more.

“This is the first perfect day of autumn,” Dr. David H. Thompson of the survey, who directed the symposium, declared. “The sky is never so blue as in autumn.”²

76 years ago, it also entranced Chicagoans. On October 6th, 1941, the Chicago Tribune dedicated an entire article to the coming of autumn. While war raged across the Atlantic, American hikers and naturalists wondered at the changing of the leaves. Two months later, winter came, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Autumn has its own smell—it’s strange, how rot smells sweet in the autumn.

Two thousand years ago in the area that is now Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, natives called Celts observed the end of the farming season and the beginning of a new year on November 1. The night before, they also celebrated Samhain (pronounced sow-in) or “Hallow E’en.” During this eerie time, people believed the boundary between the deceased and the living dissolved. And the ghosts of the dead haunted the Earth.³

In middle school, I had glorious Halloweens for two consecutive years. Dressing up in elaborate costumes from our favorite young adult novels, my friends and I would skip down the street, bellowing a made-up Halloween song at each house: (*To the tune of “Happy Birthday”*)

*Please give us some candy!
Please give us some candy!
If you would, that’d be dandy!
As long as it’s not sandy!*

2. Rita Fitzpartick, “Birds, Animals, Sky and Trees Tell of Autumn,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923–1963); *Chicago, Ill.*, October 6, 1941.

3. Alexis Burling, “Halloween History,” *Storyworks*; *New York*, October 2008.

Our musical efforts earned us cooing and chocolate—we were just on the upper edge of cute. Finally returning inside after a solid two hours of dashing door to door in the (usually) frigid weather, we would sprawl on the floor of William Brown’s parents’ living room, sipping hot cider. Then the bargaining would begin...

One (1) package of Reese’s cups = seven (7) lollipops OR three (3) fun-sized Snickers bars

One (1) package of Swedish Fish = two (2) fun-sized Milky Way bars OR one (1) fun-sized pack of skittles

One (1) soda = two (2) packages of Reese’s cups OR eight (8) Snicker’s bars

In eighth grade, William Brown decided he didn’t want to trick-or-treat with us anymore. He had cooler friends to spend Halloween with. We were getting too old anyway.

All things end.



November

The shortening days prompt our wildlife too to store food and to fatten up on Autumn’s abundant fruit, nuts and seeds to see them through the winter months.⁴

The days are now getting shorter in earnest. In the beginning, this feels like a new beginning—perhaps, a dark beginning. A kind of hope for fireplaces and snowflakes and toasted marshmallows. The kinds of dishes that include mashed potatoes and pie crust and heavy, warm meats. It’s potluck weather and casserole weather. It’s getting ready to settle into a comfortable spot in your blankets while storms rage outside.

Thanksgiving Day can be traced back to the 1621 celebration at the Plymouth Plantation, where the religious refugees from England known popularly as the Pilgrims invited the local Native Americans to a harvest feast after a particularly successful growing season. The

4. “How Does Autumn Affect Animals | Gardening with Children,” accessed October 11, 2017.

*previous year's harvests had failed and in the winter of 1620 half of the pilgrims had starved to death.*⁵

My father's family always has a dazzling Thanksgiving celebration. Cousins and second cousins and aunts and uncles and *I don't know how we're related's* tumble into their old Iowa farmhouse. In between games of Bananagrams and Catchphrase and Liverpool Rummy, the Stritzel aunts bark at the teenagers to peel potatoes and stir gravy and dig pomegranate seeds from their shells for the classic orange pomegranate Jell-O. When the chaos settles, my grandfather (great-grandfather to some) says the prayer. After loading his plate, he settles himself at the head of the table: a great patriarch, in his festive plaid vest. And I am glad to store up food before the winter.

Now the cousins are grown and have children, and the aunts and uncles are getting older. Fragments of family still gather every year, but it tastes like another ending. Autumn is a brief gasp of something strange and supernatural and beautiful.

*During this eerie time, people believed the boundary between the deceased and the living dissolved.*⁶

When leaves face disintegration and animals prepare for new birth in spring, the boundary between beginnings and endings dissolves too.

*I had glorious
Halloweens for
two consecutive
years.*

*Now the long freight of autumn goes smoking out of
the land.*

*My possibles are all packed up, but still I do not leave.
I am happy enough here, where Dakota drifts wild in
the universe,*

*Where the prairie is starting to shake in the surf of the
winter dark.*⁷ ❧

5. "Thanksgiving: What's the History of the Holiday and Why Does the United States Celebrate with a Turkey Dinner?," *Telegraph.co.uk*; London, November 22, 2016.

6. Burling, "Halloween History."

7. Thomas McGrath, "Beyond the Red River," Poetry Foundation. October 11, 2017.



GIRL PROBLEMS

by BERKELEY McCARTHY

She sits on the armrest of her wine-stained couch, only to fall backward with a cushioned thud. Her thick, kinky hair lays splayed under her. Her veiny hands are large enough to cover her whole tear-soaked face. She sighs aloud, summoning her roommates' attention.

"Accusations are thrown at me every day. For being a liar, a fake, a man. I wear dresses, I put on makeup, I act like a good girl. I soften my voice. I recede into myself. I put in the effort to prove that I'm female. I take time out of my day to make sure everyone I walk past believes me." She tries to retain her voice through her sobbing. "I have to present myself as feminine as possible so that I don't have to answer to strangers."

Why do you hate your body?

You're a pervert.

Do your parents hate you?

You're lying to yourself. You want to be part of our community so that you can feel special.

So . . . do you still have a dick?

Every day that I exist, the more my identity is up for debate. Even taking a piss is a statement. I didn't ask for people like me to be the face of a political campaign. The media portrays me as a grotesque monster. Or as the hero: a brave soul willing to wear her favorite lipstick." Her tears subside.

She rolls on her side to see her friends, folding her arms in front of her chest. "Then there's the constant violence. Every month someone like me is killed in cold blood. An average of twenty-five reported every year, more that go unreported¹. This violence tells other people that they have a right to attack me. That we *must* die. The forgotten names of these women remind me that I am not meant to exist. I know I do. I love myself. But it's hard. It's hard to get the voices out of my head when everyone yells in my face that I'm an abomination of nature. Ridicule from family, from peers, from my country."

Closing her eyes, she takes a deep breath. "I'm so exhausted. I'm worn out from proving myself, that I am happy with who I am. All I want is to like myself when I look in the mirror. People tell me how wrong I am, how I'm unnatural. I do not fight or rage. I compose myself and ignore everyone else." She laughs through her nose. "I feel like punching them would send a stronger message." She looks down toward the couch. "I try to listen to the people who love me and tell me I'm real."

Finally, she sits up, shrugging. She places her tired hands next to her thighs.

"I know I exist. I'm not sure if I deserve to." ❧

1. Crary, David. "2017 Killings of Transgender People Hit Record High: HRC." *Time*, Time, 17 Nov. 2017.



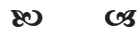


MZUNGU

by MARY BETH BLALOCK

In the landlocked African country of Zambia, I ask a six-year-old, Nyanja speaking, HIV positive girl named Natasha, “Muli Bwanji?” How are you?

“Bwino...” Fine... she replies. We continue our conversation, and I eventually ask her what she wants to be when she grows up. Her answer startles me, “Mzungu.” This six-letter word is what Zambians use to describe a white person. Unsure how to respond, I shake my head, hold back tears, and continue with my questions.



An interest in international development and global public health brought me to Lusaka, Zambia as an intern with an organization that provides schooling for orphans who live in the compounds. Through the safety of a bus window, my eyes are exposed to the most severe poverty I’ve ever seen. I

try to shake the terrifying resemblance this feeling carries to being at the zoo and staring through glass at a world vastly different than my own, a world I understand little about. I fight the urge to stare at the drunk and naked man sprawled out on the ground next to a pile of trash. I fight the anger I feel at the other passengers on the bus, gawking, taking pictures on their iPhone 7s. I fight tears when I see a potbellied five-year-old holding an infant on her hip. The bus bounces up and down as we wind through alleyways narrow enough to make me hold my breath. A group of shoeless children chase behind our bus, some following the bus, some following the others. It's a game to them, a new exciting event in an otherwise monotonous world. Americans in the bus, including myself, cry at the sight. Neither tears of joy or sorrow, simply an overflow of emotion. I have trouble believing the emotional response has nothing to do with the color of the children's skin.

When I exit the bus, a small swarm of black skinned, black haired children are reaching out for a high five. Many of the children are dressed in tattered souvenir shirts from Disney World, "The Happiest Place on Earth!" and shirts that say something like, "My aunt went to Cancun and all she got me was this stupid tee shirt!". Their shoes, if they have them, are pointlessly small or entirely too big. I make my way through the crowd, smiling and high fiving the children but uncomfortable with my immediate fame. Following the instructions of my trip leader, I try to hurry to the school across the street, the reason for our drive into this compound. Large gates topped by barbed wire and shards of glass separate the school from the drunk man and the children I was just high fiving. The children and teachers in the school are all uniformed, it is an entirely different world inside the gates. The group places themselves in the middle of the school's courtyard, most taking pictures of the brand-new building. I hang in the back, staring at the gate instead of the building. It's too tall to see over, but there is a space at the bottom where the gate doesn't touch the ground. In this tiny space, there are at least twenty faces smooshed together, straining to see a piece of the world inside the fence.

Other than having a sponsor to pay for the tuition fees, there is only one requirement for admittance into this school -- be an orphan. This includes children who are only cared for by one parent. Largely because of the high prevalence of AIDS, Zambia

*I see a
potbellied five-
year-old holding
an infant on her
hip.*

has the highest per capita orphan rate in the world, which means most of the children in the compounds surrounding Lusaka are “eligible.” At the end of the day, all the students and teachers shuffle out of the gates, dressed in crisp, western style uniforms, meeting the kids who have been waiting outside the fence all day. They are all a part of the same world again until morning.

As I make my way through the classroom, meeting these students, I worry about the way I am disrupting their classroom for the day. I wonder about all the other mzungus who have walked through these rooms, taking pictures of the school kids. Or all the mzungus who sponsor these orphans and paid for this building with a small percentage of their yearly salary. The trip leader tells us that this building used to be a brothel. He tells stories of a student whose mother was a prostitute at this brothel before she died of AIDS. “This building is a sign of redemption.” I can’t argue with that; certainly, a school is better than a brothel.



*A school is better
than a brothel.*

Walking through a shopping mall in Lusaka is where one will experience the most Western influence; Pizza Hut is in between a craft beer bar and a gelato stand. As an American living in Zambia for the summer, I was thankful for these pieces of home in a foreign land. On the walk from a food mart to a toy store I pass multiple billboards for companies I’ve never heard of. All the models on these are either white, or extremely light skinned. I look back and forth from the advertisements to the Zambians surrounding me, none of whom look anything like the posters, or me. I walk into the toy store and make my way to the doll section. There is one row of black dolls: black hair, black skin. The rest of the aisle is covered in white dolls: blonde hair, blue eyes.

Stepping into the compounds on the outskirts of Lusaka, the signs of the Western world are less obvious. Beyonce’s Hair Salon sits on the corner across from a store with a salvaged 7-Eleven sign on the front. A small hut made of recycled water bottles sells pirated American movies, refurbished cell phones, and hairbrushes all in one place. Natasha is from the Garden compound in Lusaka, Zambia. To any outsider, Garden’s name would be a mystery. The compound cannot boast of any vegetation, much less a garden; the ground is composed of dust, trash, and broken glass. Talking to

the locals reveals that Garden is named after a farming area just on the edge of the compound. Once accustomed to the smell of sewage, the field is a pleasant place to be. The grass grows a thick green, even in the dead of winter, contrasting with the grey bleakness of the compound like Central Park in the middle of New York City. Most of the kids who live here go to this field, the closest thing to “nature” left in their small world, when they need time alone, a place to process or pray.

Natasha has no trouble jumping over piles of trash and making a game out of it. She picks up a piece of glass from a broken beer bottle and begins to draw with it. It amazes me how similar her drawings are to anything I would expect to see in an American kindergarten classroom. She scratches out a sun, completely colorless, but still bringing light. When she grows bored with drawing, she skips away and limbos under a clothesline. An old lady steps out from behind a curtain covering a small door frame, I can't understand the Nyanja, but she sounds upset. Nevertheless, Natasha giggles and runs away, motioning for me to follow. I have more trouble navigating this world; I'm much more careful of the holes filled with sewage and the piles of trash. A group of men stumble past us, yelling, slurring their words, getting closer and closer. Natasha laughs at the scene but gets in between me and the group. She's protecting me while I'm in her world.

Natasha and I pass by one house where a young girl is holding a baby. When the baby sees me, she starts wailing, screaming, clenching the girl holding her. All the adults begin laughing hysterically. Natasha can tell I'm confused; she laughs, “Mzungu” and points at me. I suddenly realize that I am the first white person, or mzungu, this baby has seen. In her world, I'm just different. In her world, putting me on a billboard would seem at best, foolish, and most severely, terrifying. I think I agree with her, I find the idea of my face on a Zambian billboard terrifying.

We eat our lunch sitting on some concrete stumps with no clue as to their history or origin. I eat a PB&J, Natasha eats a slice of bread and a nutritional drink I brought her. I know I can't give her more food because her stomach isn't used to it, but I still worry about my having more than her. Other kids from the compound come up to join us, staring at me, whispering questions to Natasha. I smile and ask them questions in the limited Nyanja I know. Some answer, the rest laugh at what I'm assuming is my pronunciation. We sit, content with each other's presence. I be-

*She's protecting me
while I'm in her
world.*

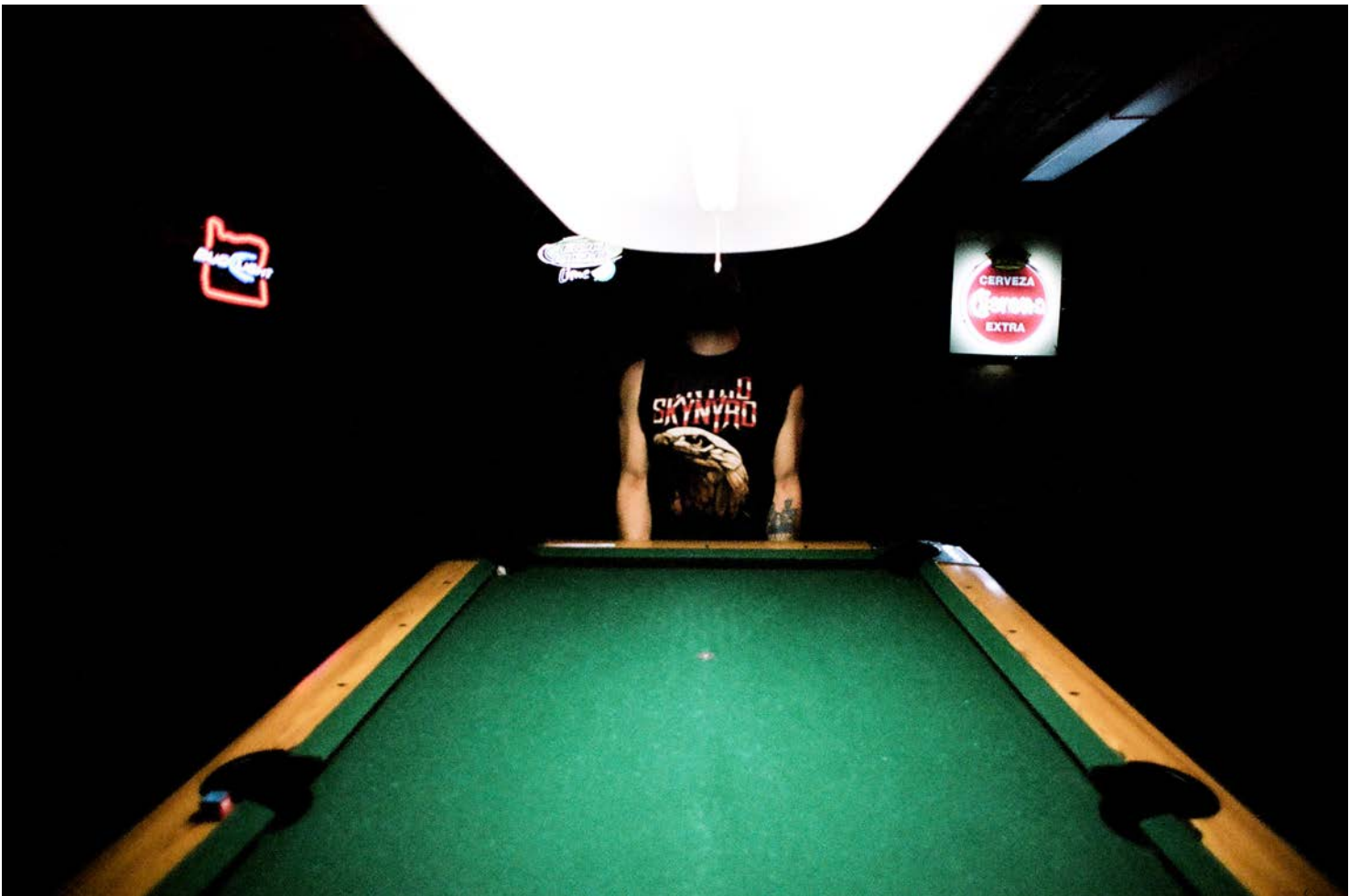
come less aware of my whiteness sitting in this calm circle of elementary aged children until a young girl starts stroking my arm hair. She giggles and shows her friend. Another boy looks at me concerned, and points to a freckle on my arm. “Fine, fine,” I say smiling. I show him another freckle on my other arm but this doesn’t comfort him. He tries to scratch off the freckle like it’s dirt.

When it’s time for me to leave, I find Natasha in the crowd of children that has formed between us. I stoop down and hug her tiny body. “Nikukanda,” I love you, I say. We walk to the bus hand in hand. I squeeze her hand before letting go, “Tionana,” see you later. I find my seat and look out the window, Natasha is still there, looking for me on the bus. I stick my hand out of the dusty old window. She’s blowing me kisses and runs up to the window. I lean my head out as far as I can to kiss her forehead before I leave her world and return to my own.



As a white, upper middle class citizen of the United States, there have been very few times I have been the racial minority. In Zambia I am white skin in a sea of black, but still I’m not the minority. I can’t travel to another country in the opposite hemisphere of the world and expect to escape my white privilege. It was this privilege that allowed me to go to Zambia, but more importantly, it allowed me to return to America. This privilege has also given me the resources to sponsor Natasha to go to school.

So, what do I say when a six-year-old, orphaned, HIV positive girl from Lusaka, Zambia tells me that she wants to be a mzungu when she grows up, that she wants to have this privilege? How do I respond when a child innocently notices a privilege many of my peers deny having? When I went back to Zambia the following year, Natasha had been in school for one year. This time when I asked her what she wanted to be when she grows up she answered, “A teacher.” A teacher like her teacher, who was an orphan herself, who grew up and still lives in the Garden compound of Lusaka, Zambia. A teacher who has given back to her community what she was given. A black, Zambian teacher. ❧



THE SHORES

by MADELEINE SELTZER

Mom reached for the aluminum foil, pulled the smooth silver out, and tore off a long sheet using the teeth on the box. “Let me just wrap up the mashed potatoes before you go” she said as she covered the stuffing and green beans.

“I’ll be home tomorrow, Mom” I snapped back. I just wanted to leave before she changed her mind and didn’t allow me to sleep over at my older sisters’ house.

“Well, maybe your sisters want it for the week,” Mom said, directing the statement to them even though they weren’t in the room. “Kristy! Lisa!” she called.

I knew where they went. I saw them sneak off after dinner to have a cigarette. I couldn’t wait to jump in the backseat of Kristy’s dirty white Honda Accord so I could have one too. Something I did only with them. I liked when they called me mature, how they treated me like a friend despite our age difference.

“Coming!” one of them yelled. Their voices sounded so similar I couldn’t tell which sister spoke.

“You want the stuffing and green beans, right Kristy?”

Mom said with a look, as if Kristy had a choice to refuse them. "I mean, I wasn't even going to make them until you told your father how Thanksgiving wouldn't be the same without them." She waved the Tupperware in my sister's face.

"Yeah, I'll take them. I can eat them for lunch at work," Kristy said. "Thanks Julie"

Sometimes I wished she would just call her Mom.

"Alright Maddie, if you still want to sleep over then grab your stuff and let's go" Lisa, my oldest sister, said as she yanked at her black skirt.

Before anyone could object I pivoted on my socks and slid across the hardwood floor to my room. I grabbed an oversized, tattered T-shirt and some flannel pants to sleep in, a toothbrush, my journal, and three different books from my shelf that I knew I wouldn't read but liked having near, just in case I ended up alone like last time.

I held my backpack to my chest so it wouldn't knock anything over as I held my breath, walking by my dad, who lay passed out and snoring as loud as a log cutter on the couch in the den.

"Ready," I announced.

"Hold on," Mom said. "Wait a minute." She turned off the faucet at the sink where she leaned over a pile of dishes. "What time are you bringing her back in the morning?"

"I'll call you when we wake up," I said and gave her a quick hug. "Thanks for dinner, Mom."

"Yeah, thanks," both sisters said in unison.

I followed Kristy who followed Lisa to the Honda Accord. The redwoods in front shielded the house from the concrete street. Lisa swung open the passenger door and I reached for the lever to spring the seat forward so I could climb in. The car always felt warm and the smell of thick smoke stained the fabric seats, also sweetly scented with perfume. The windows didn't roll down in the backseat. As Kristy reversed down the driveway, she turned her head back to see. She had a cigarette bobbling up and down from her lips and the smoke drifted toward me.

"Sorry dude," Kristy said, without parting her lips too far so that the cigarette wouldn't fall out. "Did you want one?"

Lisa plucked one from the pack and lit it for herself. "I don't know," she said, "I feel bad giving you cigarettes, Maddie." She had begun stepping into her role as the eldest. "Do you

She had a cigarette bobbling up and down from her lips and the smoke drifted towards me.

smoke with anyone else? I just don't want it to be a thing that you do *only* with us."

"Yeah, a lot of my friends smoke," I lied. She handed me the cigarette and the lighter. My thumb kept slipping off the lighter. "Can you do it for me?" I said to Lisa, handing her both the lighter and cigarette.

"Hold this" Lisa said, handing me her cigarette.



Lisa and Kristy lived together in a two-bedroom apartment in a complex with pink cursive writing on it called *The Shores*. Shortly after we arrived, they both disappeared into one of the rooms. I pulled out *Flowers in the Attic* by V.C. Andrews and flipped the pages, not looking at the words but rather listening to any kind of sound that would indicate what occupied them.

"You have to call him," Lisa said. "I told you before we left for Julie and Dad's that this wasn't gonna be easy with Maddie around. I'll stay here and you go."

"I already owe him, and he might not spot me this time, plus he likes you better," Kristy said. "Can't we all go? I'll just stay in the car with her."

"It's a type of weed," Lisa said.

"Yeah, it's called hash," Kristy said, "it's way stronger."

We crawled back into the Honda and now I had lit my own cigarette with ease. I couldn't wait to share with my middle school friends on Monday morning that I had smoked weed with my sisters. I had done it a couple times before, but I never got high.

We parked in a spot towards the back of a Rite-Aid as Lisa aggressively punched texts into her phone, swinging her head from side to side. A light blue mini-van and stopped by our car. "That's him," Kristy said and Lisa jumped out.

Last month Kristy had signed me out of school to take me to get a Halloween costume. We went to a warehouse rented out only to sell costumes for the month of October. She told me she quit her job but not to tell Mom or Dad.

I couldn't decide what to go as so I copied Kristy and dressed as what she called a "slutty nurse." She let me borrow her emergency-red thigh high pleather boots on the night of my

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my sisters.*

friend's costume party.

After a few minutes, Lisa stomped back. She kept checking for anyone behind her but she looked happier than I'd seen her all night.



Back at *The Shores* we all sat in the living room. Lisa unwrapped the cellophane covering the tiny black ball, the size of a chocolate chip.

"Dude, he totally ripped us off," Lisa said examining the piece between her thumb and pointer finger. "I can see where he pinched the sack."

Kristy came around the kitchen island with a roll of aluminum foil and the end of a hollowed-out pen. "Let me see," she said.

"Yeah right, I'll hit it first," Lisa demanded.

Just like Mom had done earlier, Kristy pulled a rectangular piece of smooth silver and tore it off with the box's teeth. She folded the piece again, tore it, and repeated, making it a perfect square. She handed it to Lisa. Lisa pinched off a piece from the black ball and rolled it until it became the size of a big booger before sticking it onto the foil. She put the hollowed-out pen in her mouth and lit the underside of the foil, expelling a stream of smoke. I never saw anyone smoke weed like this before.

Next, Kristy took a hit and held it in until a tiny cough escaped. "I didn't get a good hit," she said. "Let me do it again."

Lisa rolled her eyes like she had heard that before, and gestured for the aluminum back.

"What about me?" I said. I didn't really care about smoking, I just hated how they kept forgetting me.

"Are you sure you want to?" Lisa said. "It's really strong."

"Yeah," I said. "I wanna try."

"Okay, but let me light it for you," Lisa said as she handed me the hollowed out pen. I placed it between my lips like they had done, like I had done with the cigarettes. She lit the underside of the foil and I froze and forgot to suck.

"Maddie!" The flame went out and Lisa grabbed the pen from my mouth and tried gulping down the drifting smoke. "You have to suck really hard. You just wasted a lot."

*"Okay, but let me
light it for you."*

Kristy went into the kitchen and came back with a cup. “Here try this,” she said. “It’s a lot easier if you cover the foil with the cup, and let it fill up, then put the cup on your face and inhale. That way you *will* feel it.”

I sat with my sweaty hands soaking into my jeans as they conducted the cup experiment. When the time came for me to inhale, Kristy put the cup against my face like an oxygen mask on a crashing plane.

“Hold it in,” Lisa said. “Keep holding it.”

I exhaled and felt my body drop down. My earlobes tugged at my head like weights, my eyes started closing, and my whole body tingled as if someone had been lightly tickling me.

Each sister got on either side of me and lifted my arms above my head. Lisa stripped my shirt off as Kristy dropped my night shirt on. I felt the cold clean T-shirt collapse on my stomach like a curtain. Kristy sat at my feet and untied my shoelace. She peeled my mint green *Converse* off and rubbed my toes until they were warm. I unbuttoned my pants and yanked them off my ankles and tossed them in the corner. My face was burning and all of the blood in my body seemed to have rushed there. The cool sheets soothed me. My eyes didn’t have a chance of staying open. My head sank but my ear drifted to the hallway where I heard, “We can never tell her what that was.” ❧



OBAASAN

by DYLLAN MORAN

my grandmother / standing on the powder / sugar beach. / black sea, / the moon shining / down /
born on an island / never to learn to swim

my grandmother, / how much of you / is lost? do / you know? /
obaasan / mitsukerarenai

my grandmother's / name might mean / water; /
you never taught me how to write it. /

that means it's all still a mystery to me





CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE

by BAILEY KNAUB

Nine lives, eight lives, seven lives...

The first time it happened, I was seven-years-old, and struggling for breath like a newly born kitten, like the kittens imprinted on my red and pink Valentine's Day PJs that say, "You're Purrfect!" PJs that flapped in the breeze, bed abandoned along with the safety of youth. Un-socked, juvenile feet pattering against the hardwood as I rushed to my parents in the middle of the night, and they lie to me for the first time.

"You can breathe, Bailey. If you're talking to us, then you're breathing," my mom said, always the rational one with sound logic and wicked mama-bear instincts. A trained nurse trying to calm me through what we all assumed was an asthma attack. Although, asthma attacks shouldn't paint your fingernails and lips Atlantic blue. Skin straining over childish collarbones like they would tear as easily as scissors gliding through wrapping paper on Christmas Eve. Mouth moving, but only pained silence passing through cobalt lips. Every gasp leaving me more breathless than the last. Suffocating on dry land in the way only a mermaid could.

I died minutes later in Mom's arms, asphyxiating within my own traitorous body. The chilly February air caressing my clammy skin; that's the first sensation to seep into my memory. Next, the hard, unyielding floors of our dining room I lay on, Mom hovering above me and the deep, baritone pitch of the Fire Chief, the only medic that could find our isolated house up in the mountains. This during the time before every phone had a GPS programed into it. Back when dial-up internet screeched its invasion, our landline phoned 911, and Disney channel was still a gem.

Consciousness came in waves after I stopped breathing for the first time, after my first death. It stroked my mind, surging and receding like the crashing surf on a white sand beach. I don't remember the ride to the hospital in the ambulance, only the red and blue splashes of sirens painting the pine forest in a massacre of fluorescents. The monochromatic X-ray that—at the time—showed nothing wrong with my respiratory system. Everyone trying to express the gravity of the situation in childlike terms, telling me the ER was like 7/11.

"You can come get a slurpee any time you want."

My eleven-year-old sister passed out in a chair too large for her, child psyche intact, but fracturing under the strain this moment placed on my family. Earth shifting, gravity dragging us all down. Dad hiding the crushing pressure behind a clenched jaw in the fleeting highway lights on the drive home, and Mom's white-knuckle grip around the emergency EpiPen, our last strand of hope dying within her optimistic blue eyes. My brother falling with us when he returned from college a week later. Not allowed to sleep until I repeated back how to use the EpiPen over and over and over again at age seven on a frigid February night at two in the morning. When I finally passed their unknown test I didn't even know I was taking, I curled up in their bed—not my own—and fell asleep. But you never forget the first time your parents lie to you. It's Purrfect.



Nine lives, eight lives, seven lives...

I was ten-years-old when it happened again, and we now know what's wrong with me. What apparently was always wrong with me. My body had just lived in denial for the first seven years of my life. Now, tumors wreaked havoc in my lungs, succumbing to

*It stroked my
mind, surging and
receding like the
crashing surf on a
white sand beach.*

my own body—my own blood—turning against itself due to a rare disease. No one expected me to live past eight. But at ten, Death greeted me again as if we were childhood best friends. Knocking on my hospital door, inviting himself in, and taking a seat beside me on the lumpy hospital bed.

None of us noticed at first, too distracted by one of my parents' friend's that decided to visit us in the hospital, the first new person we'd seen outside of the doctors and nurses in weeks. We gave her the best, least uncomfortable chair in the room. My parents crowded around her, eager for news of the outside world, where time didn't stand still like it did in that hospital with an odd number of corners. You get desperate in the hospital, tired of beeping machines, the painted-on smiles of doctors, and off-colored-white walls. So bored that you start to count all the weird angles in the room just so you don't hear the worries plastering themselves to the inside of your skull.

I didn't know her name, the lady that came to visit us. She might have been from our church or my parents' jobs. But I didn't care. Not when I had a soggy hospital PB&J the cafeteria brought up for me, nothing more than bread smothered in peanut butter. Not like the kind your mother makes with love in the summer after hours in the baking sun. Visitors came and went all the time in my hospital rooms, I stopped counting, but the silent visitor that followed the woman in wouldn't be ignored.

Heated fingers closed off my throat, blocking the airway no bigger than a straw that doctors struggled to properly open. A soft pitch whistle escaping my mouth, not even able to choke out a warning. Death isn't heard, he is felt, and that day, Death tasted of sticky peanut butter and coarse hospital sheets. Screams bounced off all the odd angles of the room, and machines blared along with the pinging of the nurse call button no one answered. The foreign blue eyes of the woman froze in terror, face as ashen as my paling lips. I died for the second time to that woman's face, never learned her name, never saw her again after that day. I couldn't blame her for not coming back.

I've never seen the face of Death, but the face of that woman was the closest I've come to putting one on him. I didn't eat a PB&J again until I was fourteen.

*Death isn't heard,
he is felt, and that
day, Death tasted
of sticky peanut
butter and coarse
hospital sheets.*



Nine lives, eight lives, seven lives...

I'm fifteen, even older than anyone expected, but younger than I should be. About to start my freshman year of high school. It's summer, where the refreshing night air harbored our deepest scandals and the stars were our gods. But instead, I'm counting corners in the ICU unit, not chilling at the pool with tan lines and basking in the invincibility of adolescence. Something I had long ago lost along with my mortality. I'm baffling doctors about what's killing me, a fret that had lost its terrifying yet awed appeal after the fifth time. You know you're fucked when doctors start calling your already rare disease that's acting different than the few cases throughout history after your own name. *Bailey's* became the popular excuse doctors used when they had no clue how to treat me, how to stop me from dying.

"IDK, it's just Bailey's." I grew tired of my own name at fifteen.

Death was swifter this time. Going straight for the jugular without any foreplay. Suffocating, drowning in your own body takes longer than you think, longer than you would like. But this death happened faster with stars zooming through my vision like the heavy snowflakes rocketing past you in the headlights of your father's dinged up truck in the dead of night. Then I'm falling, submerging into comforting darkness. No light at the end of the tunnel to guide me, only soothing blackness like the kind under your favorite blanket when you're nine and you're convinced a flimsy sheet can keep the monsters at bay.

"Can I not get my driver's license now?" That's my last thought before I'm in oblivion. Or maybe it's Elysium, perhaps it's Valhalla, possibly good old heaven, but hell was better with my track record.

This death isn't memorable. It's not like the first time. But it's the first time coming back was traumatic. The green line of my heartbeat went from stable to spiking like the Colorado peaks. Suffocating in a new way at the six faces above me. Their breaths painting a watercolor portrait of panic. I'm there, but not really. Lucid, but floating in lightheadedness. Chest not moving, but air passing through the non-collapsed lung. Not registering life, reality, this moment until a nurse's fingers slip into my limp hand. Then reality snapped back in like a strained rubber band over a rolled-up newspaper your mom brandished like a whip at Thanksgiving dinner when your cousins get a little too handsy around the turkey.

*The green line
of my heartbeat
went from stable
to spiking like the
Colorado peaks.*


Jarring at the edges, blurring as adrenaline resets my heart, edges blacking out while color saturated.

“She’s back! She’s squeezing my hand. Her heart restarted,” the nurse screamed. Relief colors the air in pleased huffs. Then the doctors dwindled away, the kindling in the pyre extinguishing. Except for the nurse whose hand I wouldn’t let go of, and the doctor that wasn’t mine that I forced to stay when she tried to pull the oxygen mask away. You never knew how much you loved the taste of metal-tainted oxygen from tanks until you went minutes without it. The doctors stayed with me. Forced to sit through me comforting my father, not the other way around. His hair as chaotic as the look in his eyes after he thought he lost his youngest. Calming Mom over the phone, promises oozing from my tone in careful fibs and false bravado. Holding back tears as I texted my two siblings that realized our family of five almost just became four, fingers shaking on the keys and trying to muster the will to keep going. The imaginary pale, tear-stained faces of my family at my funeral floated behind my eyes every time I blinked. I plastered on a fake smile everyone believed after eight years of putting on the same act daily just to get by. I’m fifteen when I learn to lie as good as my parents on that first night. Fifteen when I figured out how much my family depended on me being okay, even if I truly wasn’t. I’m fifteen when I became the Bailey my family needed and started doing everything to ensure that Bailey’s dies within my body.



Nine lives, eight lives, seven lives...

Twenty-two now, a fifth-year college student who sacrificed a lung to live, and living without giving two fucks. Driving way too fast with many speeding tickets to show for it. Drinking boys under the pool table I just conned them on and currently, writing this high. Don’t fret, it’s an edible. Living on the edge is easy when you’ve already crossed that line. Tightroping between life and death now that I’m cursed with the nine lives of a cat. All because of those stupid Valentine’s Day PJs with kittens on them, and whenever anyone asks how I’m doing, I lie with an easy—I’m Purrfect.

One death, two deaths, three deaths... downloading the fourth. 



THE BEAR

by HEATHER CLAYPOOLE

When I was six, I received a stuffed toy bear that was huge, bigger than me. I was slightly terrified of this bear at first, because I was six and hadn't often encountered inanimate objects with large glass eyes and some semblance of an expression; it still escapes me why people think overly large stuffed animals are okay for small children, but perhaps my view is singularly mine. He (and I don't know why he was assigned a gender—thanks, patriarchal system) was an unsightly shade of beige; he could've blended in with our carpet that had become a murky shade after many food and liquid spills. He had no name, which I'm hoping is attributed more to me forgetting rather than lacking creativity. After a few weeks, he grew on me; I could drag him to and fro around the house, use him as cover during hide and seek, and utilize him as a backrest, but more importantly I could hump the shit out of him.

Without even having any concept of sex, this bear had somehow become my sexual awakening. It started innocently enough; after watching *Titanic*—no idea why I was watching this at six or, even more curiously, why I was so transfixed by it—I decided to experiment with kissing the bear. This did nothing

for me as he was an inanimate object; he lacked the warmth and sentience of a young Leo DiCaprio. So, I had to resort to the boys in my kindergarten class. I would indiscriminately choose a boy sitting at my drawing table, and whisper in his ear to meet me behind the play kitchen or, if I was feeling particularly brazen, the opaque, floral curtains.

Let me preface my few kissing tales with the fact that, at six years old, I was very gross and very rude and very weird. I would openly pick my nose and eat my boogers; I would flatter anyone who walked in front of me; I had a weirdly deep and raspy voice (my mother would later say I sounded like what she imagines an alien sounds like); I would push people down if they “took too long” on the monkey bars and derisively tell them that their mothers’ heads were shaped like eggs; I often stared directly at the sun; and to top it all off, I never brushed my teeth. Some of these things have since changed, but my point is that these poor boys did not want to kiss me, which is why I did not make them privy to my plans until they met me at my choice locale.

Because I was the tallest kid in the class, I would tower over my selected boy and plainly tell him to kiss me. They would tell me that they didn’t know how, and then I would give a demonstration using my hand and tell them to “just do it.” I would lean down and we would share a quick and meaningless peck, but I was always left wanting more. At six, I craved some movement of the lips, some passion that would mimic the kisses between Jack and Rose. I started to become more demanding. “Move your lips like this,” I would say before using my hand again to dramatically tilt my head from side to side, but no one ever got it right.

Perhaps no one satisfying my kissing cravings was what pushed me to the edge—the edge of my humping my bear. I’m not actually entirely sure what did it or how it came to be. Since I was at first in fear of the bear, maybe I thought I could overcome my fears by literally mounting them and going to town. I don’t know, but what I did know was that it felt good. It was a sensation I had never experienced before and I couldn’t explain it. After a while, my mom noticed that the bear was looking very ragged, so she suggested that we throw it away. I would not stand for it; at the mere mention of dumping the bear, I threw a fit, which she quickly and simply conceded to. I’m sure she thought he was just another bear, but to me he was so much more.


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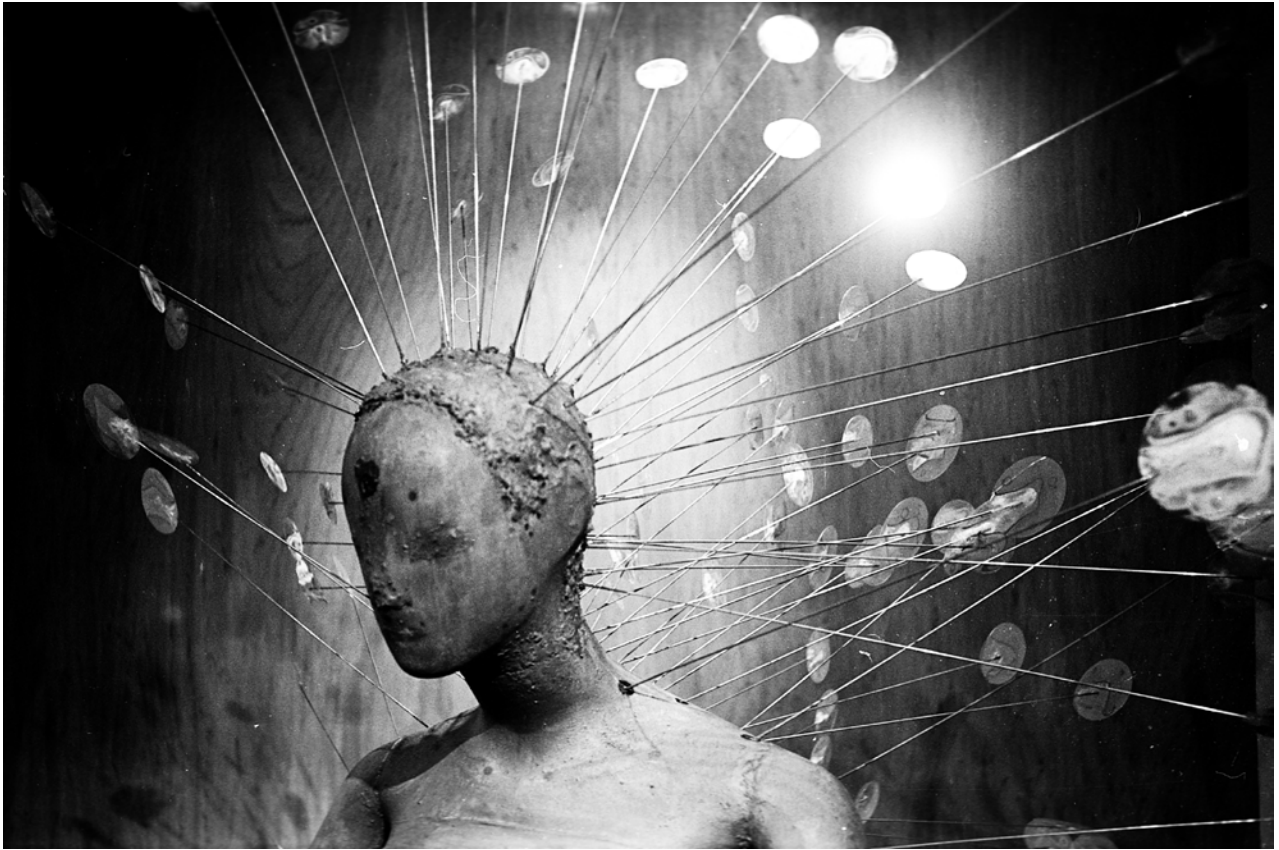
I was deathly afraid of being found out. I somehow knew what I was doing was considered wrong, and I felt shame around it, but not enough to stop me. I would only pursue our trysts when my parents weren't home, but I still had to work around my older sister. I have a very vivid memory of dragging the bear around the house in search of my sister so I could know where she was and take my bear where she wasn't. I couldn't find her anywhere and assumed she was playing outside with the neighbors, so I went to my favorite "secret" spot, which was the closet in the computer room. As I was opening the door to the closet, my sister swiftly appeared behind me and asked with a furrowed brow what I was doing. I panicked, and in my deep voice quickly said, "Nothing!" and ran into the closet with the bear in tow and shut the door. I sat there for a bit with the light off contemplating what I should do and whether I should lie to my sister about what I was doing with the bear, even though she had no idea. In the end, my primal instincts kicked in and, if nothing else, I have always been someone who does what they want, so I ended up humping the bear.

Not too long after that, I started feeling not just shame but paranoia. Not only was "God"—whom I was told bore a strong resemblance to Dave Thomas, the founder of the renowned fast food chain Wendy's—watching me, but I started to think my parents were watching as well. I got it in my head that there were cameras in the walls and that they had been watching me with disdain the whole time. I began overanalyzing their actions and words, and it ate me alive. When my mom would simply tell me to eat my broccoli at dinner, she meant, "Eat your broccoli because you've been doing something very bad with your bear and we all know about it and we're going to drop you off and leave you at the place you hate the most—the dentist's office." One day I couldn't stand it anymore, and as soon as I started hankering for the bear, I ran to the landing of the stairs and yelled, "Mom, are there any cameras in the walls?" To which she confusedly replied, "No," and inquired as to why I was asking. This was when I was seven and did not yet have the confidence to be terse with my mother, so I figured that saying "no reason" or "just curious" wouldn't suffice. I had to devise an elaborate lie, so I told her that I had just watched a show on Nickelodeon where parents put cameras in the walls of their children's rooms to watch and either condone or condemn their activity. My

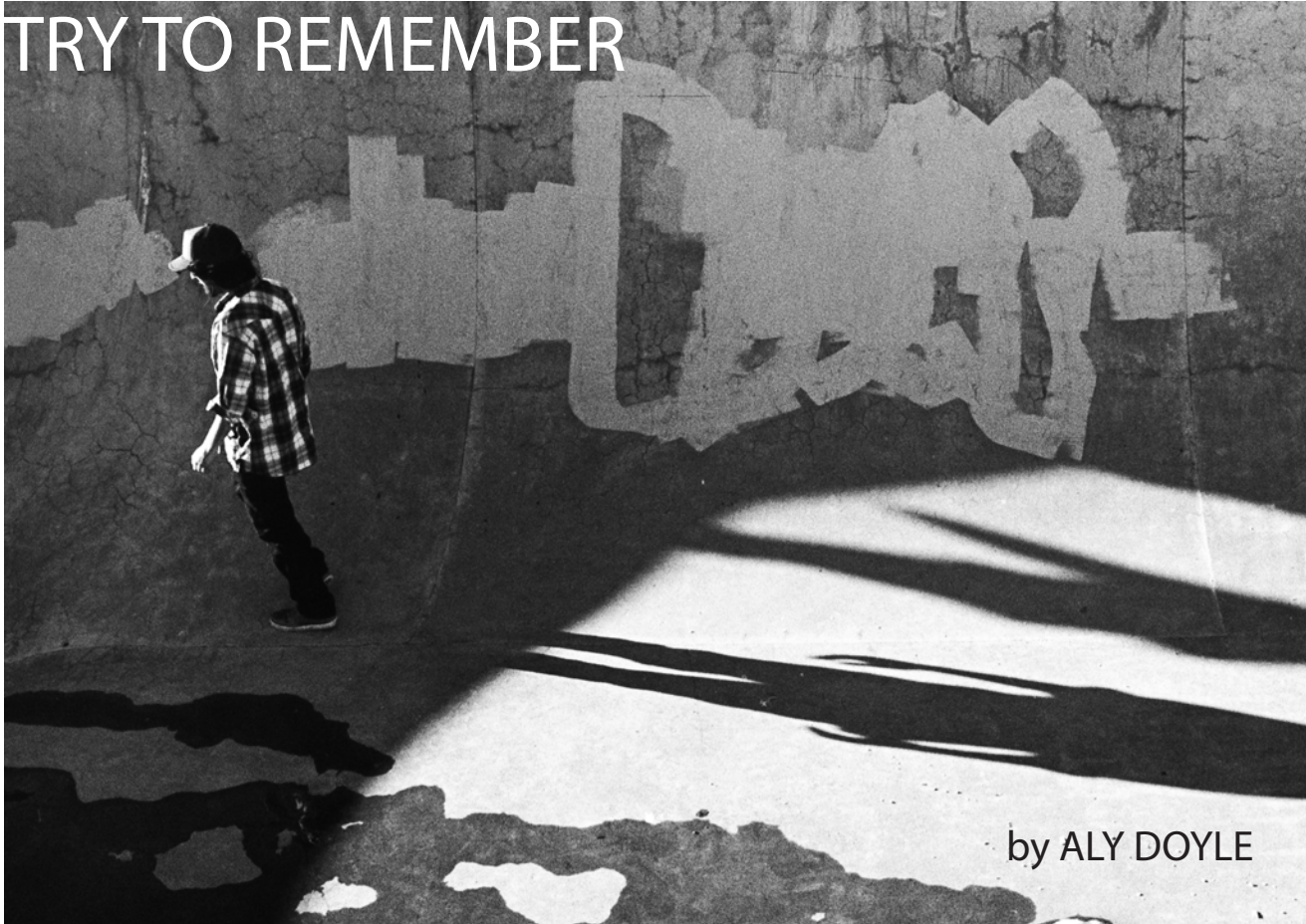
mother noted that it was a good idea for a show and maybe she should do that for us. Believing her, my heart sank and I ran to my bear thinking it may be one of our last times together.

Over the years, I would preach the act of humping to my friends. I would instruct them on how one humps and attempt to articulate the feeling. It never got through to any of them, though one friend tried but said she felt bad doing it. I was the only one, or so I thought. In middle school, I told a few of my closest friends and, much to my surprise, they had also humped objects into the ground when they were very young. None of them knew how it happened either, but they knew what it felt like. My best friend said she would hump the arm of her couch, but one day her mom walked in and berated her for it and after that she stopped.

I don't know what became of that bear. I had it for years, but once I moved onto actual human beings, I no longer needed him and lost track of his whereabouts. I like to imagine he is in a comfortable home now serving another child, the way he fulfilled his duties for me. Actually, I do not wish that—that would be weird. But I do hope that he is on a tropical island, perhaps Bora Bora, or on a northeastern retreat in the Poconos, and I hope that kids everywhere are having their sexual awakenings (something I never thought I would say) and not feeling too bad about it. And, if nothing else, it just goes to show that the best way to overcome a fear is to mount it and ride like the wind. 



TRY TO REMEMBER



by ALY DOYLE

I was fifteen, merely a freshman in high school. Between being nervous and excited, I was out of control, like most teenage girls. The gossip, boys, heavy eyeliner, and constant bickering with my mom made me a living stereotype. I held my head a little too confidently but I luckily had two brothers that kept a watchful eye on me.

My brothers were protective of me—the baby of the family and their only sister. Dominick, my oldest brother, made sure to keep me in my place. Over six feet tall and only a junior, everyone knew not to mess with him. In reality, though, he was a giant teddy bear. I still remember his kind face as he gave me advice, threatening to kill any boy that tried to play me. The older I got, the closer I grew to my brothers, especially Dominick.

I had a fairly regular after-school routine. I would go to cross country practice, then wait for my two brothers to finish football practice. One day, my twin brother stayed home because he was “sick” but probably just faking it. Dominick was with me

at school though, and despite being sixteen, he still didn't have his license yet so we had to wait for our mom. She was never late.

We piled into the car and prepared ourselves for the interrogation questions. She would start off easy, asking us how our days were. Gradually, she would start pestering us about our homework. "*Do you guys have a lot to do tonight? How much have you started?*" Quietly, we sat and rolled our eyes. Since I was only a freshman, I was always ahead of the game. While all my assignments were done in advance, Dominick was the king of procrastination. This aggravated my poor mother, leaving us no choice but to get our homework done.

When we got home, we all separated to our rooms and closed the doors behind us. I quickly ran off to finish all my homework. Dominick took his time; I was too preoccupied to notice. When I finished, I could finally sit on my phone and gawk mindlessly at all my social media outlets, making sure not to miss any new posts.

In the middle of my social media mania, I heard noises coming from outside my room. Confused, I walked outside to check out the commotion. My twin brother, definitely not sick, ran down the hallway, yelling at me to call 911. I walked forward and pushed Dominick's door open. I tried to remember his kind face, but it was gone. His face was different now. In that moment, I wondered to myself, *why is there so much blood?*

Now all I wonder is, *why did he kill himself?*

I never walked to the football stadium to wait for Dominick after that. ❧



IF YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT STEREOTYPES

by ANDIE DULSKY

The first time I can remember falling in love, I was sitting on the floor of my father's office, pounding furiously on the keys of an old typewriter my mother had pulled from the basement. There was something so beautiful about the clicking and the fresh ink on the page. There was something so authentic about not being able to fix your mistakes. It was inexplicably human. I was only six years old at the time, but I can still remember the satisfaction I got from rambling on and on about whatever nonsense was in my head that day.

The funny thing is, I can remember being six and meeting a typewriter for the first time as if it was yesterday, but I cannot remember writing my first love letter. This is something I've always done – sometimes I send them, but most of the time I don't. This first letter was addressed to my middle school best friend, after she stopped talking to me. I had moved across the country, and she seemed to have thrown in the towel on our friendship. I wrote about my grief, the things that happened when she left, and the person that I was because she had been in my life. I could still see the love in the situation. I have the letter, locked in a box in

my parent's house that I hardly open, but I cannot remember writing it.

In this box are dozens of unsent letters addressed to various people. Some of the people are still in my life, and others have left. I've had to lock so many feelings inside this box, some never to be seen by the eyes of another. I'd like to think of them all as love letters – regardless of the contents, each one is addressed to someone I have loved in some form. I've always had a tender soul, but this world is not accepting of this trait.

The first time I wrote her a love letter, I hadn't gotten any sleep. She has a way of keeping me up long after she has left, even in the early hours of the morning.

October 16th, 5:39AM

It's 5:39. I've slept for an hour tonight. I'm lying in a new friend's bed, waiting for the sun to rise so I can walk home. I remember everything, but a familiar haze is covering the edges and seams of everything that happened. I don't remember how it started, but I remember regretting leaving you behind.

I walked home at 6:55. I remember the exact time – it was September and the sun was rising later than I would've liked it to. I left the building, feeling the judgmental stare from the man guarding the front desk. I would've liked to say, "it's not what you think," or "fuck off," but I was too tired to do anything and instead, I walked right past the man, out the front door, and into the morning air.

Maybe I shouldn't take this town for granted. The world looked so beautiful, hazy. I took pictures of everything that morning – the creek as I walked past it, the flowers blooming, and the leaves that were just beginning to turn from green to a shade of pale yellow.

When I finally reached my apartment, I fell straight into bed and fell asleep until two in the afternoon, when my sister came into my room to ask where I had been last night, who I had been with, where I had stayed. I told her I was at a party with friends, and had stayed with them. I didn't mention her.

November 30th, 2:35AM

I can't say I see a future with you, but I can see a present. I can see you waking up next to me, rubbing your seafoam-green eyes in the morning. I can imagine how it would feel to kiss the sides of your neck and run my fingers along the small of your back. I already know how it feels to kiss you, but I want to know how it feels to

*I've locked so
many feelings
inside this box . . .*

kiss you when the rest of the world is silent and I want to know what you're thinking. I want to understand the way your beautiful mind works.

My mental state died right along with the yellow leaves in September, and I fell into a bout of seasonal depression unlike any before. I spent days in bed, unable to cope with the outside world, and nights etching black charcoal across pristine white paper. I distanced myself from everyone around me, creating a wall between myself and anything that could hurt me. I wrote letters to the people I had met, but mostly I wrote them to myself. I told myself to remember to breathe, to go to my classes, and to try to keep people close. I kept my sister and friends, but I dared not keep her. The monsters had already taken my joy; I dared not let them take her too.

*My mental state died
right along with the
yellow leaves in
September . . .*

In the following months, I slowly emerged again. I took up dancing again. I started using color in my art after the longest time of seeing things only in black and white. I started talking to her. We became close friends as soon as I could allow her into my life. Despite all of our differences, we got along as well as any two people could. Sometimes she would send me poetry in the late hours of the night. We talked about her friends, her ex, her difficult relationship with being in college.

I'd forgotten how to fall in love, tried over and over again to no avail. There was the girl with the stony blue eyes who spoke in riddles, the girl with mold growing in her lungs, the girl who could never fall in love with me and me alone. In the time that I was dressed up as nicely as I could be, stood up by a date, she was there, late, with her blonde hair and green eyes, looking as nervous as anyone could in a room of strangers. She picked me up in her mother's old car, moving a canteen and a softball mitt off the front seat. I told her that there wasn't

anything more stereotypical that she could've done. She just laughed.

That night, I brought her to my friend's apartment, frequented by so many people. I can't tell you exactly how it happened, but it was in the brush of my hand against hers, in the way that she danced with me. It was in her crooked smile and the way her eyes glinted as she spoke. We stayed up together until four, talking about everything that we could, until she fell asleep. I didn't sleep at all.

The morning was filled with our unwillingness to leave the comfort of the bed. "Thank you for letting me stay," she said, wrapping her arm around my waist and kissing my neck.

"Thank you for staying."

It was the first time she had kissed me in the daylight, the first time we had touched since that first night. It was the first time that I had felt so at peace with another person in the better part of a year.

April 30th, 1:37AM

I think I fell a little in love with you last night. I know it's too soon to be thinking like that, and I have no idea how you're feeling of if you'll ever feel the same way. I already know your kind heart, and the weight that you carry. I know that you talk in your sleep, and that you hadn't ever had hot tea until you met me. Everything that you do seems beautiful to me, even the little things. The way that you hook your thumbs through your belt loops, the way that you brush your hair behind your ear. I've spent so long thinking that I could never connect with anyone. It's like there's a jar over my head like in "The Bell Jar," and how's that for stereotypes. But it disappears when I'm with you, so I know that because of this we can understand each other.

Remember the night that we met when we sat on the edge of that bathtub and talked? I remember you talking about engineering and math and thinking that we couldn't be more different. I was wrong. We have so much in common that I don't really know how to function when I'm around you, let alone tell you exactly how you make me feel, so I'm left to tell you all of the things you do that make me feel this way. ☞

*It was the first
time she had kissed
me in the
daylight . . .*





FALL IN ASPEN

by KRISTIN HOPKINS

Occasionally thumping along a rough patch of weather-trodden asphalt, I glide down Main Street in a beaten town car. On my right is an aspen tree grove, sunlight seeping through their tawny leaves, scattering blotched shadows on everything beneath. I find it difficult to believe that a dying thing could appear so fiery and relentless at the inevitable turn of the season. To the left side are a continuation of tourist traps and medical practitioner offices, offering overpriced shot glasses for upper shelf bourbon and straightened spines. The recreational yet gluttonous town is a haven for both the wounded and the intoxicated.

Aspen is a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Denver. Or an hour journey from DIA, considering the forty-five minutes in the air, and the ten-minute rugged landing between two mountains and a deadly tailwind. An oxygen bar at baggage claim is perfectly placed to balance a tourist's equilibrium as they enter the paper-thin air. The oxygen spooling from the tube was flavored with lavender the one time I tried it, but those who grow up here experiment with expensive air for fun rather than

out of necessity. I am home after fifteen years for my high school reunion, unable to recognize anyone in coach on the way over. Maybe they have all found their way to first class. My driver to the hotel relays his story of transporting John Mayer from the airport just last week. His Italian leather shoes were hung over the backseat like rotting bananas, and he apparently served himself a line where my jeans now brush up against the upholstery. “He tipped me alright, but I wouldn’t mind watching those earphones he was so fond of jammed in a different cavity”.

I am left to my own devices on the corner of Main and Mill at the Hotel Jerome. Not exactly the heart of downtown, but still the beginning of it. Jerome Wheeler was one of the first socialites in Aspen when it was still a mining town. He built both a hotel and an opera house, which still stand today in their golden brick layering. Even his home has been preserved in the West End neighborhood, and I wonder if the Aspen Historical Society kept the same furniture he sat upon at his magnificent soirées. The Hotel Jerome is known for its J-Bar for having served liquor to the buffoon writer Hunter S. Thompson, who shot a bullet through his head only miles from here, and Bill Murray, who played Thompson in a film.

The lobby is scattered with elk heads attached to the walls and framed photographs of high society folks in their lace-up boots bound to the mud. The sidewalks of this town, lined with Gucci, Prada, and Burberry, were built on the dirt and bones of the hundreds who used to live here, searching for their fortune out west when mining for silver was still relevant. Smuggler Mountain, the fortress opposite Aspen Mountain, is a particularly fascinating mine. The largest silver nugget ever found was dragged from its caves right after the Panic of 1893, rendering it useless. There is a photograph in the lobby of the sofa-sized nugget, with a chain tightened around its neck like a noose. With all the extensive tunnels underneath the town of Aspen, an earthquake in these parts would cause the entire four square miles to implode.

After leaving my suitcase behind in the room, I depart the hotel and traipse down to the Rio Grande River just on the outskirts of downtown. This area was a lover’s lane when I was a high school student: the skate park nearby with a deep and shadowed hole, a bench by the recycling center to fit a large blanket and two sets of shivering feet. Years ago, around this

time, when the animals were still feasting before their long stay in underground caskets, I woke up alone on that wooden bench to the scraping of a bear's claws against the recycling bins. Its nose was sniffing the air for a hint of last night's rotten and maggoted meat. I laced up my shoes and sprinted a mile back home. What was once my family's two story block is by now a four story mansion. My parents finally sold the place and moved to Idaho after a brutal fight between average paychecks and skyrocketing Aspen taxes.

I enter the John Denver Sanctuary, a park nestled into the side of the river and spotted with granite boulders. It was built not long after the singer's infamous death, and each of the polished boulders is inscribed with lyrics from his memorable songs. "Leaving on a Jet Plane" is the first boulder I find, and ironic that he did leave on a jet plane, and did not come back again. Country music is popular in these parts, but the live music bar "Belly Up" at the base of Aspen Mountain tends to cater to a younger generation's vices, electronic and hip hop reverberating off the cobblestone streets most weekend nights. College kids come back home for wild nights in the underground bar where many established musicians have performed in the nearly impeccable acoustic arena. In the bathrooms, cocaine residue accumulates on baby changing tables and lipstick stains the mirrors with phone numbers and personal anecdotes.

A teenager sprawls herself out on a rock in the middle of the river with a novel in hand, much like I used to do on weekend afternoons. A dog laps around the lagoon with a mossy log in between its barred teeth. The water is no longer riddled with rapids like it is after the snow melt. Now it drools on, and will eventually connect to the Colorado River. Every time an Aspen native takes a step into its frosted surface, the oil from the bottom of their foot can make it all the way to California. When the sky begins to turn, like too much milk whirling in a cup of earl grey, I part with the natural scene and return to the buzzing streets.

The outdoor mall is a congregation of the town's most bustling restaurants and proactive parents with their children attached to their arms like rubber gloves. A fountain sprays at the foot of the cobblestone path, water plumes dancing in unison and surprising the distracted passerby as a foot of water climbs up their pants. A clown blows balloons in the shapes of dogs and

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pirate swords, and a kettle corn machine pops and sizzles, leaving greasy trails in paper satchels. The aspen trees lining the street will be covered in lights within the next couple of months for the holidays, and one can witness the glistening from a party at the top of the mountain. There is something about the gold, purple, and blue lanterns that dress the trees in an even more lively manner than their own fallen leaves, strewn about the sewers. I take a turn past the bus station to the gondola plaza at the foot of the mountain.

At my feet is a large compass carved into the granite. My elementary school class once took a field trip here to show us how to find our way to civilization if lost in the woods, in our quite different curriculum. I direct my feet north, and watch where the fading sun has left an orange glow on the mansions of Red Mountain. The way north is the way out of this town, out of this world within itself, which has promised me beauty and given it promptly. Nothing can truly be so wrong in one's life if they can gaze at those successively dying aspen groves far from where the streets have a name. I stand alone and erect in the middle of a compass and take off my hat, nearly bowing to the majesty of the primitive time that still exists, only hidden between the alleyways and river bends. This plaza will be drowning in tourists come November, clutching ski passes and tossing around gloves as though they were confetti, and I will still be standing here gazing at a scene, which I am both separate from and a part of.

I appreciate where I come from. It took a long time to come to terms with that fact, but I am an Aspen native and I should be proud. The policemen mostly do drug arrests and the children are at risk for severe entitlement, but if one can look past these underlying factors, they can see that thousands of people flock here for a noble reason. The sun is nearly gone now and I have found myself squatting on the frigid pavement. I hoist myself onto achy knees, and shuffle back to the hotel to change into my finest clothes for the reunion. ☞





CONTRIBUTORS

MARY BETH BLALOCK is a car-dancing, to-do-list-checking, puppy connoisseur who finds a passion for social justice to be the fuel and steering system of nearly all her life's endeavors. She has spent two summers working in Lusaka, Zambia studying sustainable development, and in her free time mentors teen moms and their children in the Boulder area. Mary Beth recently joined Teach for America's 2018 corps and will begin teaching early childhood education in Denver this fall. When she needs to unwind, Mary Beth finds that playing the piano, watching puppy videos, dancing to Beyoncé's "LOVE ON TOP," and camping seem to do the trick. In May she will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, minors in both Leadership and Business, and a certificate in Public Health from the University of Colorado Boulder.

HEATHER CLAYPOOLE grew up in Tallahassee, Florida. She spent four and a half years at CU—she wrote "THE BEAR" in **KERRY REILLY**'s Introduction to Creative Nonfiction class—and graduated with a degree in Film Studies and Creative Writing, resulting in a career as a full-fledged barista. In her off time she restores famous fresco paintings and nurses jumbo isotonic sports drinks while indulging in teen dramas or google images of Dave Grohl, and having one-sided conversations regarding the beloved animated character of **CAILLOU**. Having recently returned from a jaunt to Australia with no semblance of a plan for post-graduate life, Heather will do—whatever. She can be found on a street corner waving at people or poring over the children's magazine, **HIGHLIGHTS**, in the waiting room at the dentist's office. Heather is still waiting for "MAMBO NO. 6."

JOE CONSTANCIA was born and raised in the middle of nowhere, Texas. He was never disciplined as a child and that is most likely what's wrong with him. He is an undeclared sophomore who, as a freshman in fall 2016, took the **PROGRAM FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC**'s Intro to Creative Nonfiction class with **TOBIN VON DER NUEL**. Joe's passions include activities drawing his attention away from shiny objects, making people talk to him on airplanes, daydreaming, and putting his imagination to good use, mostly for food. He hopes to earn a living making people laugh, between sleeping on a pile of cash. Experience in manual labor and years of procrastinating have given him a renewed appreciation for how valuable an education is, and he is honored to have stories of his old nine to five job included in **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY**.

ALIA CULBERTSON is drawn to all things creative. She's spent her life growing up in Colorado but is eager to see where her creativity takes her after graduating. Alia is in her third year at CU Boulder pursuing a double major in English and Elementary Education as well as a

minor in Political Science. While most of her time is occupied studying, being a part of Camp Kesem, and serving in the Arts and Sciences Student Government, she finds time to do what she enjoys most: photography, writing music, reading, and spending time with her siblings. Alia hopes one day to be a part of bringing major change to the Education system in America, but for now is content getting involved with her local community.

ALY DOYLE is an International Affairs major with a deep passion for traveling. After spending most of her childhood in Colorado, Hawaii, and Michigan, she has always had a deep appreciation for new cultures and settings. Although happily finding her new home in Boulder, she realized her passion for traveling would only grow as she met peers from all over the world. Hoping to pursue a career learning more about other cultures, especially in Asia, she strives to broaden her experiences and passions. Aly is a Junior and as her time at CU slowly comes to an end, she is eager to see more, learn more, and pursue her goals and aspirations.

ANDIE DULSKY, author of “**THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN**,” is a writer, musician, and activist from Denver, Colorado. Her other work often centers around identity, particularly as a queer, Jewish person. She often writes of trauma, family, and queer relationships, all from a place of tenderness. She currently resides in Boulder, where she studies poetry, dance, and business. She comes home every night to a full bookshelf and a Cairn Terrier named Eve.

KATHRYN HERBERT has always had a passion for self-expression. Although not pursuing a degree in writing, she took **ERIC BURGER**'s Advanced Creative Nonfiction class last fall and still enjoys creating poetry and other experimental genres of literature, along with reading any book that comes her way. Kathryn is a double major in French and Political Science and is currently pursuing her Colorado Teaching Licensure as well. She loves to travel and explore new places around Colorado and the world, always looking for new inspiration and ideas. A lover of animals (including her pet snake), gardening, cooking, fresh vegetables, live music, and a strong community, Kathryn is grateful to be a part of this publication with her fellow student artists.

KRISTIN HOPKINS is an English major and Film minor at CU Boulder. This is her third year in college, and she doesn't know where the time has gone. She was born in California and raised in Colorado, so the mountains are very close to her heart. She enjoys skiing, writing, watching films, and hanging out with friends. Kristin is very excited that she has been published in **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY** after her modest debut in **TeenInk**. The author of “**FALL IN ASPEN**” hopes to write novels or screenplays. One of her goals is to watch every film on the Top 250 Movies list on IMDb.

BAILEY KNAUB has always had a passion for writing. She's spent most of her life reading whatever she could get her hands on and writing whenever she had time. When she started her freshman year at CU, she couldn't wait to pursue a major in creative writing, as well as a minor in history. Now as a fifth-year student, Bailey has had a broad range of interests and

adventures, but her love for writing has never left. “**CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE**” was inspired by her tough battle with her rare disease and the true events she hasn’t shared with many, and was written in **JAY ELLIS**’s Intro to Creative Nonfiction course. Bailey hopes to pursue a career in the publishing world after graduation and dreams of one day making **THE NEW YORK TIMES** Best Seller list.

TAYLOR A. LUCIO comes from the suburbs of Denver, Colorado. She is currently a sophomore at the University of Colorado Boulder, in Creative Writing and Chinese. She plans to teach Secondary English. Taylor published her first story in kindergarten under the **READING RAINBOW YOUNG WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS** Contest. She is currently working on a sitcom about CU called **THE DARLEY DARLINGS**. She plans to write novels and travel since publishing “**TAPIOCA PUDDING**” in **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY**.

BERKELEY MCCARTHY is a junior in sociology with a passion for activism in multiple fields. They are also working towards minors in business and film. Growing up in Long Beach, California, they felt that Boulder would have the same appreciation for laid back and progressive attitudes. Berkeley hopes to uplift and empower their own community and other marginalized people through writing and art. They’re part of peer education at the gender and sexuality center on campus and helps coordinate for **T9 HACKS**: the women’s hackathon. They enjoy films, arguing, urban exploring, memes, and having a good time. They hope to finish two short films by the end of 2018, and maybe even submit to a festival.

DYLLAN MORAN is from Aurora, Colorado and is a Creative Writing and Japanese major at CU Boulder. He has appeared in journals such as **ENTROPY MAGAZINE** and **WALKABOUT** Creative Arts Journal, and also has staged readings with Curious Theatre Company’s **CURIOUS NEW VOICES** program and the University of Colorado New Play Festival. Outside his academic interests, Dyllan also enjoys gardening, watching old movies, and discussing politics.

MAGGIE RAMSEUR is a neuroscience major at CU Boulder. Beyond her coursework, she enjoys traveling and photography. What brings her the most joy in life is her role as a teacher and mentor at the dance studio where she grew up. She loves choreographing entertaining pieces and getting to work with younger dancers. Her family has always inspired an appreciation of good food and good company to share it with. Maggie hopes to continue to refine her writing skills and improve her understanding of the world even after graduation.

MADELEINE RUTH SELTZER is a student of English literature and Women and Gender studies at CU Boulder. The author of “**THE SHORES**,” was born and raised in Los Angeles, California.

HELEN STRITZEL is a Colorado native who will graduate from the University of Colorado at Boulder in May of 2018 with a major in International Affairs and a double minor in Economics and French—and took Eric Burger’s 3020 Creative Nonfiction class in the **PROGRAM FOR**

WRITING AND RHETORIC last fall. She grew up reading everything she could get her hands on and started writing short stories as the age of 12. An avid traveler, Helen has lived and studied in both Japan and Senegal, and possesses a working French proficiency. In her free time, Helen loves to spend time outdoors and try new recipes.

STEPHANIE A. WOOD has been writing since she was young—her first story was about a purple hippo. She is a senior, graduating this May with a B.S. in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing, a minor in Creative Writing, and three certificates. She gives credit to her great experiences with the courses and the professors in CU’s Creative Writing program and is inspired by the university’s visiting writer, **KHADIJAH QUEEN**. Even though school keeps her busy, Stephanie finds time to play board games, read, write, and volunteer at the local animal shelter. When she has saved up, Stephanie likes to travel. Her most recent trip was to Spain and Italy, and her most interesting trips were to Egypt and Vietnam. 