



CREATIVE NONFICTION



JOURNALTWENTYTWENTY

JOURNAL 2020 is a collection of the finest undergraduate artwork and creative nonfiction writing at CU Boulder—the work of young writers with enough strength of voice, vision, and courage to tell their true stories and the true stories of others.

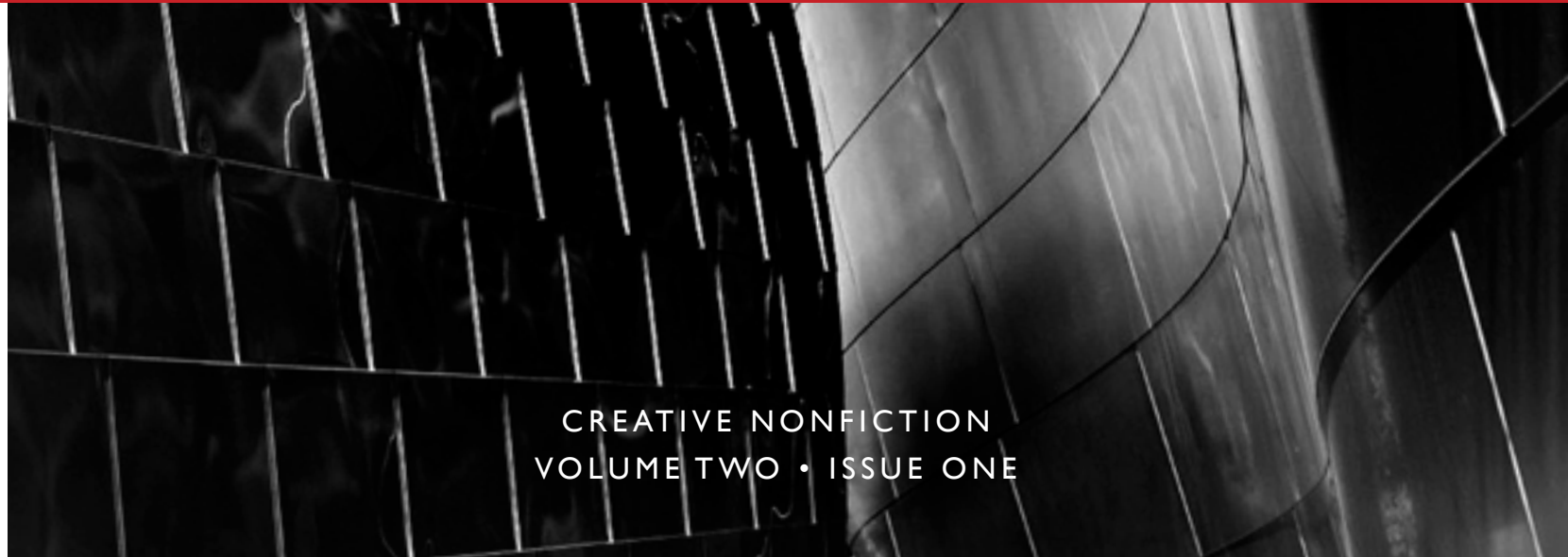
JOURNALTWENTYTWENTY

PROGRAM FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC • UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



SPRING 2014
VOLUME TWO • ISSUE ONE

SPRING 2014 • VOLUME II • ISSUE I



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JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY publishes print issues each Fall and Spring, 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 back 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

We, as the Editor-in-Chief team, have had the immense pleasure of helping to oversee the third installment of **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY**. What has sprouted from a classroom has since blossomed into an evolving expression of undergraduate experiences. This semester has been challenging, but also extraordinary. The success of the previous two issues has allowed us to expand our small staff to include twenty-eight students, some who are enrolled in the new course—WRTG 2090, independent study students, and of course our dedicated volunteers.

The transference of the our journal's workplace to a classroom brought with it a staff of bright-eyed learners with their own personal skills, and a desire to hone them while learning new ones. The breadth of experience and dedication of our staff has blown us away, and we would like to thank each and everyone of them for spending long nights editing our submissions, digital production work, and compiling the third issue of **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY**. This publication would could not have happened without their help.

We have been struck by the enormity and depth of the stories our fellow peers have had the courage to share. Creative nonfiction is a broad genre, but one that allows the expression of truth in a way that helps make sense of this confusing and passionate world we live in.

This issue begins with a creative work by Andrew Hecoeks about the small things in life we often overlook. Claire Zai and Amy Burnett recall the challenges of overcoming suicide, whether a friend's, or ones own attempt. Kim Campbell and Ben O'Leary describe aspects of class differences, and Alynn Evans expresses the challenging nature of finding the correct order of words to express meaning for something intangible. The social changes brought about by the introduction of the e-book are cleverly discussed by Madison Hosack. Emma Gardner shares the difficulties of telling her loved ones she does not share the same beliefs while Paul Henning struggles with prayer. Parker Griggs explores the use of metaphor in creative nonfiction. Heather Clark gives a profile of an Alaskan town, and Talia Halfon witnesses the remains of the Rwandan genocide, while Conor Kuczka shares

his experience in Iraq. Colin Barry beautifully writes on his experience of drowning. Jeleighna Killet describes the feelings of anger of defeat. Peter Hassinger humorously describes the moral dilemma of using “study aids” and Parker Griggs tells us how satisfying sharing a good beer with a few good friends can be. Ariel Herman explores the wonders of meditation, and the issue concludes with a gorgeous piece about Tanzania by Kathrine Hurley. ❧

EMILY PATTERSON, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
FIONA DOXAS & PENELOPE BAGGS, ASSISTANT EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

I was fortunate enough to be able to take the course that originally inspired this student-run journal in the fall semester of 2012. Our class was gifted in many different ways and we learned to love the power and art of creative nonfiction. As a class and as individuals, we were able to learn how to take something from real life and turn it into a creative, new experience with words to share with others. It was ultimately therapeutic finding the words for moments I thought I could never explain. I learned we write because we have something to say, but we don’t always know how to say it out loud. Writing creative nonfiction brings past experiences back to life one more time. With the first issue, it was clear to the staff and our instructor Jay Ellis that this would not be a one-time project. The amazing talent at the University of Colorado Boulder needed to be shared in the future. Months after never-ending proofreading and countless arguments over small and silly details, JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY was born.

Having the privilege of being a part of the editing process for our third issue of JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY has been a great experience. It has been a joy to receive so many submitted pieces with such strong skill, voice, and ability to translate true stories into beautiful works of writing. Not only were we able to work with great stories, we were also able to work alongside these talented writers throughout the process. The pieces in this journal encompass many different points of view and are all entirely true. I, and the rest of the JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY staff, want to thank each author for their strong contributions. It has been a pleasure to watch the growth of this project throughout the semesters, and I look forward to the amazing work to come in the future. ❧

ABIGAIL NELSON, MANAGING EDITOR

Both of us were very excited to become involved in Art Direction for Volume II, Issue 1, of JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY. We both are involved in photography and other forms of art. We looked forward to all of the art related business and duties in the journal. We do many things as the art directors; this includes making posters, picking pieces, creating the covers, and much more. While the primary focus of the journal is of course written work, a great deal of undergraduate artwork also circulates throughout the journal. None of this would have been possible without the help of such talented artists and a hard working Art Direction staff. We grew from a staff of one student, to six students in the last year, which has only helped improve the journal as a whole. As JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY begins to move into a new era of its production, we hope everything about it continues to thrive. ❧

MARK HASELMAIER & AUSTIN ZUKERMAN, ART DIRECTORS



Three is the magic number. This Spring 2014 issue of JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY wears our scholarly badge of Volume II, Issue One. The numbers proliferate. As we reach our second year of publishing creative nonfiction from across the CU Boulder campus, the scope of our journal has grown considerably. From a staff of eight students—mostly all-volunteer—working absurd hours to produce our second issue, we go to the printers now carrying the hard work of twenty-eight undergraduate staff. Our course home in THE PROGRAM FOR WRITING AND RHETORIC (WRTG 2090-001) anchored efforts this semester with seventeen dedicated students learning the Editing, Art Direction, Digital Production, Business, and Marketing skills to produce this issue led by fabulous Independent Study Assistants and our all-volunteer Editor-in-Chief. We also made forays into Video Production for an upcoming promotional piece for the journal, and we will be updating and expanding our online presence—which already includes social media. But the print issue remains our gold standard for now. Look for us to keep growing again next Fall. Meantime, read on. ❧

JAY ELLIS, FACULTY ADVISOR

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DISCARDED THINGS

By Andrew Hecocks

Socks with holes worn in the heels and toes, crumpled and torn pages on notebooks—these are the things we discard and forget. A toy car lost a long time ago to the grass and dandelions of the backyard, when you spent hours looking for it until the fireflies came out. When your mother calls you back inside, you tearfully stumble over the threshold because that little green car was your favorite, and unfortunately suited for perfect camouflage in the lawn.

A penny flips end over end into the koi pond that's really too deep to be a pond and is more of a lake, choked with dead leaves and plastic on the tense broken mirror of its surface. The penny is lost and forgotten under the sediment and fish crap.

An empty soda can under a bench that gets blown over by the wind and rolls down the road to rest in the highway-side ditch. Old clothes with unraveled hems or holes in the seams and the collars, buttons missing from their shirts and hiding in cement basement corners. Near-empty bags of popcorn left under theater seats. Apology letters written to somebody you reeled in and then forgot about, penned in red ink and folded into a neat square because this happened a long time ago, before

electronic messaging eclipsed everything. Broken rubber bands vacuumed off an office cubicle floor; an antiquated cell phone gone uncharged for a while so it chirps its catchy little battery-low jingle in the closet for a day until the screen goes quiet and cold.

A used tea bag, good for about three and a half mugs of chamomile, flushed away down the sink and snaking drainpipes. A once painstakingly-made cup gets a chip in it and sits sadly on a foldaway card table at a garage sale, resting on a paper that reads “50 cents” in hand-scrawled Sharpie to keep it from blowing away. Factories responsible for making discard-able things like Mylar potato chip bags and aluminum foil.

Sometimes it’s nice to put on some old socks with holes in the heels and the toes, and go walking in the backyard and step on a green toy car and swear loudly, but in the end pick it up and run it up and down a splintery handrail on the back porch, while around you the birds sing harbingers of autumn and many, many grey velvet curtains of sky roll down your immediate dome of a world, and the dead, yellow kudzu hangs weakly onto the tired, slumping chain-link fence that kept your childhood in an isolated square when you were little. You let go of the car and it speeds down the steep banister and crashes back into the grass next to a quivering leaf, coming to rest with its spinning wheels to the sky.

Past the fences are the satellites and rabbit ears and peaks of tar and shingles of the rest of the neighborhood. The leafless tree clutches an old tree house in its bony knuckles, the once-bright curtains of hobby-store fabric now faded by decades. The best days of your life are spent in a green box full of discarded things—they are crumpled up and stored in a plastic Wal-Mart bag hanging in the front-hallway closet just in case you ever need them again; and while sometimes you open the doorway to let in some light, in the end you just kneel to pull on your shoes and close the door again, leaving behind a lot of things that you look at every day but do not use, an anachronistic museum without any glass because nobody wants to take the exhibits—a closet full of rubber and canvas and moth-eaten fabric that doesn’t mean much to you anymore. And when you get home that evening and step in through the yellow rectangle of an arguably welcoming front door, you’ll take off your shoes and find that you’ve worn a hole in the heel of one of your socks; you’ll peel it off and drop it in the garbage can, and go upstairs to have an existential crisis in the shower with your head against the tiles on the wall. ❧

*The best days
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discarded things . . .*





AN UNDERSTANDING EAR

By Alynn Evans

Blue Band, Clocktower, bucket showers—all things that had no existence in my life two months ago and now are normal. *Pole, karibu, asante*—words I now speak because they have meaning and purpose, while two months ago they were just noise to me. There is no escape from what I am learning, feeling, and trying to make sense of, because it is a part of my every moment. It is infused in my thoughts, manifested in my actions and reactions—seeping into my interior like the tea bag diffusing through the water of my morning cup of chai. This is me, here in Tanzania, constantly trying to make sense of what is going on around and within me.



Stepping onto Tanzanian soil, I was ready for an adventure and a change from university living. I had signed up to spend four and a half months abroad, traveling throughout northern Tanzania learning the language, meeting the people, and staying with local families.

I quickly realized the differences of living in Tanzania. My family and friends in the States can describe my home life, and I can get an understanding of it. I can ask questions about

how my brother, aunts, and grandparents are doing, and feel connected to the answers because they are familiar. I have my understanding of home, and it makes sense to me—but this insight does not always go both ways.

I can tell my American family that every night I helped make dinner with my Tanzanian sisters and mama. I can tell them that we started picking the un-edibles out of the rice at four in the afternoon and how I tried to keep up with my twelve year old sister as we cut tomatoes. I can tell them I sat over a hot, smoky fire for the next hour, stirring vegetables. I can tell them that I eat until I can't move, and then my Mama will feed me more. I attempt to excitedly describe how incredible it is: we get our milk directly from the cow, we kill a chicken for dinner to feed the family, and we pick avocados from the tree in our yard. I feel as if I am screaming out all the dense realizations I have that make me feel warm, or uncertain, or whatever. It's then I expect someone to scream back in a way that shows they understand what I'm feeling. And then they respond:

“Wow, that sounds incredible, but are you getting enough to eat?”



Camping in the national parks was another endeavor. Though I always slept soundly, there was one night I did wake up, at 12:41 exactly. It was the night a group of hyenas stopped by our campsite in the Serengeti and trotted off with our trash-can. I woke up instantly to their cackle, followed by a mental monologue where I realized that the only thing separating me from these animals, which could easily crack a giraffe's femur with its jaw, was the thin layer of my tent. Of course it struck some fear through my body—as it should have. By withholding this story from my worrisome mother in our brief conversations, I attempted to shield her from the farfetched possibility that an African predator would snatch away her daughter.

These experiences have all functioned as incredibly personal reminders of how a young, white woman like me fits in the world. While I may not be thought of as a rich individual in the States, I am a representation of that here in Tanzania—whether I like it or not. My allowance to buy one lunch in Arusha is twice

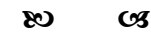
*I want to be
understood
for who I am.*

as much as most people have to live off of in one day. I reek of privilege. It seeps out of my pores and reveals itself through my camera, headlamp and quite simply, my sweaty, pinkish skin.

Of course I am turned off by the fact that this is what most Tanzanians see in me. It is unpleasant to be bombarded with merchandise while walking down the street, asked to pay for a bottle of water by a stranger at a restaurant, and constantly hounded for gifts. Whether it's a stranger selling hats at the Clocktower roundabout, or my Masai homestay mom, they smell my privilege from a distance. I want to represent more than a white Westerner to the locals. I want to be understood for who I am. But with a language barrier, only four months living here, and no hiding my light skin, this seems impossible.

And all this makes the translating harder. My friends and family want to hear about my personal experiences. They want to laugh about weird things I have eaten, and absurd things I have done. But what I tell them also largely shapes how they view Tanzania.

Take my Masai mama for example. This is the woman who took me by the hand on day-one, and bought me a soda and sucker for the walk home. The woman who kissed me on the cheek in the most endearing and tender way when I returned from the long trek to Lake Natron in the hot sun. The same woman who snatched my camera away from some children, because she could tell by the look on my face that I did not want to take any more pictures. But this is also the same woman who on the last day of my visit herded me to her jewelry, instructing me to buy it with prices clearly higher than anyone should be willing to pay. Of course I want to think of her as this sweet lady who took me in and cared for my every need for three days, and that is how I would want to portray her to people back home. But she is also a business woman, who heckles and hassles me because she too smells my privilege. This is the reality, and I am learning to accept that. But to people back home, it sounds wrong.



There is a romanticized, preconceived notion that maybe different cultures and backgrounds can harmonize, that people can be loved, or at the least understood, by complete strangers. I spent over an hour one night filing through pictures with a fel-

low student and friend determining which ones to post on Facebook. We put pictures up of children in seemingly dirty clothes, intense gazes, and mouths with downturned corners. They are portrayed as the poor, sad poster-children of Africa—not the tough, sometimes annoying, resourceful kids of Engare Sero that I held hands with and slept next to every night.



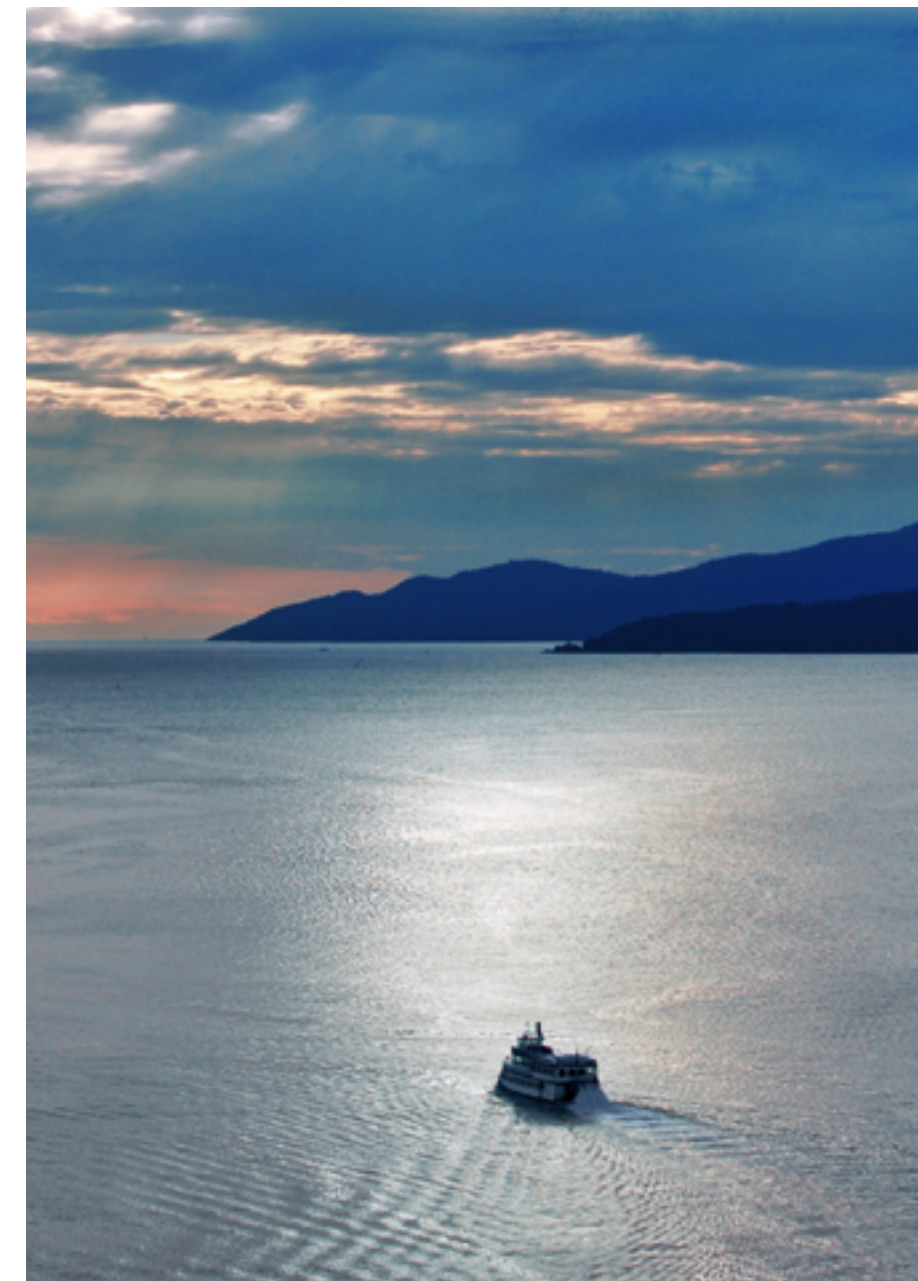
After my Masai homestay, I returned to camp exhausted, dirty and hungry. I had to be ready that afternoon to witness a goat being killed for our food. No one made me, but I told myself I had to watch it. It was about time I saw my food transition from a living breathing animal, into a few cubes of meat on a plate. I love animals deeply, and I knew it would be hard for me to watch, but I also knew it was necessary.

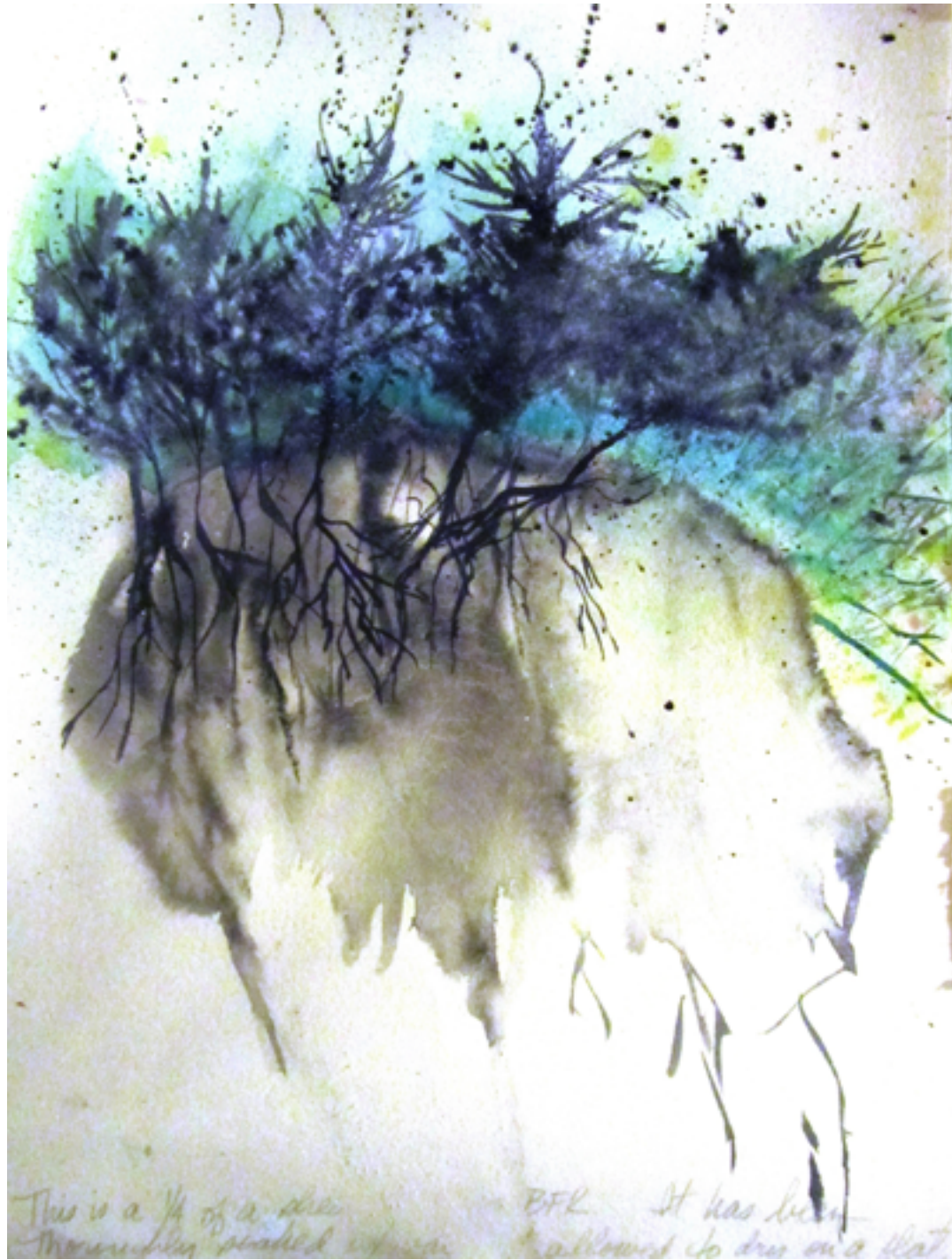
As the goat's nose was covered, he began gasping for air. There was little struggle beyond the gasping. The group remained quiet and the air was thick. I held tightly to two friends' hands, and we cried, sniffled, and cried more. Our hands were sweaty, but we didn't notice, we were fixated on the goat. It was very uncomfortable to watch, but once again, it was necessary. Something happened that I didn't quite anticipate. While I was surely crying for the goat in that moment, other feelings came up too. Feelings that I couldn't possibly recognize at that time. I had so much inside me—thoughts, emotions, realizations from the recent Masai homestay to experiences in Tanzania as a whole. They came out in soft, quiet tears and comfort from the simple gesture of holding hands with others who were also having an intense moment. It felt so good. I was refreshed and alive.

I had struggled so much with putting my experiences into words, but I've since realized maybe that's not always the point. Surely, I desire an understanding ear to reciprocate these wild things. I appreciate the people on this trip with me that do understand what I am experiencing because they are part of it too. I am also thankful for my loved ones back home that do their best to comprehend what I am telling them. But maybe it's not always practical to attempt to manifest my experiences into words. Because these experiences are so multifaceted, words can't always be the outlet. Sometimes it needs to come out in tears, a scream, shared laughter, or an embrace of some sort. The mes-

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sage may not get across in these ways, but words aren't all too successful in relaying the message either. Though I feel plagued with the responsibility of crafting many people's perception of Tanzania, I've learned it is an impossible task for one person. Sometimes making sense of my reality here can be expressed, but not always spoken. ☪





SITKA

By Heather Clark

The water in Sitka, Alaska is dark grey. We plow through it as we head into deeper waters, hoping for a successful day of fishing. The farther we get from land, the greater my anxiety grows. My mother pales at the mere sight of a boat, yet here I stand, faking the existence of sea legs. As I sit inside the cabin of the fishing boat, memories of past family travels flood to mind. We visited postcard worthy tropical paradises with white sandy beaches and itineraries, our days jam-packed with activities in order to achieve the most efficient use of our time. Alaska was a different world.

Before I left for Alaska, a variety of people offered wisdom and advice, and warned me of what it would be like. My mother, in her infinite worries, shared only the worst stories. I heard tales of serial killers, bears, and what Alaskan natives were “truly” like. I was told that to live in Alaska, you must be running from something—something was preventing these people from living in a civilized society, where you weren’t paid for your residency. The people are uneducated and wild, killing the food necessary to survive the year. These familiar

stories create a surprising contrast to the former commercial fisherman and his son with freshly cut hair and shaven faces standing before me.




As we navigate the rough waters, I can feel myself being swallowed up by their darkness. The collection of islands with sparse wooden cabins are almost too small to see. The boat rocks fifteen feet up and then back down as we throw our longest line into the ocean. I hold onto the fisherman's dog as we slide across the deck of the boat, simply trying to remain upright. The more we rock, the more I see how small I am compared to the boat, the ocean, to Alaska. The world seems impregnated with space. Hours pass and we pull out the line we left behind in those deep waters. Fish after fish flail for mercy, as they are ruthlessly yanked from the depths of the grey. They squirm until the fisherman clubs them hard enough that blood spatters the white walls of the boat and they slide lifelessly along the deck with the motion of the waves.

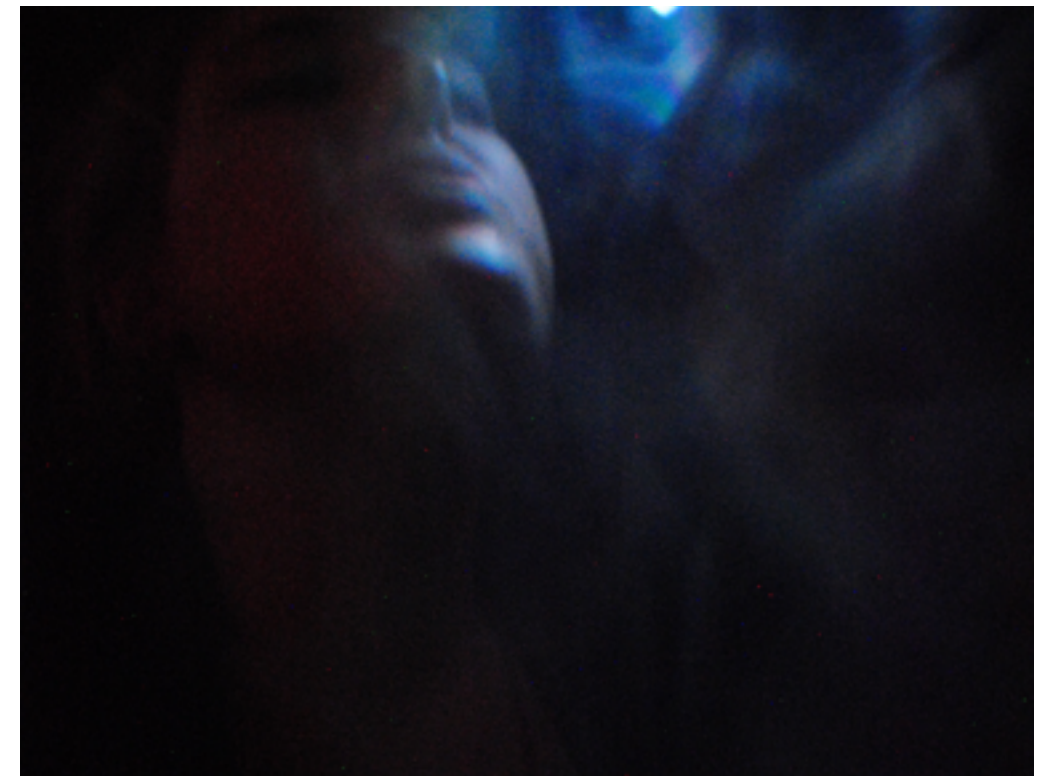
We return to the simple rustic cabin on the island, the sun still high above us. I wander the coastline, finding the abalone¹ shells left empty and abandoned by mink. I imagine the fisherman's son, in his younger years, finding secret passageways through the forest, catching young fish off the shore with a homemade fishing rod, and collecting the spiky starfish off the rocks when the tide rolls out across the shore. These images leapt from childhood fantasies, and instead of drifting off to sleep to dream of small town Alaska, I wake to meet it.

The fisherman, who grew up here, will grow old here. He will spend his days on the water with his wife until he dies. The hours he spends working to build and fill the perfect woodshed next to their home will be a trademark of his own. Meanwhile, his wife will shell crab they catch themselves and hand knit hats to send to their children, now off in college, never forgetting to text them both every morning when she wakes. Generations of memories fill their picture frames and I, now sitting alongside them at the dinner table, am becoming a part of them. I slowly surrender to the in-

*... I can feel
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up by their
darkness.*

evitable fact that I will be caught in this net of thoughts, memories and connections—ones beautifully different from those I had known.

Days later I find myself on a plane heading back home. As we lift into the thick clouds permanently suffocating the small island town, I gaze down into the grey water speckled with white fishing boats. Maybe all of my mother's stories were true. There could have been serial killers; there truly are bears, and maybe all the people were running from something—or maybe, they went there, looked down into the darkness of the water and felt a force pull them, bringing them to the rawness of the earth and exposing them to the clarity of a simpler lifestyle. They find themselves not minding the cold, the rain, the snow, the wildlife, and the groggy pace of life in Sitka. They find themselves on a plane two months later, that dark ocean beckoning them back north. 



1. Any of various large edible marine gastropods that have ear-shaped shells. They're often used as ornaments due to their colorful, pearly interior.



I JUST NEED TO FALL ASLEEP

By Paul Henning

That desperate feeling always comes on at the same time, while I am lying in bed waiting to fall asleep. As I recap the concerns of the day in my head, a part of me wants to travel to that place that made me feel better when I was younger. I started to do it, but I stopped myself. I know that it is not going to make anything better. I have known for a while that it is wrong, but for just a few minutes, it helps. It eases my anxious belly and comforts my worried mind, just enough to shut my eyes, and drift off for the night. If I can make it to the encouraging light of the morning, I will be all right. I just need to fall asleep. I. Just. Need. To. Fall. Asleep.

Having to unlearn something can be so much harder than learning it. It helped calm my concerns for well over a decade. Now it fought with me. It yanked vigorously on my sensibilities. In the back of my mind it started to speak, quietly, trying to make its way to the front. Come on, it will all be all right. Just one more time.

It might not be so hard to resist if I had not watched my entire family do it day after day growing up. Worried about your relationship? Do it. Concerned about someone's health? Do it.

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents and brothers, all of them did it, especially when they felt helpless. Maybe it is in our blood. Maybe it is because I am from Texas. I know that when I moved away to college it took me only a few months to realize that I was not going to go down that path any longer. From that point on, most of my friends would not do it, it would not be a part of my relationships, and someday, my children would not do it, at least not because had I lead them that way.

On the grand scale, it has caused substantial issues in many cultures and contributed to confusion about what is right and wrong. It is true that many people can handle doing it without impacting others negatively, but that seems to be the minority. Commonly generating guilt, it often causes violence, misunderstanding, hate and entitlement. It regularly reinforces the oppression of women, and frequently aids in the defamation of those that are not part of a “normal” family.

I twist in my sweat-drenched bed sheets, my thoughts consumed with my worries. My girlfriend was having a rough week dealing with her father’s health, and I am powerless to help. My brother might be heading down a dangerous direction in life, and I am incapable of changing it myself. These feelings of helplessness over these long years developed into a trigger for this behavior. I am divided in a moral dispute.

I tear off the sheets and sit up, already disappointed in myself. If I give in today it will be that much harder to resist tomorrow, but it is too late. I step onto the floor, turn and face the bed, kneel down to that familiar position, bow my head, and pray. ☪

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DAMN LIP RING

By Claire Zai

I knew at the top of my one and a half full that I wasn't going to make it. My rotation was glacial and my twist was sloppy, all over the place. I pulled my dive in tight waiting for my call. "Hup." I shot my feet straight down as soon as I heard his voice echo across the water, praying that I didn't kick out too early. I broke the top of the water and rocketed toward the base of the pool at the wrong angle. I had under rotated my dive and I knew it. I let out all of my air as I rose up to the top. I could see my assistant coach from the depths, his form sitting over the water on the deck. I looked up at him as I rose above the water. He smiled at me, shaking his head while he played with his smelly green gauges. We both knew what was wrong.

"You're twisting too early and not wrapping hard enough. Try one more time." I nodded and hauled myself back out of the pool to try it again. He stood and wrapped his arms around his head, demonstrating the motion he wanted me to do. "Remember, it's like you're throwing a huge trucking wheel."

While waiting for me to dive, Fish played with his lip ring. It glinted in the dim light of the pool. He would always mess with it, moving it around with his tongue. I started again, slowly measur-

ing my steps down the board trying to find the zone. I lifted off and threw my arms around my head, but my hips went the other direction. I popped up from the water again, Fisher's boisterous laughter filling the pool. He calmed down, breathing hard and chugged a couple sips of his mountain dew before he looked back down at me.

"I don't know how you did that but you twisted to your right, and then back to your left." He stood and walked away. Fisher grabbed his swimsuit off the chair, returned from the locker rooms and replaced me on the board.

He stood at the foot towering over the team as we looked up at him from the water. His face was focused, his blue eyes set on the goal ahead of him. He inhaled deeply, his chest rising. Sunlight from the only door in the pool shone onto his face, illuminating it. He was waiting, waiting to feel the connection with the board, for that perfect moment. He released his air as we watched him slowly approach the other end of the board. His powerful body gently moved, coaxing the board to bend to his will as he sunk deep into his hurdle and hit his last jump.

*Fish shimmied his hips underwater,
pushing up from the bottom of the
pool with strong, powerful kicks.*

Pressing the board down with his power, he let it lift him halfway to heaven. In the air he was rigid—like any good diver should be. He fought for control over every muscle in his body. He spread his arms like wings letting his body begin to flip. He shot himself into a spiral and wrapped his arms around his head with all his might. He spun like a top, and as he entered the water, there was no splash. His arms were long and straight above his head, breaking the water and creating a perfect pocket of air around him. He was straight all the way to his perfectly pointed toes.

I dropped below the water line and could hear the board bounce as I waited for him to enter. Bubbles surrounded him, gently caressing him and congratulating him on his success. Fish shimmied his hips underwater, pushing up from the bottom of the pool with strong, powerful kicks. He rotated underwater as he rose all fourteen feet from the bottom, his head leaning back

searching for the light at the surface. His hair flowed underwater, a curly mess streaming back from behind his head.

He faced me, his eyes sparkling, and smiled. His lip ring glistened next to his teeth. Underwater he was weightless and free. Here in the deathly silence nothing could touch him, nothing could break him. As he broke the surface he flipped his hair out of his face spraying water everywhere and making all of the team burst out in laughter.



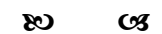
I remember the warm June night clinging to my skin as I drove home in the dark. I had my radio blaring country music and my windows wide open. The stars glittered from above and smiled down on me. I was elated with my life as I sung along to the music. My diving was going well and I was getting back from a lively night with friends. My phone buzzed jarring me in my seat. I picked it up to read it.

All the message said was "Fisher Gould has taken his life."

I screamed. I struggled to control my car. I had no words for what I had just seen. With my eyes wide I just stared at the empty road. I shrieked hysterically until I had no air left, pounding my fists on the steering wheel. I had to pull over to the shoulder. I shuddered and wept, barely able to comprehend what had just happened. I just sat in the empty darkness, waiting for the horror to end.

I had to remind myself almost constantly that he was happier elsewhere; he had made the conclusion that this was not his place. I knew that if Fish had made the choice to take his life there had to be significant reasons, and that he had thought through his decision. I wanted to respect that and I hoped that it had been the right one. But instead, I cursed him in anger. I cursed fate. I cursed the board. I cursed all of it. Nothing mattered if we couldn't take care of those who were close to us.

Why were we here if we couldn't save each other?



Every day at work I avoided the board as much as possible, trying to ignore it, trying to forget the memories that it held for me. I ached and strained to forget the man who shared those memories with me. I missed his smile and that damn lip ring. It had always been there smiling at me, and now that it was gone, I didn't

realize how much of a comfort it had been, glinting there at the corner of his lip. I looked down at the board from the overlook of the rec center. A piece of glass safely placed between the board and me. Didn't he know that we had been here for him?

Eventually I felt that I needed to spend some time on the board, but I didn't feel like flying with it. I just collapsed on the board after the rec center closed. I lay there shaking violently; the whole board shook with me, my tears soaking its blue aluminum. I hadn't touched the thing since before that warm June night. The board pulled me into itself, protecting and comforting me, and for a while I was able to disappear in my sorrow.

The board reminded me of Fisher and all of the memories that I shared with him. "You're twisting too early and not wrapping hard enough. Try one more time. Remember it's like throwing a huge trucking wheel." The board was an important part of our friendship. Now a part of the board was missing like a piece of it had just been torn away. It was a wound that we could not fix because we didn't know how to replace what had been taken from us. We couldn't bring back our friend.



My first day back at practice was the hardest. I stood at the foot of the board trying to find my focus, trying to find the zone. I couldn't move from that spot. I was stuck just staring at the wall with an image of his face eternally fixed in my vision. I had to back down off the board. For the time being, I was thankful to have my feet back on solid ground. Some of the new divers snickered and looked at each other. I turned back around and climbed back onto the board. I forced myself to walk down the board with my eyes closed and it wasn't until my last step that I opened my eyes and looked for the end. I took off like a scrambled mess. My arms and legs flew everywhere and my jump was too far out. Underwater I screamed in frustration. Why did he leave us here all alone? Why didn't he ever say something? I let myself rise to the surface and didn't even look at my coach. Fish wasn't up there, I knew that, but couldn't bear to visibly see the wound.

I let my body slide back below the surface, just listening to the silence—to the whir of the jets pumping out fresh hot water. I could hear him down here. Why wasn't he here with us? I could hear his voice and his laughter, bellowing and echoing. It hurt to

not have him at practice. I looked around under the water waiting to see him swim toward me, waiting for him to appear out of the blue depths. I looked up at the light that shone down. What did he think of every time he looked up at that light, and now what did he think as he looked down at me in the depths of the water? This was a place we could both call home. Why hadn't it been enough?

As practice wore on I grew angry, stomping and pounding the board. I fell off on almost every dive. I kept losing my balance. I couldn't find my zone. I couldn't even find the board for god's sake. Bubbles ripped from my lips, and water filled my gaping mouth as I cried out underwater. If only Fish was here, with his crooked smile and his damn lip ring, he would know what to say. Everything would be fine if he were here.

I kept diving through the end of practice, never accomplishing a single thing. I pulled out a couple crumpled dollars from my wallet and purchased a mountain dew from the vending machine. Sitting there on the side of the pool, I watched him dive. Over and over again I watched his image leaving the board and arching gently through the air, a smile always plastered on his face.



Every time I practice now, a piece of my mind settles on him. I find my focus on that wall, the same wall he found his focus on. That lip ring cheers me on every time I leave the board. I breathe, look down at my toes and settle into the board, becoming one with the board and one with Fisher. I give him just a thought and then let my mind go blank as I raise my head to look at that one spot on the wall. I slowly approach down the board pressing my weight into it every time I step and let Fish lift me up into the air, flinging me halfway to heaven. ∞

*Bubbles
ripped from
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and water
filled my
gaping
mouth as
I cried out
underwater.*



CHEMISTRY OF CONSCIENCE

By Peter Hassinger

“The final exam will count for twenty percent of your course grade.” Shit. “Expect to see material from chapters three through eight covering hybridization, kinetics, VESPR theory, chemical equilibrium, REDOX reactions, thermochemistry, types of chemical bonds, acid/base chemistry, Gibb’s free energy—” My weight shifts in the chair. “The exam will consist of multiple choice questions, short answer problems, and two essay questions in which you will have to use equipment from the lab to conduct titrations. We’ve reviewed everything covered in the exam, so nothing should look foreign tomorrow.” I need to start studying, now.

As I slowly gather my books and my thoughts, the flickering fluorescent lights of the classroom mock my persistent procrastination. The vast vacant board at the front of the room mirrors both the barren white landscape outside and the emptiness inside my head. Prepared smiles from fellow classmates single me out as “the one that’s not ready.” As I flee out the door to escape the onlooking students, the stale sign by the handle throws one last jeer my way: “Start studying early!”

The previous memory of this morning’s review still echoes through my head. If I’m going to pass this class, I know

I must make a choice. Obviously, starting to review weeks ago, instead of binging on Netflix shows, would have been the best option, but I can't change that now. The missed homework assignments and gaping zeroes in attendance have taken a heavy toll. I've never resorted to using 'study drugs' before, but a friend had mentioned this last minute option for cramming.

Half the notes from the semester, the vast expanse of the internet, and a four pound lame excuse for a tree are on my side. With these hefty study materials and one minuscule bead-filled pill, I am ready to begin. Looks like the sheep will have to jump over the new moon uncounted tonight.

My large hand cradles the microscopic capsule in my slightly sweaty palm. I look closely and begin to wonder how the smallest of words are printed on these unfamiliar tablets: Adderall XR 25mg. I've never seen a pill like this, filled with tiny balls of chemicals I can't identify. The trustworthy Wikipedia tells me it's salts of dextroamphetamine and racemic amphetamine: should last 8-12 hours. Is this cheating? The question rings in my head like a penetrating gong, as the response from my conscience falls into a grey area. Sure, there are students with ADD who require prescriptions like these to study—but this ethical dilemma wasn't covered in our honor code. My conscience tells me this is wrong, but the increased potential to study is too tempting at this point. A sinking feeling strikes, as I realize that this is my only option. Here I go again, wasting more time. I quickly swallow my pride and my principles with the capsule. Hopefully the ends will justify the means.

My weight shifts in the chair. As I steal one quick look out the window behind me, the thick evergreen trees are lit with a soft, tangerine glow. The clouds in the sky resemble scoops of orange sherbet spread thin among contrails, and the snow-topped mountain peaks at the edge of the horizon glisten with a light pink hue. I direct my increased focus back to the dark desk in front of me. Let's get to work.

The old dark wood that composes the desk is sprinkled with paint streaks. Chips and dents bring depth to the flat landscape. Across the wooden plain, a computer screen soars towards the ceiling. The towering monitor emits a powerful synthetic moonlight that reflects my anxious face on the surface of what used to be a mighty tree. My weight shifts in the chair. Chapter three. I begin to page through the book, seeing what subjects I

*I quickly
swallow my
pride and
my principles
with the
capsule.*

*I feel a slight
confidence
growing before
reality slaps
me hard.*

recognize. It's like I'm thrown into the high school reunion of a close friend—there are a few familiar faces here and there, but I'm mainly learning from scratch.

Scratch scratch. Blink blink. I am glued to my work, as I scream through the chapters. Two down, four to go. Topics congregate in my head like parents slowly trickling into a PTA meeting. I feel a slight confidence growing before reality slaps me hard. Thump thump. In one short glance at the clock, the bold red numbers dissolve my hesitant hope and scold me for the nights I should have studied. I race to the window that confirms my fears: the thick evergreen trees have vanished with the sunlight. The clouds in the moonless sky are hidden by a layer of low fog. The snow-topped mountain peaks at the edge of the horizon loom in the distance. Shit. I direct my dwindling focus back to the desk in front of me. Persevere.

Four chapters down; two remain. Scratch scratch. I nervously fidget in my chair. My aching brain pleads for me to go to sleep. As I power through the pages, the fatigue building in my bones is put on the back burner. My gaze returns to the taunting clock. Blink blink. It can't be true. I rub my eyes hoping I'll wake up in bed with a fading nightmare retreating from my mind. Yawn. As I slowly raise my heavy head, my heart simultaneously sinks. The glass paned window to the world reveals the unnerving truth: billowing clouds now consume the sky as beams of yellow creep through the cracks. I stare emptily beyond the glass, and the sound of mockingbirds outside begins to overwhelm the soft music playing within my artificial landscape. The hourglass of the evening has run out of sand. My weight shifts in the chair. Scratch scratch, thump thump.

The test looms closely in the front of my mind as I numbly drive towards my final exam. The lines of the road rhythmically whiz by, as I struggle to organize the chaotic chapters in my head. I've used all the time in the short evening to prepare, but I know the past fourteen hours is still not enough. Those wasted nights filled with *The Office* episodes and *Friends* reruns eat away at my consciousness like strong acid on a precipitate. I vow to never repeat this experiment again. Next time, I'll actually heed the advice of Mrs. Archer's note: "start studying early!" The cold snow covering the landscape blankets my hopes of success, as I sit down with my graphite companion. My weight shifts in the chair.

You may start your exam, now. ☞



THAT SWEET SMELL OF FALL

By Parker Steven Griggs

We lay where the two lane road turns to dirt, looking at the stars on the eastern plains. We lay there as I smiled, soaking up the valor and sweet victory that was your company. I had fought with honor and had mustered up more courage than I thought I was capable of, just to rest by your side. The stars were so bright out there. On the horizon, the clouds sat perfectly between the stars to fill in new constellations of ducks and rocket ships. We lay there pointing at each one, musing that the creator was playing an elaborate game of connect the dots between each bright and flickering star, painting the marriage of land and sky with cave drawings of horses. A production tailored uniquely for the two of us. A production fit for royalty. To the south, the stars had formed a team of horses marching into battle, jousting with the army painted on the northern hills. The wheat whistled soft melodies in the fields next to us. The pines played a ballad of whispers in the distance. When the notes reached us, they smelled like campfires, waterfalls, dust and raindrops.

The wind brushed by each one of my shoulders, knight-ing me with the sacred duty to defend you. I sported a coat of chainmail, wielding a sword the length of my gangly legs. The

weight of the armor was exhausting. You had a pointed pink cone for a hat, with a ribbon draped from the tip, twice the length of your perfect body. You were my majesty, my princess. Beside you was a bouquet of wildflowers, picked when I was a serf, for adornment to your radiance. The bed of the truck where we lay made the castle walls. I wanted to toss my armor to the side and toss your hat there, too. I wanted to explore the castle instead. I wanted to learn every corner and chamber. I wanted to light each new torch along our way.

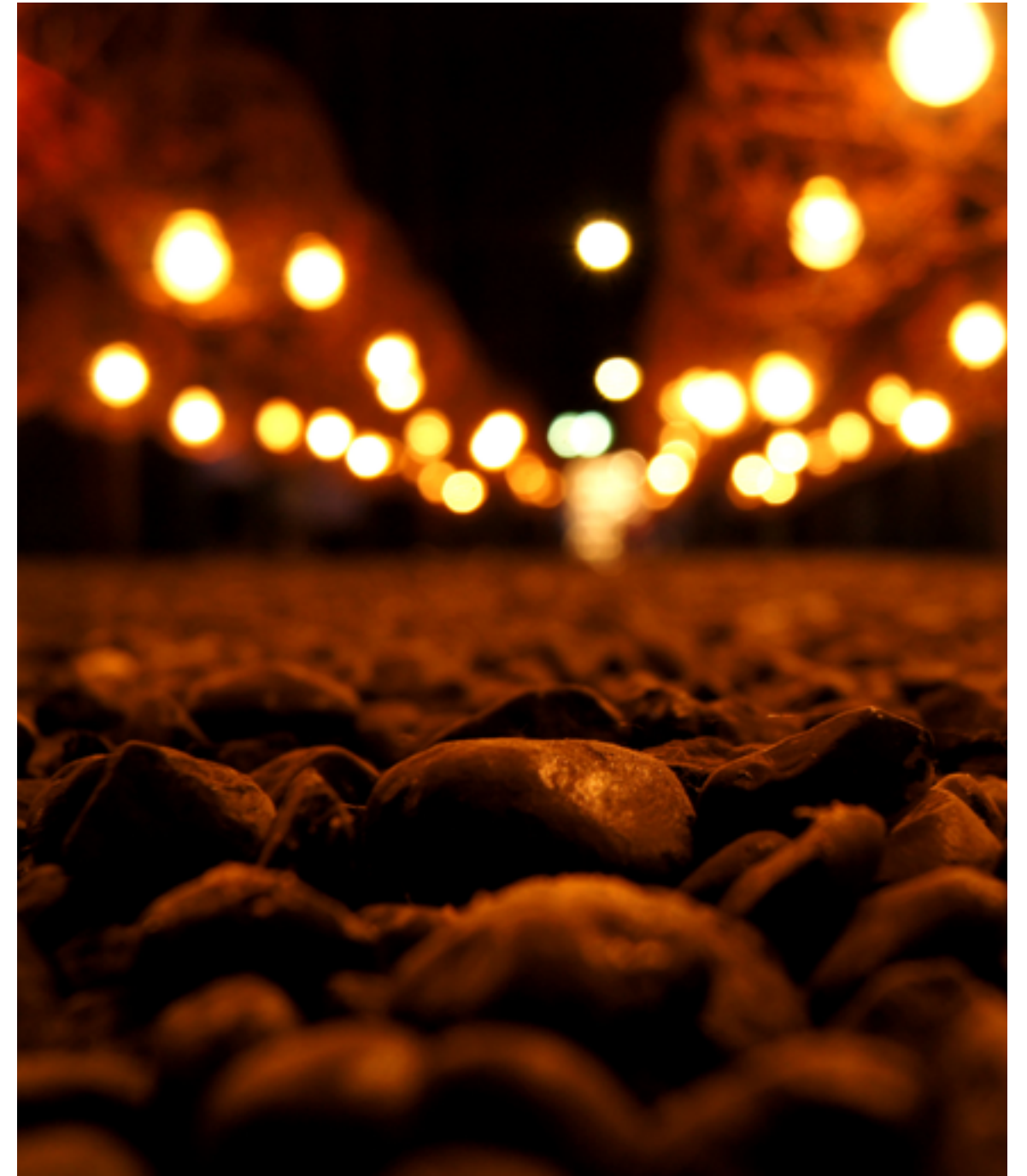
A pack of coyotes howled at the drawbridge. I sat up, startled. I tried not to let you know that I was scared. Your arms squeezed around my waist. You pulled me close. You whispered into my ear, "Don't worry about them, we're safe. We don't have anything they want."

"I don't." I thought to myself, "I don't have anything they want." You had everything a sensible coyote would want. You smelled sweet, like newly cut pomegranates and sunscreen and a rocky mountain brook. I closed my eyes. Your warmth sang lullabies to my sleeping heart.

*I was your knight,
yet I couldn't even
pick up a sword.*

I should have never closed my eyes. I woke up. You were gone. I yelled your name. You didn't answer back. I called your phone. It went to voice mail. I called your mother. She said you had left. I had failed. I had sworn to protect you. I was your knight, yet I couldn't even pick up a sword. Maybe the coyotes had breached our walls. Maybe you found a safer castle. Maybe you went to sing with the wheat and maybe, you got lost.

I chased the symphony of the wheat and the trees, but my armor was slowing me down. I fell too far behind and there I was, left with only my calloused hands, the bouquet of flowers, and the ribbon of your majesty's hat. ❧





HOLEY DEVOTION

By Emma Gardner

I sat down at the table, as I had a thousand times before. They'll love you no matter what and that is all that matters. Truly, I had no idea what the outcome of this conversation would mean for my future. My heart was pounding and I knew that if I didn't get this conversation off my chest, it would haunt me as it had for years, but worse. Unconditional love is what family is for. We were raised to have our own educated opinions. My sisters and my mom took their places just before my dad and I. I felt my face turning red as I set my fork down. Without warning, my lips betrayed me:

"I don't believe in God."



It wasn't that I wanted to taunt my mother, but I had already made the assumption that her reaction would be worse than my father's. At this point, my face felt hot and my heart raced. I had never experienced shame presenting itself in a physical form. The heat in my cheeks matched that of the fire you weren't suppose to touch, while the beat of my heart matched that of my

swift race to hell. My mom—my idol—looked at me as if I was speaking in a foreign tongue. Without reason I repeated myself: “I don’t believe in God.”

Immediately, her hazel eyes began to swell with tiny droplets.

This is what you expected, just relax.

This is okay.

You don’t have to agree with everything.

Although I kept repeating nearly the same things to myself, when the tears began to consume napkins and my dad’s stare seemed to penetrate what soul I still believed I had, the shame washed over me.

My mom became unfamiliar and my dad became angry. Once she was able to regain herself, the truly difficult part began. “What did I do wrong?” This question, she repeated a few times before she even looked at me.

You didn’t do anything wrong.

You’ve loved me unconditionally,

but I refuse to submit anymore.

She rhetorically asked me why I had no faith and then listed all the things she believed she could have done to avoid this. It would not have mattered if we went to church more—I stopped going before the family did. It would not have mattered if we prayed before meals more—I stopped before I had the chance to start. It would not have mattered if we were involved with the church more—I lacked the ability to enjoy the company.

My dad politely hushed my mom who was still blotting tears before he spoke. “What would your grandparents think if you told them that?” I knew full well what he meant. My grandparents had become the only reason I went to church at all. My grandparents meant more to me than almost anything and my dad knew that. For my grandparents to think less of me would crush me and he knew that too.

Maybe I should have told them first.

At least they wouldn’t cry.

Grandma would be upset a little, maybe,

but she would understand.

*... when the
tears began
to consume
napkins and
my dad’s stare
seemed to
penetrate
what soul I
still believed
I had ...*

*This was my
shame—
my reason
to be silent.*

*Grandpa would ask me why,
but he would ask out of curiosity,
not disappointment.*

Maybe I should have asked them how to approach you two.

The shame I felt was unlike anything I had previously experienced. This was not the shame you felt for being caught stealing from the cookie jar at age five and being placed in time-out. This was not the shame you felt when caught lying about where you really were with your best friend at sixteen and being grounded. This was not the shame you felt bringing home that less than impressive calculus exam score at eighteen and having to watch your GPA take a dive. This shame felt like it would never quite leave. This was my shame—my reason to be silent. I didn’t even take a bite of my meal. Instead, I excused myself and spent the remainder of the evening in my room. I pushed what had transpired to the back of mind and did homework, knowing that my parents would be in my room in due time to confront the issue.



I read *Salvation* by Langston Hughes just weeks before I found myself in my room that night. This poem, another assignment for my AP Language and Composition class, was the first time I had connected with a reading in a way I never had through the comprehension questions. Langston Hughes describes a boy surrounded by his congregation, trying to see God in order to be saved. The predatory scenario, taking place in a room full of adults pressing young children to understand God is what causes the little boy anguish and anxiety. The anxiety coming from his inability to feel connected to God and the anguish that brings him to lie just to escape the church walls and cry himself to sleep was something I did not think anyone understood but me.



Recollecting the joys that church brought me when I was much younger comes with ease. At an age where pleasing my parents was the best way to end the day, I took pride in getting my Sunday best together prior to bedtime. I took pride in get-

ting up early the next morning to comb my untamed curls, to pull my dress on—and always smooth out the wrinkles—to pull my frilled socks up—and always fold them over evenly—and to buckle my Mary Jane shoes—and always use the third hole.

*Why did it matter what I wore?
Which bird of prey was staring down on my choice of attire?*

I would put in the barely visible earrings because too much jewelry gives the wrong idea and never wear lip-gloss because that's inappropriate for church.

What wrong idea does a six year old portray with an extra bracelet and shiny lips?

You should be ashamed.

I would dutifully help my mom get my sisters ready, and then we would be off.

*Weren't we all in this place of worship to do just that?
Worship.
Why were we worshipping this figure anyway?*

The pastor was reading from the big book and interpreting it for us, telling us how we should live our lives week by week. The elders surrounding me didn't ask questions.

*Who is he to tell me what I can and cannot do?
Each of these worshippers surely lived beyond the walls of this entrapment,
yet they all sat and nodded.
Amen.*

*Does he even know my name?
In school, we are expected to interpret on our own,
so why do I have to accept this man's,
this complete stranger's interpretation?*



My parents didn't come to my room. I sat in solitude and felt numb. I thought it would feel great to remove this weight, but it had come to be anything but a relief. The shame subsided, but just barely, and I was able to think back to why I had come to this point in my life.

*... our
subservient
shepherds
would lead us
to school—
The Kingdom.*

As if a broken record, I was six again, walking into that Littleton church giggling with my best friend. Although we did enjoy church, our devious smiles were solely the result of the doughnuts sitting just outside the church kitchen. All we would have to do was behave for the twenty minutes before they would call the smaller children up to ask them questions. After the adults got a few laughs and felt that the children had expressed some understanding, our subservient shepherds would lead us to school—The Kingdom. The Kingdom was where we would either compete or reluctantly participate in any number of activities that occupied the two hours that service lasted. Participation equated to doughnuts, and I was not about to be the six year old to turn them down.

*Why was that okay?
Why was it acceptable to have six year olds trained to behave through a two-hour service by means of bribery with a sugary delight?*

I understand now that doughnuts and coffee after church were meant for the adults to discuss the sermon, the past week and the personal faucets of life. I went to church because I got to hangout with my best friend, see my grandparents and eat a doughnut after two hours of games.

*How could I have known at an age where Mommy and Daddy know best that The Kingdom was a way to reel us in?
How could I have understood that even as they were feeding us doughnuts they were truly plumping us up with ideologies they did not want us to question?
I thought I believed in God because everyone else around me did, but what does a six year old know?
It's got to mean something more than showing up to church and saying "amen" to truly accept the almighty in your life, right?*



However enticing doughnuts were to my six-year-old self, they simply no longer held the same power. I stopped going to The Kingdom when I realized its children knew nothing beyond force-fed interpretations of the bible.

Were my parents really the only ones who raised their kids to have their own opinions, unless it meant a disbelief in God?



Church resurrected as a math equation: two hours of fanciful daydreaming equated to one doughnut. But that no longer equated to fulfillment, and it surely never occurred by choice. About as soon as I lost interest in sitting in the pews with the elderly for two hours, we were going to a new church. This church didn't have my grandparents or doughnuts. This church had—what my best friend and I called—baby care. Our mischievous escapes from The Kingdom were over. At this church, our mothers had to be physically present in the doorway before we were emancipated.

A new church clearly meant that my mother had finally gotten fed up with all the drama that encapsulated the elderly in the Littleton church choir.

That's not what I would consider a Godly lifestyle. If it truly were "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," critically judging others would not be acceptable. Besides, judgment on the final day is left to the big man upstairs, so why waste the time? Your paraphrases of this book are an abstraction: my clothes, my sexual activity, my beliefs, my language were not predetermined.

By the time we stopped going to the Littleton church, I knew that my mom was sick of them, though she didn't confirm that until I was older. I had watched these people of God get one choir director fired, one pastor replaced, and several people removed from the choir. I should not have been expected to see these people as models for right and wrong. After all, when I think of all the people I know, the ones who aren't fully fledged

Sunday worshipers, tend to be the kindest and most accepting. They are not the ones telling me I have to be something, do something and say something. They are not the ones disappointed in me for making a personal decision either.



My parents never came upstairs. My parents never said a word. My parents still haven't said a word. For the first time in my life my opinion was not up for further discussion. Whether or not they disregarded the conversation as mere words from their stubborn teenager, reaching out about the subject will not happen unless I'm the instigator. I haven't stepped in a church since and I haven't prayed. I never told my grandparents because the shame brought on by my dad's words burned brighter than my desire to discuss it.

This is me.

I didn't have to be placed in a church basement to feel as though there was something closing in on me, like I was alone. I didn't have to sit amongst the congregation to try to see God and fail.

*Was I failing God for not looking in the right places for Him?
Was He failing me?
Was the search as simple as closing your eyes?
But why was there nothing there?
Closing my eyes to say "amen" was just like closing my eyes to go to sleep—it was just like blinking.
I've had an imagination my whole life,
so if God appears in different forms to different believers,
why was there absolutely nothing?
I'd shut my eyes tighter if that's what it took.
I'd try different places if that were what it took.
But it didn't seem to matter how often I tried,
how often I went to church,
how often I prayed.
I saw nothing.*



Oh my God.

My very first thought after answering the phone just before ten on what I thought was just another summer morning. July 27, 2013 was a horrifying reality check. My grandma had a stroke. I was terrified, but being the oldest and having neither of my parents home meant that I had to explain what was going on to one younger sister and then withhold the information from the other.

My mom came home to take my sisters and I to the hospital and shortly thereafter, my reality became a nightmare. Grandma had a grade four tumor on her temporal lobe. Grandma had cancer. The real tears began that evening.

“This hospital is a great hospital. I was real sick when I got here, and Imma tell you that they do good things here. Ya’ll be in my prayers. God is good.” My whole family had been sitting with my grandpa as my grandma went in for another MRI four floors above us.

Why was that necessary?

This older man had stopped by and said those few words, and to my immediate family it may have been a kind gesture, and part of me wanted to be thankful for people like this man too.

*If God didn’t prevent this science,
he surely is going to fix it.*

Your faith claims everything happens for a reason.

I would love to be enlightened as to why my grandparents must suffer through this experience.

This is a matter of science—of genetics.

I’d rather not lay blame,

but if we’re going to praise Him now,

I just have to ask one question:

Why a grade four tumor?

If there is a God out there that helps his angels—which I believe my grandma is—why was she the one to get cancer?

It should have been me:

punishment for the nonbeliever.



*... my reality
became a
nightmare.*

*I’ve conquered
the predator.*

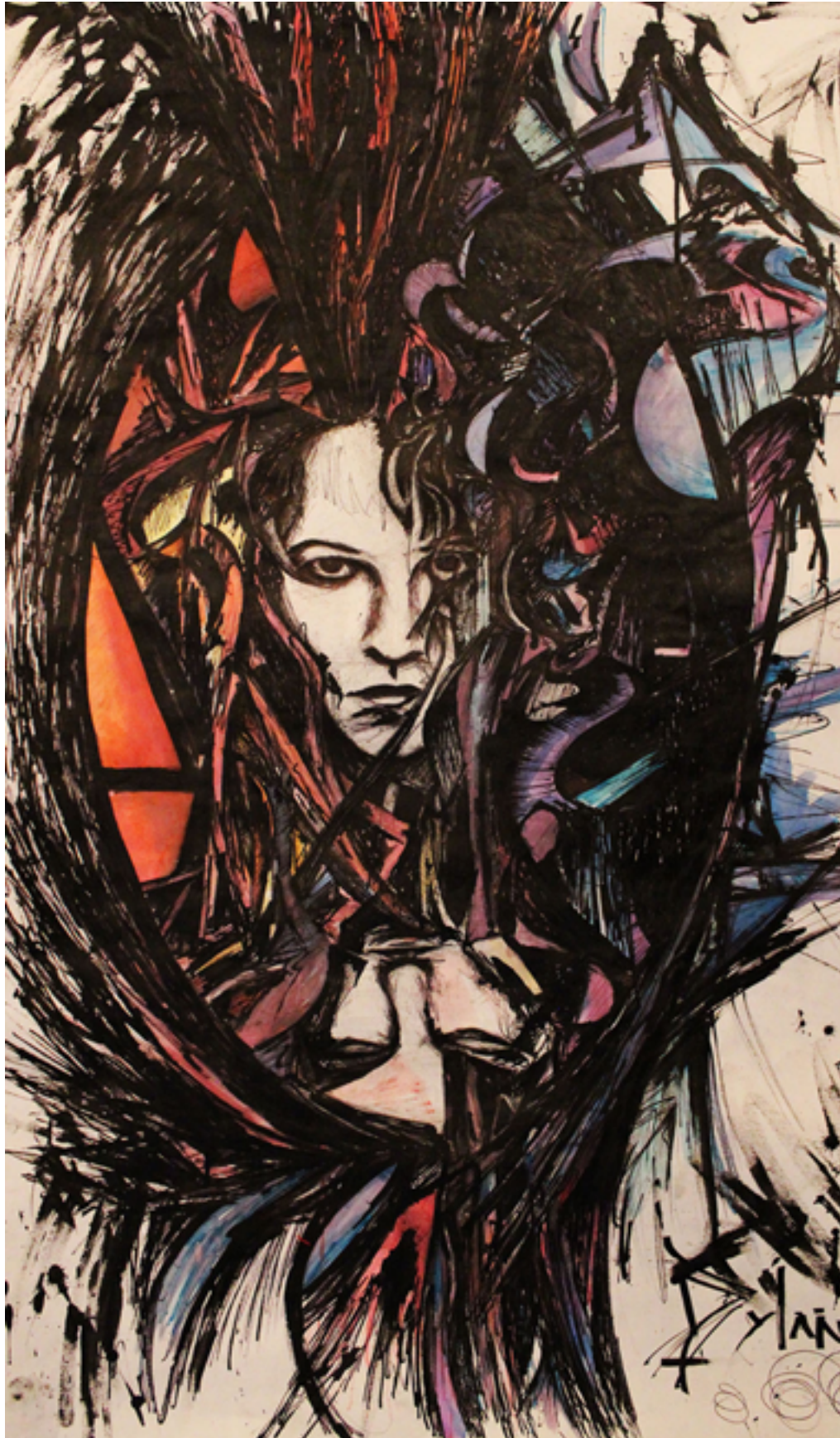
If I were to ever believe in God, it would be for my grandma. Of all the people that have told me how to hold myself, how to act, how to pray, how to live, none of them would have allowed me to breathe on my own if they could have managed it. My grandma, the only person I’ve ever seen as a true person of God, is the only one who has never given me lessons in “how to.” Instead, she offers the advice I have needed over the years.

So why is she being tested by God?

My grandma has accepted her tumor in a way that I have not—in a way I do not understand. She is not afraid of passing on because God has given her more than she could have asked for.

“If it’s my time to go, I’m ready.”

When my grandma said that, any shame that still haunted me faded. I’ve conquered the predator. My grandma can be at peace with a fatal diagnosis and still be the rock in our family because she has God on her side. My grandma was enough for me to understand that my peace didn’t have to be dependent on my family’s support of my beliefs. My peace came from standing up for myself, from questioning the one thing I wasn’t supposed to. God is good for some, but not for me. My grandma’s words broke my heart because I don’t want to let her go, but those same words enabled me to see that it was okay for me to not believe in God because I’m happy without Him. This is me. I do not believe in God. I am not ashamed. I am at peace. I am happy. ☪



Artwork by Dylan Gebbia-Richards



RWANDA

By Talia Halfon

I crossed the border from Uganda into Rwanda with quick ease. It took all of ten minutes to get off of my little blue bus, exchange my passport with a clerk in a cramped shack-like building, sign a few documents and wait for my bus to follow me over the border. I was headed to Nyamata, a small rural town in Southeastern Rwanda.

My bus continued through Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda and I took in the hustle of the major city. The buildings towered over a sea of suits bustling about in day-to-day business affairs. I continued on past the city, making the transition into more rural communities where the task of going to work meant going into a field and having access to running water was a novelty. Outside Kigali, beautiful jade hills, countless in number, rolled on for miles until they melded into a mosaic of shades of green. I had previously researched the communities I now traveled through, and discovered these were most heavily affected by the Rwandan genocide that took place twenty years prior. As I gazed out the left window, a hill of tall grass came slowly into focus. The grass easily exceeded my height, and stretched across several acres. The field I was



looking at was the very same one I read about, the same field hundreds of Tutsis fled to every night in an effort to hide from the nightly raids over rural villages.



We drove on past the massive field, continuing on to a dirt road. The dirt road bumped along for at least a mile, before we stopped in a lot surrounded by four red brick buildings. Stepping off of the bus, utter silence of an entire town engulfed me and I shuddered. I ambled around the eerily quiet lot, kicking up red dirt under my feet as I went. After a few minutes, it finally occurred to me the lot was completely empty—no children jumping rope or playing soccer and no adults conversing—an anomaly in similar rural communities I had worked in. I found myself wandering aimlessly, looking for someone who could direct me as to where to go. Walking along those vacant streets, I suddenly became aware of an outburst of choir music slowly building, increasing in volume as I progressed towards a church.

*... hundreds of bullet
holes tattering its
once-smooth bark.*

The sound differed greatly from the choir music I had listened to in the past. The language it projected remained unfamiliar and foreign to me, but I didn't need to know the language to understand its beauty and power. I followed the music into the church, and stood silently listening in the back, admiring the simplicity of the structure. The outside of the church was under construction, but the inside stood beautifully—the ceilings high, the walls bare and holes in the walls taking the place of windows. The church differed drastically from the grandeur of some I had seen in the United States. After several minutes a tall, thin, middle-aged man appeared next to me. Once the choir took a pause, he extended his hand for me to shake, and motioned me to follow him out of the church. Quietly and without question, I obliged.

I walked with him across the lot to the base of an enormous sausage tree and he stopped at its roots in silence. I looked closely at the tinted grey tree trunk to see hundreds of bullet holes tattering its once-smooth bark. The tree offered a sense of comfort—an icon of hope in its survival through the atrocities that had taken place around it. After a few moments of shared admiration, he turned to me and asked abruptly, “Shall we go into the church?”

I looked at him with slight confusion, and replied “Were we not just inside the church?”

He smiled politely and informed me, that the community decided to leave the remains of the old church after the genocide as a memorial and reconstructed a new church for the community just across the lot. He took out a key chain from his pocket and singled out one small silver key. He unlocked the rust stained, white gate next to the tree and ushered me into a white flower lined yard of a smaller brick structure. I followed him through the front doors, welcomed by the musty odor of old cloth. Thousands of articles of clothing lay stacked in mounded piles on top of the pews in an otherwise empty room. I walked through the middle aisle to the front of the room where a statue of the Virgin Mary stood tall on a table draped with white linen, stained with splashes of old dried blood, overlooking the ruinous cache of abandoned belongings. At her feet lay jewelry, identification booklets and other personal possessions of people who did not have the chance to flee the church. I slowly tried to absorb the scene, gazing upon the wreckage. Casually, the man grabbed an identification booklet and pointed out the information of a young woman who it had belonged to.

He took me downstairs into the basement of the church, where the casket of a 28 year-old woman remained. She had been raped repeatedly by upwards of ten men and was then brutally beaten to death with a metal rod. Beside her casket, the weapons used to destroy these people lay chillingly beside her casket: metal rods, guns, clubs, machetes.

I followed him up the stairs and out the back door to a mass grave. Unlocking a door that lay on the ground, he motioned for me to go down. Hesitantly, I obliged, and crept down the narrow wooden stairway. Reaching the ground floor, a sick horror began to bubble hotly inside me as I gazed upon thousands of human skulls, stacked neatly on dusty shelves stretch-

*... a sick horror
began to bubble
hotly inside me
as I gazed upon
thousands of
human skulls,
stacked neatly on
dusty shelves ...*

ing down a long hallway in either direction. A wave of repulsion, rage, and terror rushed over me, and I felt a desperate need to get out. I rushed out of the underground grave, breathing heavily. I walked around the church, out through the front gate, back out to the sausage tree, and paused with both hands on my knees as I tried to catch my breath.

After a few minutes, the man emerged again and sat down on the ground beside me to tell his story.



He grew up in the Nyamata community, he attended that church, and it was there he lost his family. At twelve years old, during the initial civil war between the Hutus and the Tutsis, he and his family sought refuge in the church during an attack and survived. Years later, they fled to the same church when their village was attacked in the spring of 1994. After three days inside their sanctuary, he awoke one morning to hundreds of men throwing grenades into the church and he was knocked unconscious by one of the blasts. When he regained consciousness, he found himself beneath his dead, eight-year-old brother. He heard men walking through the church, but they weren't there as rescue. A mass amount of Hutu men returned to kill those who survived the attack. They shot at the helpless crowd, ruthlessly crushed children's skulls into the walls, and raped the women. He quietly tucked himself further under his dead brother and the surrounding corpses, pretending to be dead. He stayed there in that massacre three more days, until he felt it safe to leave the church and go into hiding in the nearby forests. He remained in the forests for another two weeks before the genocide was finally over and he was safe.

He retold his chilling story not with anger, but with compassion. He was the only one of his family who survived the Nyamata massacre, but he managed to move past the slaughter—somehow able to forgive the people who had taken his family. I admired him. He was the strongest person that I have yet to meet, but with his story and that experience, I realized I myself was not strong enough to live in Rwanda.



*... he managed
to move past
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somehow able
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people who
had taken his
family.*

Everything I saw in Rwanda thereafter seemed entwined with the genocide. I became nervous and on edge everywhere I went and it became clear I was not fit to teach in Rwanda.

I didn't sleep that night and instead of continuing on, I cancelled my stay in Rwanda for the next three weeks. I returned back to Uganda on the first bus the next morning. ☪





SEPARATE WORLDS

By Kim Campbell

The man looked dirty. His ashen jacket had clearly seen better days and only partially covered up the remains of the black shirt beneath it. His stained jeans barely extended beyond his knees, and the materials covering his feet couldn't even be called shoes. His greyish hair, which may have been brown at one point, now hung limply down the sides of his face. The bramble that grew on his chin was flecked with dirt and remnants of an old meal. He meandered out of a dark alley, pushing a shopping cart filled with water bottles and blankets.

☞ ☜

I began to speculate how this man's life reached this point. I wondered if he had ever known a warm place to call home. I questioned if he had ever experienced having money or power, or if he had always drifted between places, never truly belonging. Just as pity and sadness began to set in, I noticed a small black shape following him. As the two forms emerged into the streetlight, I realized the shape was a stray dog, happily trotting along behind this man. The man seemed to

notice the sound of the dog's footsteps, turned around, picked up the dog, placed him tenderly in the shopping cart, and continued on his way with a new smile on his face.

☞ ☜

I noticed this event while at a stoplight, sitting in the comfort of the leather seats in my warm car. The light turned green, and just as quickly as the man appeared, he vanished into an adjacent alley. ☜





BACK FROM THE BLUE

By Colin Barry

Drowning is like meditation. Like freeing your mind. Like forgetting the world around you and focusing on what little breath you may still have left within your lungs. Drowning is like a dark prison cell, where the only thought that enters your mind is begging for forgiveness from your loved ones. Drowning reminds you that whatever compassion, love, patience and generosity you once were capable of, it was never enough. Drowning is like stepping into a washing machine, curling up in a ball, and letting the rolling and turning sensation take you over. The ocean does not care about the friends and family you will leave behind or the future experiences you will never have. The ocean only moves on, rising and retreating like it has done and always will. Drowning is desperation.

∞ ∞

I remember a poster on my basement wall of a man on a robin's-egg blue surfboard, riding a giant purple wave in Hawaii. The man, smiling ear to ear, seemed to be in a uniquely wondrous state of mind. A state of mind that elevated him to touch

the sky, forever remembered in one snap shot. The poster was a souvenir purchased by my parents from a previous romantic getaway to the beaches of Hawaii. “Life is a Rush—Hawaii” was the phrase imprinted in my mind whenever I looked up at the poster on the wall. This man, in his tight yellow board shorts, is who I dreamt to be. Gliding atop a rushing blue monster, a lei of flowers around my neck in my very own banana yellow speedo, waving to all of my friends as I touched the sky.

Surfing is an addiction. It is a habit that is impossible to break once you have been emerged in your first wave. It is an addiction in the non-traditional sense of the word. It is not to be taken as simply as a deep inhale of a long awaited Marlboro. It is not just a way to escape the dull monotony of white-collar city living. It is a lifestyle. One, where at the end of the day, there is always someone holding a cold beer, waiting to hear your stories and share their own. Surfing engages with the beautiful world around you and with those sharing the same passion. Surfing is about the inhalation of the Earth into your lungs. The gulp of realization that the world is more than the people and places you know. Surfing is not the past, nor the future—it is the present. It is a whisper of salvation, filling your body and releasing through your pores. Surfing is privilege. Surfing is a moment of liberation where the only context is the blue water around you.



My first taste of surfing culture came in 2011 and it was a taste I quickly became addicted to. Moving to California was predicated on the assurance that I would be living “three blocks from the water and even closer to the women.” Both of these assertions proved to be more than accurate when I spent the next ten months as a grizzled beach bum looking to score a big wave and a little action. While the women proved to be a challenge—California girls do not, to my surprise, dig the homeless man look—ultimately my only goal was to surf. California was like an appetizer. A little sniff of the sizzling top shelf New York strip that was waiting on the grill. The initial lick of that popsicle on a hot summer day. California was the antipasto before the anticipated bathtub sized bowl of spaghetti at an all you can eat buffet. It was the kiss on your wedding night, reminding you to consummate the thing. After my time in California, I was in desperate need of some consummation.

*Surfing is
about the
inhalation of
the Earth into
your lungs . . .
Surfing is not
the past, nor
the future—
it is the present.*

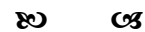
The following winter I picked up a bright yellow pair of board shorts and booked a flight to Chile. The trip, of course, was about more than just surfing. It was about indulgence, and the ability to visit one of the few places I had forever dreamed of seeing. Chile is an outdoorsman’s paradise. A 4,300 km noodle that travels north to south along South America’s western border with the Pacific. In correlation with its uniquely elongated shape, Chile has a wealth of geographic and biological diversity. A territory that stretches from the Martian deserts of Atacama, to the frigid desolation of Antarctica. Throughout this stretch, there are several different climates and mile after mile of pristine beaches. While the country offers up the adrenaline and high-tempo lifestyle of a formula one racer, I was looking to tap into my inner Keanu Reeves and find a paradise where I could relax, catch my breath and surf my days away.



“Don’t forget to buy some bananas while you are here, I feed them to my dog!” Nico, my new counterpart and the young owner of the Surf Farm hostel in Pichilemu, yelled through the window of his rusted Geo Metro. As I scoured the small grocery store, looking for the bananas I was instructed to find, I thought of only one thing. I could smell it. I could hear it. I may have been able to taste it, had I not had a full bag of potato chips dangling from my lips. The feeling I had so desperately been pining for since the day I left San Diego. My old friend the Pacific Ocean was inviting me back for a swim and a cup of tea. Like a clown at the carnival I carefully balanced and juggled my grocery necessities as I reached for the bananas. Green bananas were all that I could find and I figured the dog, named Pomello—or grapefruit—would not mind the color. The small crowd of old ladies gathered at the deli nearly dropped their canes when my careful balancing act suddenly became a cleanup zone after I lost my grip on three bottles of beer, two bags of potato chips, and the generic Spaghetti-O’s I was hopelessly clinging to. “God damn Grapefruit” was my only thought when the one thing I managed to hold on to were the un-ripe bananas. “*Maldito* gringo,” the ladies yelled at me as they shoved me out the door with their canes.

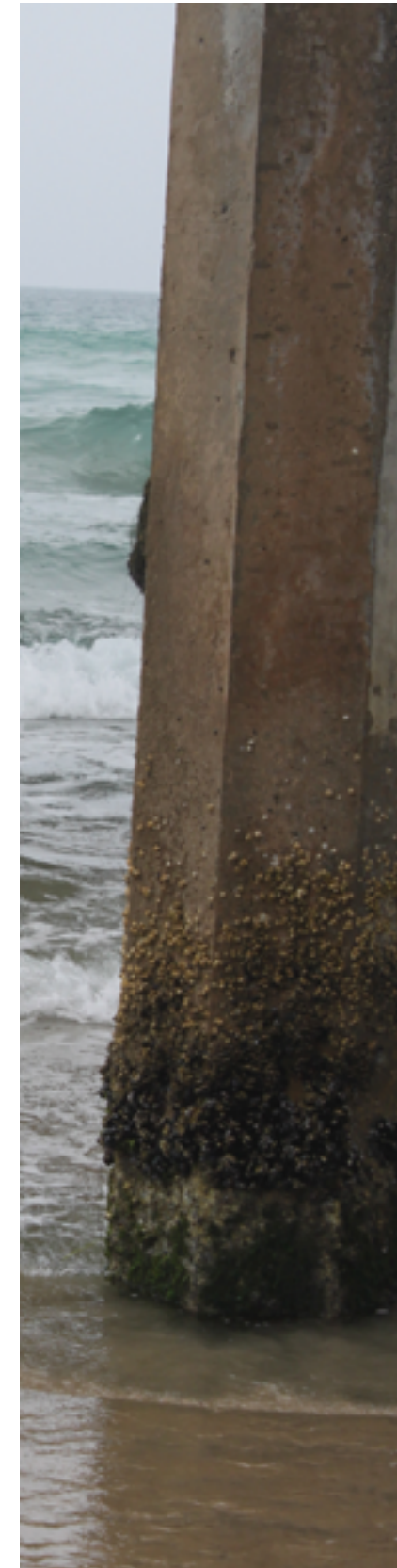
The small, sprawling, village of Pichilemu is not the type of place that a gringo like me would expect to be a world-class surfing destination. In December—the beginning of the Chilean summer—the place feels like a semi-tropical Detroit. Mechanics, rather than beach bums, roam the beaches near the town toting their rusty tools in place of a shimmering surfboard. Pichilemu is not Southern California—it's a working class town through and through. The beautiful beaches and rocky coasts serve mostly as footpaths, from one machine shop to the next. Pichilemu is stunning. There is a certain beauty in the contrast of the ocean and the landscape of the town. The rolling hills of sunflowers and dandelions contrast the dark blue of the sea with stark yellows and greens. Nico's surf farm was situated at the crux of where the yellow meets the blue, a hundred yards from the rising tide of the Pacific.

On Monday we drank Carmenere. We passed the bottles between us and gave the dog an occasional sip. This was the day for reflection. For relaxation. It was a simple moment to unwind our rushing minds and to ease the death grip from our planned adventures. On Monday we talked. We told stories of past waves. We told stories of past women and compared them all. We remembered the rush that we wake to on any given day when the breaks are clean and the wind is low. We tasted the currant, the raspberry, the dark chocolate palate of the glasses in our hands. We talked about submission to the water. The immunity to pain. The release of any problems dwelling inside us, too head strong to come out. We talked about the feeling of feeling significant because we knew come tomorrow morning significance would be meaningless. We could feel the water approaching. Each rise and retreat of the tide moved with the breaths we took, as if knowing eventually we would breath together. For tomorrow we knew we would ride the Point of The Wolves. The swell of Punta De Lobos was beckoning.



They told me to drop. “Take this one, we will wait out the next,” they said. Paddle hard and don't lose focus. Follow the barrel and push yourself into it. Force your feet up and let them slide underneath you. Find your wax, and plant yourself into your board. “Your feet are your roots, bury them deep and they

*We remembered
the rush that
we wake to on
any given day
when the breaks
are clean and the
wind is low.*



will keep you upright.” Be careful of the rocks. Watch out for the current. “Do it. Drop,” they said.

So I paddled. And I dropped.



Two and a half minutes can be a very long time. I started to count my breaths, then realized there was nothing to count. I tried to center my focus on my body. On my survival. To let any thoughts of panic that entered my mind be quickly forgotten. I puzzled over the situation I had found myself in and tried to devise a plan to pull myself out—to stand up straight and fight back against the monster that held me down. With each attempt I was thwarted like a fly does a fly swatter. Two and a half minutes in a cave of darkness and doom. Rolling and tumbling like an avalanche from a mountain, only to realize that there is no end. My mortality was creeping up on me and reminding me to repent. To apologize to my loved ones and to myself for the future I would be leaving unfulfilled. I knew this was impossible. I knew that my story would end here. There was nothing I could do. There was no way out. This barren hollow of blue would be my final resting place.

Two and a half minutes was far too much time to withstand. The carbon dioxide was pulsating through my blood, begging me like the devil on my shoulder to take a breath. This would be the easy way out. Short and sweet. I fell into my thoughts and allowed myself the acceptance of my watery grave. Two and a half minutes was all I could bear.



I simply sat. At the edge of the beach where the sand turns grey and the tide barely reaches. The ocean continued to breathe. It continued to force its smell and taste into my body. Salt was in my brain. Salt was in my lungs. Salt was all that I could taste, smell, hear and feel. The edge of the ocean rose and fell, reaching for my toes as if trying to return me to its grasp. Reaching its long blue tongue out as far as it could, only to pull it back when it touches my feet as if to say “I barely had a taste, let me finish my meal.” Food was the last thing I thought of. My stomach was full of kelp and minnows, garnished by the zest

of the Pacific. The only thing I wanted to swallow was the wind around me. I reached with my mouth as the ocean reached for me, for any taste I could manage to capture of the fresh air. I coughed. I coughed again and spit up what saline discharge was left in my lungs. I engulfed the breeze. I frantically puffed and panted with all of my might to take in whatever amount of life I could manage. The sweet air of the Pacific was the doctor that saved my life. It had ripped the lid off of my coffin and demanded I breathe. It reached inside of me and ran throughout my blood stream. It searched for the places invaded with fluid and forced it to retreat—to leave my body and to return to the ocean from whence it came. That zephyr, that gale force current, forced me to breathe. I had ridden the wolves. I had been on giants. And I had been eaten alive. Drowning is like desperation. Drowning is despair.

With the sharp end of a stick I started to draw. I left that beach with a pat on the back and a cold beer supplied by Nico. As we drove away I stared across the great blue of the Pacific, as the tide finally washed up to shore. The ocean had obliterated my drawing, but it had left me alive. It swept away the sand as it had swept away my dreams—as it had swept away the life I had known before. The life I had taken for granted. The life that five minutes earlier had been accepted and forgotten. My life that I had already mourned as I twisted and tumbled, begging for freedom from the water. The ocean had let me go. It had unlocked my shackles and released me from my certain condemnation. At that moment, tattered and torn, I could breathe again. Drowning is like living. ☞

*I had ridden
the wolves. I
had been on
giants. And
I had been
eaten alive.*





DESCENT

By Ben O’Leary

“These ladies are selling dynamite,” Basilio told us as we hopped off the steps of the bus. “Anywhere else in Bolivia the police would think you’re a terrorist, but in Potosí you can buy dynamite in the street.”

My friends and I collectively blushed with nervous smiles as we took turns holding one of the sticks and fiddling with the fuse. We were led down a narrow alley and into an unmarked building where we were given our equipment. The weight of the yellow jumpsuit reminded me of the gear I wore going skydiving, but the black rubber rain boots ensured that this would be a different kind of adventure. Basilio and the other employees helped us as we hooked up the headlamps to our hard hats. We returned to the cramped bus and slowly started making our way up the winding road towards the round copper-colored mountain.

The tour guides passed around a few large bags of dry coca leaves to those who were interested. I took two massive handfuls and stuck the leaves between my gums and lower teeth.

We finally reached the entry point. I stepped over two metal tracks in the ground and followed their path with my eyes. They disappeared into a dark tunnel carved into the side of the

mountain. As I gazed blankly into the opening, a mysterious clatter echoed from within at an increasing volume. Hunched over with their arms extended, three men emerged into the sunlight pushing a cart full of grey rock. Their faces were darkened by dust and sweat. Another team of men started shoveling the material into disorganized piles. The first group grabbed an empty cart and returned into the darkness without hesitation.

We were split into three groups of six. My group's guide, Carlos, was short, stocky and spoke through a massive cheek-full of coca leaves—which I could not compete with. Carlos chuckled at our amazement as he watched us, with our professional looking Nikons and iPhones, eagerly taking photos of the strange-looking mountain and city sitting in its shadow.

*“About fifty die every year
from collapses,” he told us.
And even if they avoid these,
no one escapes silicosis.*

He briefed us on the journey we were about to embark on, telling us how many mines there were in this mountain, their colonial history and the danger the miners face on a daily basis. The mountain is called the ‘Cerro Rico’ where the Spanish started sending slaves in about 500 years ago. “About fifty die every year from collapses,” he told us. And even if they avoid these, no one escapes silicosis. The miners chew coca because it is a mild stimulant and it represses appetite, giving them the ability to work sixteen-hour shifts without much food.

“I was born in Potosí, and I will die in Potosí,” Carlos said with a casual certainty.

I think he went on to talk about his past, but I don't remember what he said because that sentence was still echoing in my head. I had never heard someone express such a clearly defined sense of self in so few words.

Carlos organized us into a single file line. The same jitters I felt minutes before jumping out of the plane began to conquer my body. “My group always goes the deepest,” he laughed.

With nothing but our headlamps guiding the path, we took our first steps into the murky tunnel. Our boots struggled through the grey puddles between the metal cart tracks. I glanced back at the entrance and watched the daylight slowly disappear. Carlos ordered us to move aside as the loud reverberations of a cart approached.

Our descent continued. We had walked less than one hundred meters, but the tunnel had already become a disorienting maze of bends, curves and diverging lanes. At a fork in the path Carlos led us to the right. Our surroundings started to change; a large gap in the grey earth lay ahead, bridged by a six-foot-long wooden plank. Below the wet piece of wood was a considerable drop-off where a lone miner was crouched in the crevice, hacking away at the walls with a pickaxe. Carlos called down to the man and told us to ask him any questions we may have.

“How many hours do you work every day?” The man remained crouched down and mumbled his responses without looking up. “Fourteen hours.”

“How old were you when you started working in the mines?”

“Twelve-years-old.”

The ceiling of grey dirt was coated with a sparkling silver dust. I reached up and scooped some into my hand. “That's silica,” Carlos said. “That's what we're breathing.”



*Symptoms
include shortness
of breath,
chronic cough,
loss of appetite,
and chest pains.*

Silicosis is a respiratory disease caused by inhaling silica. While there is no danger of infection from entering the silver mines just once, the dust slowly tears away at the lungs of those who descend every day. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chronic cough, loss of appetite and chest pains. In severe cases, the miner's skin will turn blue and his fingernails will fall off. It takes about twenty-five or thirty years of mining before silicosis kills its victim, giving the average worker a life expectancy of just under forty-five years.

We crossed the plank and landed on somewhat firm ground. A distant rumbling filled the tunnel. Carlos tried to explain what the noise was, but his rapid voice and our incomplete knowledge of Spanish left us uncertain. “Want to go down and see them?” he asked.

“¡Sí!” we exclaimed in unison.

“It’s about one hundred meters down on the ladders.”

We walked on the flat path a while longer until we saw a ladder poking out of a hole in the ground. It was no more than a foot wide and the rungs were blackened and soaked by the soles of countless boots. Carlos calmly made his way down first and then spotted the next person. Step-by-step I slid in descent, blindly trusting each successive rung and hoping my boots could get some traction. John, our anchor, finished climbing down and we all breathed a sigh of relief. “*Tres mas,*” Carlos said.

A dry, dusty cough began, leaving an irritating tickle in my throat. We turned another corner and saw the next ladder jutting out crookedly. The machinery shouted louder as if it sensed intruders, aggressively warning us to turn back. Only by yelling could we communicate over the blasting metalwork. As the noise got louder, the air got hotter.

*I stepped into the
daytime and left
the night behind.*

The rattling of the walls overwhelms my memory of the two remaining ladders. I was nearly overwhelmed by claustrophobia and chaos as faceless men drilled into a crumbling wall packed with silver. They acknowledged our presence and then returned their focus to the drill. Dust flew violently in my eyes. I made a futile attempt to wipe away the dirt and sweat from my face. Carlos herded us back up the ladders as I waved goodbye to the men who stayed below. One of them gave me a thumbs-up and may have been smiling under his mask. Carlos told us that even with masks on, their lungs aren’t sufficiently protected from the dust.

We dragged ourselves back through the tunnels. I finally saw light ahead and remembered that the sun was still shining. I stepped into the daytime and left the night behind. A stray puppy and a child selling precious stones were the first to welcome me back. I took off my hardhat, bought some rocks and felt the wind on my face.

The rest of my friends emerged from the tunnel and piled back onto the bus. The academic director greeted us with rosy cheeks and told us what was next on our schedule. Before the bus departed to take us back to the hotel, I briefly made eye contact with an idle miner. Aged by the mines, his wrinkled face surveyed the tourists who had come to Potosí. He turned his back and joined two of his coworkers. They pushed an empty cart down the tracks until they disappeared, descending into the darkness of the mine. ❧





REDEMPTION ON THE LAKE

By Amy Burnett

I probably don't deserve to be here. I'm lucky that anyone loves the shell of who I once was.

I wondered if John Wesley Powell—namesake of Lake Powell—could identify with these thoughts when he first arrived in the Glen Canyon 144¹ years prior to my 2013 arrival. He had lost an arm in the American Civil War before charting the portions of the American Southwest that would one day become Lake Powell. I had both my arms, but only 90% of my brain. Two years earlier tragedy and abuse had barely left me with my life. Of course, I didn't traverse an uncharted lake in a canoe, but rather in an air conditioned houseboat, equipped with two bedrooms and a water slide. The entire Cross family, ten adult humans and two Vizsla puppies, fit on the boat.

Powell and I both arrived in that place broken. Neither of us could heal our physical maladies in that sacred place, yet we each left a bit more whole in another way. But since he's already got the namesake, I'll have to settle by telling my tale here.

1. Shelly James, Canyon Country Online LLC, 2013.



I couldn't imagine anyone being bored on this particular vacation full of jet skiing, shallow water snorkeling, swimming and campfires. On day three of family fun, we all packed into a speedboat and skipped across miles of the man-made lake. We were headed toward the Cathedral in the Desert—a natural landmark made of one of the offshoots of the main channel of the lake.

I had never been to Lake Powell, so I didn't immediately understand the sense of collective dismay upon arrival. The water level was several feet lower than it had been the last time anyone visited, so one could not simply step off the boat onto high ground like before. A loose salmon-colored sandstone wall stood several feet above the water level. A trickling waterfall crevasse carved the only passable route to the Cathedral's entrance.

This wall was only scalable using the eighteen-inch crag carved by the tiny waterfall. My knowledge came from years as a rock climber—wedging my body into impossible positions, maneuvering myself into contortions in order to inch closer to the top. The tragedy of this whole situation was that I was the only person on the boat with any sizable climbing experience.

Oh, god. If mercy exists, let them believe this is impossible.

In the climbing world, we call tricky spots “problems.” The Cathedral in the Desert “problem” was solved after a ten second survey of the rock—at least in my mind.

While I was waiting for everyone else to discuss their particular solution to our problem, my body filled with a nervous energy. My skin tingled, painful to the touch. I wrung out my hands as tears filled my eyes and dense dry cotton filled my throat. We decided that two young men could go up first and then pull everyone else up. By the time this consensus was reached I was sobbing, uncontrollably.



Not more than two years earlier, I would have fearlessly led the charge up the rock. Climbing rocks was and still is the cheapest and best therapy I've ever known—and heaven knows I could use

The tragedy of this whole situation was that I was the only person on the boat with any sizable climbing experience.

some good, cheap therapy. Ironically, it was an almost successful suicide attempt that had left me with a traumatic brain injury. I was forbidden to climb for the following two years.

Now what, girlie girl? You can solve it, but you can't do it. Is that all you have? You're only a shadow of your former self and you know it.

I was bullying myself, quite effectively.

Oh look, the entire Cross family now thinks you're a wimp. You know you can't do this and there's no way you can hide.

The tears streamed hotly down my face, stinging my dry skin. I managed to remove the cotton from my throat long enough to offer to stay in the boat with the puppies so everyone else could enjoy this fine afternoon of their vacation. Seared into my mortal memory was the genuine offer that my partner's dad made to keep me company. His kindness in that moment, while not uncharacteristic, gave me the confidence to circumvent self-judgment enough to reassure the clan that being alone would suit me best.

I had an excellent cry. Even now, I feel a bit bad for sobbing into the fur of five-week-old Bridger. A cathartic cleansing of the soul, a forgiveness of self for the years I lost to mental health crisis, abuse and great loss.

Even shadows can climb with a little external effort.

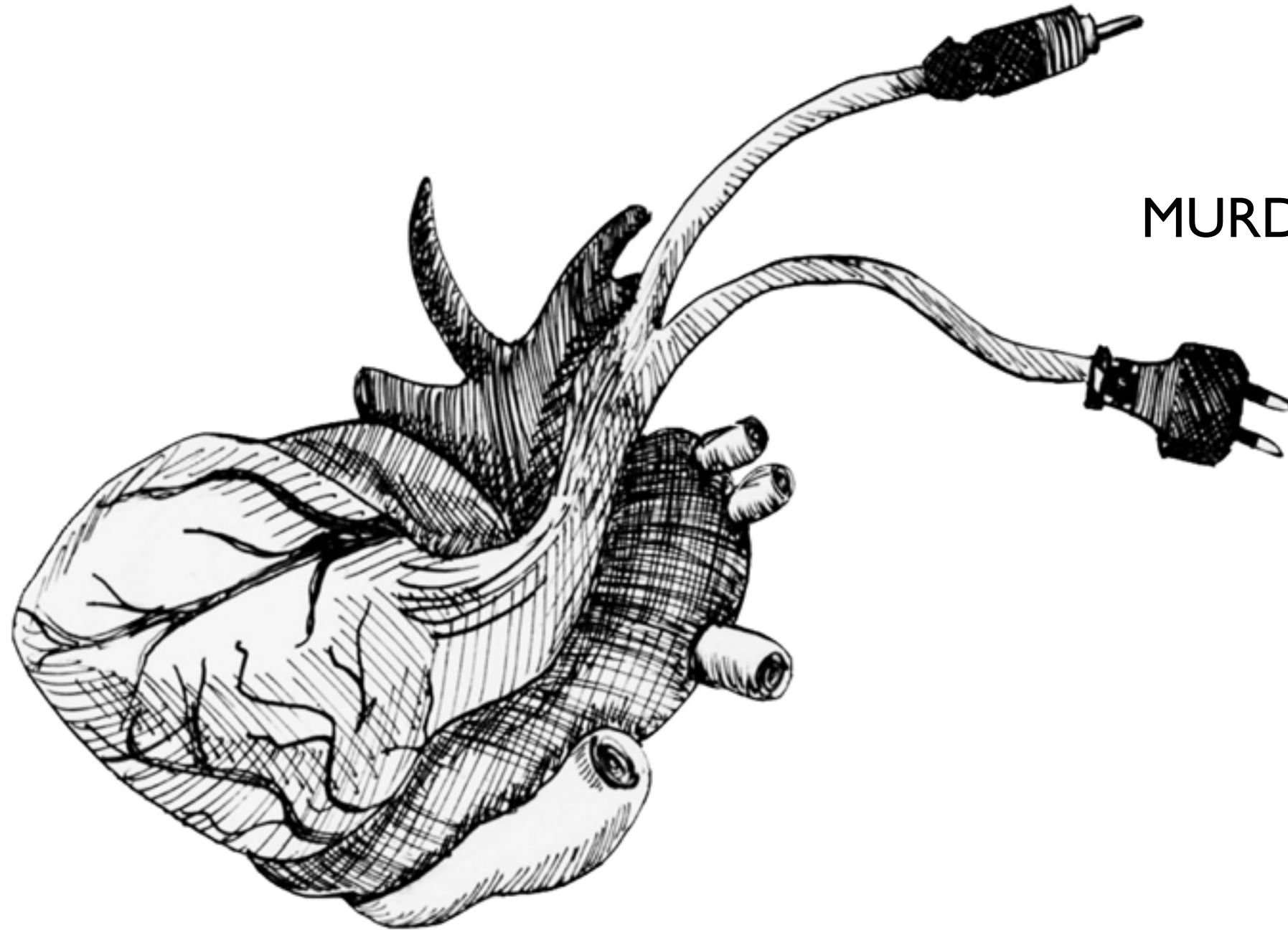


My failures and loss have carved a deep channel in my heart, just like the water has carved deep crevasses into this rock—but my success and skills haven't left me either.

*I can scale this pain. I can scale this rock.
Scratch that, I must scale this rock.*

I made it past that crevasse to the Cathedral in the Desert with the help of a family who loves me. It was a sincerely magnificent combination of waterfall, canyon and compassion. But the true magnificence was in the battle against Fear. He had won too many battles already.

It's my turn.



MURDER BY E-BOOK

By Madison Hosack

Andrew Carnegie donated \$60 million dollars of his fortune to fund 1,689 public libraries in the U.S. In 1903, Carnegie built what would become Washington, D.C.'s oldest library. It was open to all races and genders, acting as an "intellectual breadline." Those affected by the Depression went there to feed their brains.¹

Besides my birth certificate, my library card was my first form of identification. It never expires.

Johannes Gutenberg invented mechanical movable type printing in the 1450s. It is often regarded as the most important invention in the modern world. It created equal opportunity learning and made knowledge available to the masses.

Michel Hart is attributed with inventing the e-book. The first digitized text he created was the *Declaration of Independence*. He

1. Susan Stamberg, "How Andrew Carnegie Turned His Fortune Into A Library Legacy," NPR, last modified August 1, 2013.

once said that, “E-books are the very first thing that we’re all able to have as much as we want other than air.”²

Every Christmas my family and I eagerly clamor down the stairs to retrieve Barnes & Noble gift cards from our stockings. We proceed to spend the entire next day at the bookstore, making careful selections so as to use our gift cards to their utmost potential.

E-books “typically have prices that are 50-60% lower than their print counterparts.”³

I add all the books I buy for school to my personal library in hopes that, one day, my delusion of generating a “Beauty and the Beast” Library will come true. I don’t have shelves for them so they are stacked horizontally along the floor of my room. I arranged them so my favorites sit on top of the stack.

In 1605, Father Henry Garnet took part in the gunpowder plot to blow up the House of Parliament. His punishment was death by hanging. His offenses were recorded in 1606 and made into a book entitled *A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Proceedings Against the Late Most Barbarous Traitors, Garnet a Jesuit and His Confederates*. It was bound using the skin of his face.⁴

The Kindle Fire HDX has a feature that allows you see what your friends are reading, share highlights, and rate books you read. This “real-time highlighting” is supposed to create a more immersive reading experience.⁵

CU Special Collections has a copy of *Mein Kampf* with Hitler’s signature in it.

In one year, over two billion books are produced in the U.S. The

*... in the hopes
that, one day,
my delusion of
generating a
“Beauty and
the Beast”
Library will
come true.*

paper needed for these books comes at the cost of around thirty-two million trees.⁶

On February 16, 2011, Borders applied for bankruptcy. On July 22, they closed their last remaining stores.⁷

With the dispersion of Borders, Barnes & Noble became the last remaining major bookstore chain.

The e-book industry grew by forty-four percent from 2011 to 2012.⁸

When I graduated high school, one of my teachers “gifted” me a copy of *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran. His note inside the front cover says this book was the best advice he could give.

Andrew Carnegie’s Library in Washington, D.C is dedicated to the “diffusion of knowledge.”⁹

MIT Technology Review did a study on the effects of e-books on the democratizing effects of reading:

Except under limited circumstances, eBooks cannot be loaned or resold. They cannot be gifted, nor discovered on a trip through the shelves of a friend or the local library. They cannot be rebound and, unlike all the rediscovered works that literally gave birth to the Renaissance, they will not last for centuries. Indeed, publishers are already limiting the number of times a library can loan out an eBook to 26.¹⁰

Michel Hart, the inventor of the e-book, died in 2011 at age 64. His death was announced on International Literacy Day.¹¹

2. Andrew Losowsky, “Michael Hart, Inventor Of The eBook And Pioneer Of Electronic Literacy, Has Died,” The Huffington Post, September 8, 2011.

3. Roxanne Weber, “The Pros and Cons of eBook Downloads,” TopTenREVIEWS.

4. Keith Veronese, “Anthropodermic Bibliopeggy, or The Truth About Books Bound In Human Skin,” io9, February 22, 2012.

5. “All-New Kindle Fire HDX 7” Tablet.” Kindle Fire HDX Tablet. Amazon, n.d. Web.

6. Zorba, “Ebooks Save Millions of Trees: 10 Ideas For Sustainable Publishing,” Epublishers Weekly (blog).

7. Julie Bosman, “The Bookstore’s Last Stand,” The New York Times.

8. 100 million ebooks downloaded from Kindle Owners’ Lending Library, Public Libraries RSS, August 28 2012.

9. Stamberg, “Carnegie Library Legacy.”

10. Christopher Mims, “The 2014 List of 50 Smartest Companies,” MIT Technology Review.

11. Losowsky, “Michael Hart Has Died,” The Huffington Post.

The New York Times named Barnes & Noble one of the “only things standing between traditional book publishers and oblivion.”¹²

On August 28, 2012, Amazon announced that over 100 million e-books had been borrowed or purchased from their Kindle Library.¹³

My best friend trades her Kindle Fire for Denver Beer Festival tickets on Craigslist. She purchases an iPad the same week.



My parents used to make my siblings and I read *Harry Potter* aloud to them before we went to sleep. We would all crowd onto my parents’ bed and take turns reading chapters. When us kids beg to postpone our bedtime to find out what happens to the boy wizard and his friends, my parents always comply, secretly wanting to continue as well. My mother was the best reader—she had voices for all the characters that were subtle enough to seem real. Turns out we all had been pronouncing Hermione’s name wrong for years, we didn’t realize it until the movie came out.



The Kindle Fire HDX has a “read-to-me” feature that can read any English-language content aloud to you.¹⁴

On May 10, 1933, the German Student Association burned upwards of 25,000 volumes of “un-German” books under the Nazi Regime as a form of censorship.

China’s entire Internet is censored.

There is a second hand bookstore on Pearl called Red Letter Books. There are three employees. The shelves are completely overgrown with books of all different shapes, sizes and smells. It’s always quiet in there, even when it’s crowded. No one ever

*The shelves
are completely
overgrown
with books of
all different
shapes, sizes,
and smells.*

12. Julie Bosman, “The Bookstore’s Last Stand,” The New York Times.

13. 100 million ebooks downloaded, Public Libraries RSS.

14. “All-New Kindle Fire,” Kindle Fire HDX Tablet.

goes to Red Letter to simply buy a book; they go to be entirely surrounded by them—to lose themselves in them.

Nearly four billion trees or thirty-five percent of the total trees cut around the world are used in paper industries on every continent.¹⁵

I have always loved the smell of books. The first thing I do when I pick up a book is run the pages through my fingers. They make the sound of shuffling cards and smell like damp ink.


Andrew Carnegie saw public libraries as “instruments of change—not luxuries, but rather necessities, important institutions—as vital to the community as police and fire stations and public schools.”¹⁶

Public libraries remain one of the only places besides shelters where the homeless can take refuge. They accept the hungry, the ragged, the smelly and the people who have nowhere else to go. A clean, safe place to read a book is a simple luxury.



Bemis Library is five minutes from my house. We went there every Sunday. There is a wooden castle in the kid’s section. Its narrow passage, perfect for keeping adults out, leads to a second landing piled with pillows.

In my memory, I begin with strolling the isles, carefully selecting the day’s top picks and retrieving a whole stack of books. I then proceed to barricade myself at the top of the castle for the remainder of the day. My sister meanders around the pre-teen section while my brother plays games on the old, bulky macs. My parents branch off to look at books without pictures.

It is the only place I remember going where they would leave us to our own devices. 

15. Sam Marton, “Paper Chase,” Ecology Global Network, September 10, 2011.

16. Stamberg, “Carnegie Library Legacy.”



VICTORY LAP

By Je'Leighna Killet

I am bouncing back and forth, staring at the starting line. My gut, heart and lunch are threatening to spill out of my mouth. Not to mention, I need to tinkle. I break focus with the vibrant, rust-colored track and gaze out onto the stadium. Although this event is outside, there is no space to breath fresh air. I pity the sticky bodies clustered together at the fence near the start. On any other day, I'd complain about the dry heat scorching my shoulders and proceed to whine for water. Instead, I'm daring the stadium to break out in flames. I switch my attention to the thick, grassy football field and see all of my relay girls in their designated spots, wearing neon-yellow socks. We plan on making a statement today when we run the Sprint Medley Relay (100m-100m-200m-400m). I always bust out the 400 meter run, which is an entire lap around the track. The man who shoots the start gun slowly climbs up the ladder and stands tall, signaling he's ready to begin. The murmur of the crowd lowers and all attention is focused on us, the sole event on the track. I recognize the man on the ladder from previous races. Every time he starts our race we dominate the track—

just as everyone expects. It is a promising start to my last State Championship. He takes a glance at each girl in her lane and proceeds to raise the gun.

“Sweats off,” his voice echoes in the megaphone. All of the girls in lanes one through nine strip down to their spandex speed suits. The feline-like athletes pounce up and down to preserve the tedious warm up we all did to chase the prize of first place. The claws in our spiked shoes grip the track with our final stretches.

“On your mark!” Everyone who starts the race settles onto their blocks. I stop jumping and look at Bridget who will ignite our race.

“Set!” I take a deep breath in. And wait.

The gun explodes. Bridget propels out from the blocks—like she’s expected to—at top speed and controlled power. She reaches Hayley after a short 100 meters. She’s one of the first to get the baton and I’m confident she’ll close the distance between herself and the one other girl ahead.

Her time’s up and she passes the baton to Crystal. I grin at the sight of them. My girls are flawless. I shiver and bounce ferociously as I await my turn. As she turns the back corner—in the lead of course—I stop my bouncing to get a better look. Are those wings on her feet? My heart beats in anticipation as if I were already in the middle of my own run. She comes in closer and I confidently swagger into my stance. As soon as I see her hit the mark, I press three powerful strides, pop my right hand behind me, and wait for—

“Stick!” Perfect.

My hand is like a magnet that pulls the hollow baton in towards me. The empty “clank” against my hand signals my turn. I blitz out the first fifty meters and then relax my run, focusing hard to remember the perfect pace. I’ll die on the home stretch if I fully sprint the whole race. At the 200-meter mark, I’m impeccable at keeping my breath. Breathe in, *one, two, three*, then breathe out, *one, two, three*. Repeat. I refuse to do anything too strenuous—it must be perfect. Then this girl passes me. That’s alright, I’ll get her at the end like I usually do because I’m supposed to wait to run my hardest—right? It’s not unusual for me to be passed in the middle of the race. I always catch her. But then, number two passes me. I’m starting to get nervous. My butt hurts. It feels like someone has lit a torch in the depths of muscles

*Are those
wings on
her feet?*

and forced it down to my thighs and up to my lower back. The flame constricts my once solid stride and makes it shorter and shorter. My lungs are shrinking, there isn’t enough oxygen to give to my legs and I still have 100 meters to go. This is the last curve of the lap where I normally slingshot straight to the finish line. Instead, I’m moving in slow-motion. My once beloved track betrays me and burns my feet at every step. As I attempt to pick up speed for the last stretch, number three passes me—why can’t I move faster? I begin to plead with the lower half of my body. My legs are rejecting me and the best I can do is beg them to at least keep the same pace. I’m pathetic. I look down and try not to focus on the metallic taste in the back of my throat. Before I cross the finish line, I feel this unfamiliar tingle in my eyes. I have nothing else left in me. I have no breath, no drive and no heart. They’ve all been replaced with fresh disappointment.

*I double over with
my elbows on my
knees, begging for air.*

I stomp heavily across the finish line, no longer graceful and soaked in my sour sweat of defeat. I double over with my elbows on my knees, begging for air. I stand up straight, trying to maintain the little bit of pride I have left. My legs shriek at me to breathe, but they don’t deserve the air they desperately crave—they can starve for all I care. The prickling sensation in my legs tells me that they truly are bereft of oxygen and it gives me a morbid satisfaction. It takes all I have left not to throw the baton at the track and scream. I have to stay in control. The sharp resentment racing in my mind helps me drag my pathetic limbs over to the grassy field. The moment my three girls look at me, my rage turns into guilt and shame and my tears spill out. They nurture me, as I did for them so many times.

“We still have another race,” each of them promises me. I know that they feel just as disgraced as I do. Each of us has had our own hideous moments when running—dropping the baton, false starting and even missing a race. I wish my time to wreck a race would not have come when my team needed me the most. We reluctantly lag our way to have our pictures taken

on the podium. The megaphone directs the crowd's attention to the podium and announces the "winners." They all clap, but I know it's not for us. I stare into the depths of the black lens and shamelessly glare at the photographer when he says, "Smile."

❧ ❧

There was absolutely nothing to smile about. Years of hard work and I blew it. Every day for the past four years, my life has been oriented around track. I've been consumed with hours of difficult drills and endless running. During the season, Saturdays are completely dedicated to the track, which is an all-day event. When track season was over, I worked out and watch my diet. I even did cross country to lengthen my endurance. As soon as that terrible sport was over, I did off-season track during the winter to sharpen my skills. I've missed countless opportunities to be close with my family for this same rusty track. I've been captain for three long years—wasn't I supposed to be a successful role model for the entire team? I had high expectations and unlimited internal fire. Any hopes or plans for the future were bitterly drenched—what did I do to deserve this failure? So no, I refuse to plaster the perfect smile on my face for anything, not even for this moment that will be captured forever.

The camera flashes and the agony is over. ❧





WARFARE'S LIFELINE

By Conor Kuczka

Our lives can be drawn simply as line segments, beginning in one place and ending in another. And it was the life and death of a man that I have never met that drastically altered the course of my very own line.

It was March 2003: I remember watching the news from the comfort of my red leather armchair. Trucks roared through the streets with merciless intention, fire and smoke engulfing the once tan and sandy buildings. Tank engines rumbled as they crawled into the ancient cities accompanied by the steady chatter of gunfire. The screams of soldiers and civilians intertwined to create a sorrowful melody of warfare. News anchors interviewed generals and politicians, discussing battle plans and immediate actions. The war was on—and I had a front row seat.



War was gritty, dirty and terrifying, but I thought there had to be a purpose—why else would generations of people continue to go to war for their country, their homes, and honor? Maybe because war is a necessary evil, preventing those who endanger

our freedoms and way of life. But what freedoms of mine had been taken away by the people of Iraq? Who lost their right to freedom in my country because of the actions of the Iraqis? I had so many questions, but it didn't matter. We were at war now, fighting the bad guys—good versus bad: that's all they needed to legitimize this dirty conflict.

The logic that controlled the attention span of my ten year old self wasn't terribly refined. I was at an age where certain events did not have the proper meaning since I could not comprehend them. I began to lose a vested interest in the war, only quickly glancing at the news and wondering if those who said we had lost our freedoms had found them in that ancient desert. I wondered if we had stopped the bad guys yet. I didn't think about the war in detail, or the soldiers who were fighting. They weren't like me—it was their job to fight.

One such glance at the news introduced me to the soldier who would alter my life's line. I never met him in person. I never knew his name, his hometown, or even what he looked like. I only knew that he was inside a casket, and draped over it was the American flag.

The same American flag that, to me, represented a symbol of the righteous. If we fought under the American flag, we were automatically justified—we were invincible. It represented life and liberty, but it hugged his metal casket in solemn comfort. In this moment, the flag was not met by a smile from me. Its tattered and broken edges waved at the frame of the crypt, its bulk held down by the time worn hands of Death. I imagined a cloaked figure standing at the back of the crowd at the soldier's funeral, placing his thin, pale hand softly on the mother's shoulder while cooing softly, "Another war, another body."

Death sighed.

The soldier wore the flag on his shoulder while he walked the dusty streets of Iraq. It was sewn on inversely, representing the soldier as "always moving forward." He enlisted under this flag, fought under this flag, and died under this flag. And it failed to uphold the intangible ideas that I believed it had. The American flag was not bulletproof.

It became all too real. It was the heart break of his family, crying on the woven red, white and blue fabric. It was the loss of a young man who held so much light in his eyes—a man looking toward his future. That light was faded in the fifty eggshell stars.

*The American
flag was not
bulletproof.*

Seeing the casket and the flag—seeing war for what it was and not for what it was supposed to be—stopped my life's line in its progression and quickly and resoundingly smashed it into a new trajectory. The force and the shock of the collision knocked me from my blissful ignorance. I cried at this realization, my parents were unable to console me.

"Conor, you are not going to die! You are perfectly safe here. You don't need to worry about death," my parents said. But I didn't cry for myself. War leaves permanent scars that come at a high price.

If war embodies such sorrow, why then do men and women volunteer their lives to serve? Why do they merge with the predestined warfare line if it causes them to suffer through blood, sweat and tears? The same line bathed in the blood and tragedy of past wars. Since the war started, I had many questions that I could not answer. I did not understand why someone would willingly put themselves into harm's way, knowing what war was like and the risks that came with it. But, slowly, I finally began to understand—seeing that family cry over the flag draped casket defined war's meaning for me.

War isn't about the medals, ribbons, or glory—wars aren't fought just for honor, or out of duty to one's country. Those elements all have a place in war, but are not the driving force behind why a person would put themselves in harm's way.

They joined and fought because of a love for each other. They found themselves miles from home in a foreign land already scarred by centuries of warfare, the only familiarity being one another. They fought for each other. And at ten years old, I understood—I wanted to merge my line with theirs.


*The war was no longer a
distant conflict seen through
the screen of a television, but an
internal struggle within myself.*

I couldn't help but wonder if I would have the courage to leave the comfortable life I had been lucky enough to enjoy, and risk it all in an unforgiving desert. If I was not able to serve, if I

did not have the desire to serve, who would go in my place? This question haunted me for weeks. The war was no longer a distant conflict seen through the screen of a television, but an internal struggle within myself.

It infected me.

It kept me up at night, distracted me at school and redirected my attention away from my family and friends. If I did not serve, whose family would be crying over an American flag? I decided then, at a young age, that military service was mandatory. I was not willing to let another human have their lifeline erased prematurely because I hesitated.

It was this thought that flashed through my head as I walked into the ceremony room at the Denver Military Entrance Processing Station on October 10, 2013. I stood in the front row, with a group of people I had just met that morning. We were all strangers who had our own reasons for standing there that day, but I knew at one point the only thing that would keep us alive in war would be each other. As I saw that family from ten years ago in the corner of the room crying for their son, I raised my right hand, and swore the oath to serve. 





GOOD BEER

By Parker Steven Griggs

I remember the first time I invited a girl to join my friends and me at the brewery. She didn't live far away, so we had little time to converse on the way. I spent most of that precious time apologizing for whatever my friends could possibly say throughout the evening. "These are military people." I said, "They can get a little carried away with their war stories." "It's fine, my dad was a Marine."

Inviting someone to our Thursday night brewery gathering was like inviting a friend to church: everyone attending was very accepting, warm, open, and friendly, but you still couldn't shake the fear that your guest might not like it. They might think you are in a weird cult, or be so bored they keel over in front of you. This was beer though, tangible, flavorful—this was art.

I opened the door to allow my canonesse to proceed me. I couldn't see how she reacted, but my hope was that it was something like a Texan's first experience with snow. My hope was that she would be as excited as I was. The building was very basic: jet-black metal ceiling, painted concrete floor, orderly alignment of chairs behind the giant, solid oak tables that stretched from

one side of the building to the other. The interior of the building was surrounded by massive wooden barrels stacked three high. The podium stretched from the left wall, twenty-five feet to my right. Behind it were ten tap handles standing at immediate attention prepared for duty and service. When someone was in need, the tap would bow forward, ceremoniously relinquishing the prized beer that was being guarded so vigilantly by these ten soldiers. Not just anyone had a relationship with these soldiers though; it took training, trust, commitment, and extraordinary knowledge to become a brewer.

Taylor was in charge of ordering food since he had established an ever growing friendship with the waitress at the wing place. The brewery didn't have a kitchen of their own so we would have the wings delivered. "Just look for the four good looking dudes in the barrel room," he would always say—but this time he added, "oh, and the pretty girl with us." Taylor was my best friend and usually I would carpool with him to our event, although, given the circumstances, he had shuttled himself that night. He didn't like beer. He said it was too bitter, but he enjoyed our company and was in attendance every week, which was great for me because he could be my designated driver—though that was rarely necessary.

Jeff, an ex airman tended to favor the amber beers, and it wasn't unusual for him to perform a particular "happy dance" when he noticed the red was on hand-pull—an homage to the traditions of craft brewing. He and his wife had just come back from a three year displacement in Europe, bringing back stories of pubs, cities, and general chaos from his time overseas—his job was to start our tab.

Jason was a wild card, he had a tendency to pledge his allegiance to the pale ale. Bitter and sweet, typically with a higher alcohol percentage, pale ales have a unique characteristic of getting rowdy. His job was to get two boats of the free popcorn they offered to patrons. I had only met Jason the month prior. During our introduction he tried to convince me that he was once a helicopter, from then on I just referred to him as "The Helicopter." He too, was an ex airman. He had recently returned from a two year stint in Korea and Afghanistan.

Neil told me a story of his first time in Las Vegas, where he would order his drinks by the color, not the technical name. Neil favored the Apricot Blonde. It was a dark orange color and

*... it took
training, trust,
commitment,
and extraordinary
knowledge to
become a brewer.*

*Inside the glass
was a caramel
colored liquid,
bubbling with
anticipation to
be consumed.*

sculpted with great care. The apricot was imbued with sweet notes from the special apricot purée. It was light and easy to drink. Savoring the robust flavor was the best part of this beer. It was consumed with reverence and honor. Slowly swishing the beer to either side of the glass, little bubbles would form, but the carbonation wasn't overbearing. When you took a sip, the beer would rest on the palate and soak into each taste bud.

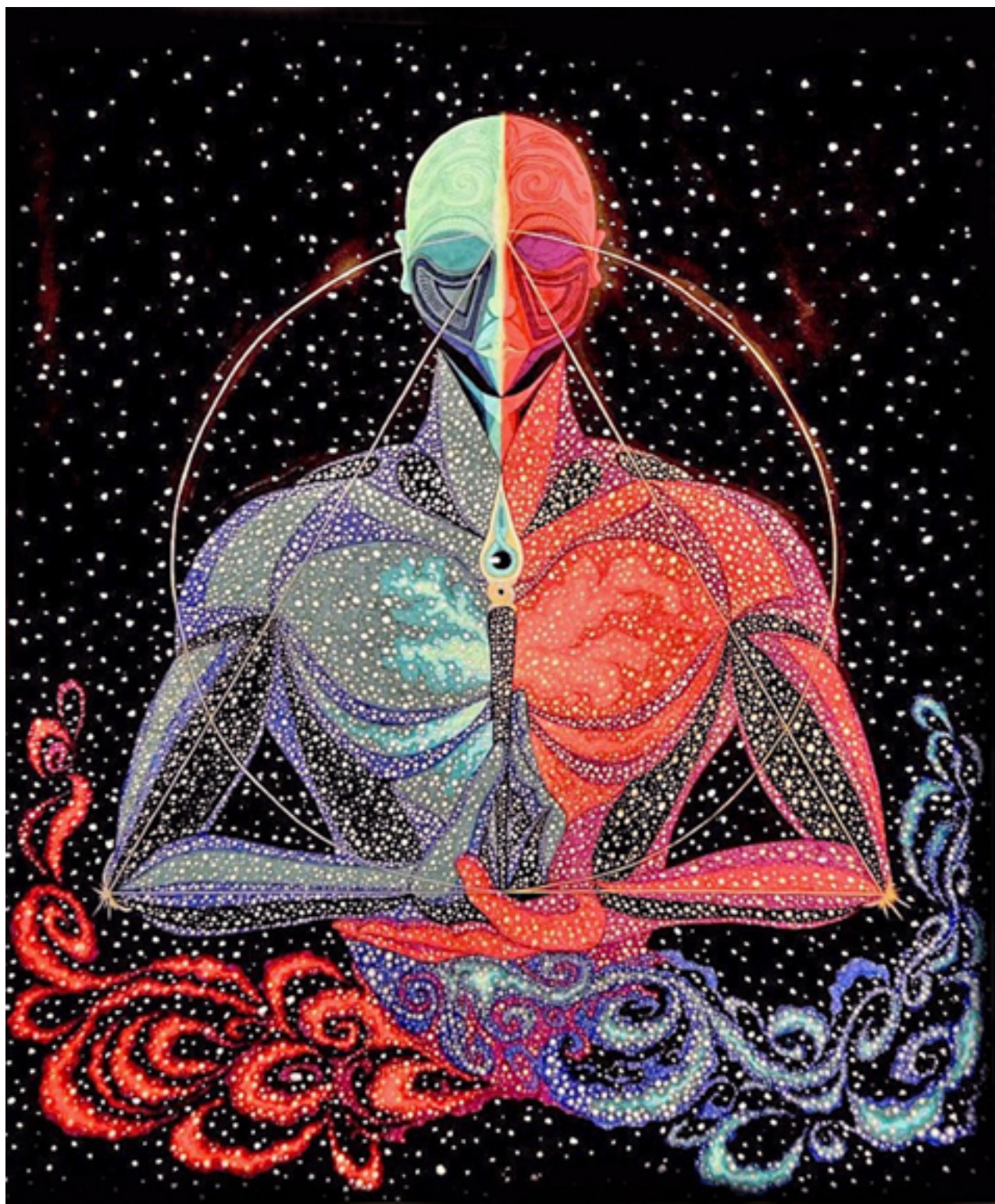
Walt was the brewmaster who worked with Neil. They were both in the military. He would come over and talk with us, bringing us new beers and explaining the science behind brewing. "Lagers like Corona are awful to keep on tap; they skunk out within 20 seconds of being exposed to light. That's why they're always in cans or green bottles. Some brown bottles also offer protection from the light—for example Bud Light and Coors light which are American Lagers." He always had some interesting beer fact to share with us.

The girl I had brought sat very quietly, her eyes drilling away at the screen of her phone. She would only look up to acknowledge the questions we asked her, but never really took the initiative to join the conversation. That didn't spoil it for us though—we were a community.

The glass would always make a small noise when being delivered to the table. It never sounded angry or harsh—it was as if it were just announcing "I'm here." The light would sparkle off its crystalline sides and draw your attention to the brew within and the little Dry Dock Brewery logo. Inside the glass was a caramel colored liquid, bubbling with anticipation to be consumed. The aroma it let off was so sweet you would think it was candy—the taste, now that was the real joy. It was slightly bitter—not in a sour or spoiled way, though. It was just a little bite on your taste buds in order to wake them up, that then apologizes by getting sweet. It was an ale.

Sometimes, when it was available, I would get the stout: pitch black with a milk chocolate colored head. It was not a drink for the faint-hearted. It was a workout to drink, but afterwards you would realize just how special it truly was.

I was amazed at how many variants there were for something so generically called "beer." The canvas of the glass was always painted a different shade with each handpicked color. This gallery of handcrafted beer was what brought all of us together. It was the artful community of beer that united us. ☘



DOING NOT-DOING

By Ariel Herman

*Welcome to Vipassana.
Bring your attention to the breath.
Then, focus on bodily sensation.
Try to avoid thinking, or focusing on thoughts.
Focus between thoughts, between molecules,
behind the movie screen.
Do not personalize this.
See you in ten days.*

Meditating for any period of time brings to mind interrogation scenes from chintzy action dramas, where two cops beat a powerless, bound man, firmly reassuring him that this can go easy, or we can do it the other way.



A static, unstimulated expanse of time is completely subjective. For me, it was oddly similar to the time I went skydiving. Chester “The Molester”—a squat, Greco-featured tandem diver, who shared a spooky resemblance to my first college professor—

grabbed my shoulders from behind as the rear hatch opened. “This is going to be a bit like prison sex—if you relax, it will be better for the both of us,” he said before triple-flipping both of us from the back of a perfectly functional aircraft. As I fell, Chester was on my back as my liaison to the sky. In this ninety second relationship, trust was mandatory—but I wouldn’t meet Chester for five more years.



I was driving north with an old friend to do something for myself that I’d wanted to for a very long time. It was autumn of 2005 up in Kelseyville, California. I parked my ‘85 Volvo with the other cars at a sandy volleyball court. At the edge of the parking lot were two women seated at a resin table with clipboards. The trail beyond led across a small creek ford. Highway 101 was a few miles behind us, and equally as surrounded by the evergreen and deciduous forests, capped with incoming cloud cover. My friend’s name and mine were checked off of the list by a brunette in a bandana with wide-gaged earlobes. Her comrade, a bundled up blonde in a black hoodie, gave me a small guidebook and reiterated the precepts of Right Action: “You must abstain from killing of any kind. No stealing. Suspend all sexual activity. Do not tell lies or take any intoxicants. You must maintain Noble Silence beginning after orientation until the course concludes.” Her eye contact was warm but curt. Tomorrow would begin the ten day introduction to Vipassana meditation, by N.S. Goenkaji. I was nineteen years old.

We forded the creek toward the campsite and parted ways from there. After setting up the tent, I discovered it had a gaping hole in it from years of childhood trips—maybe it wouldn’t be a problem? We were given orientation in the main dining area before being released to shower, and turn in. Eye contact was also forbidden—much like a crowded New York City subway, except we were alone together, maybe sixty people, in the middle of Northern California at a summer camp for kids. As a child I’d thrived in places like this.

When I was in school I was described as a procrastinator. I like to think of meditation as a scrupulous form of procrastination. In school, I resented being told to face my tasks and—to

*You must abstain
from killing of
any kind.
No stealing.
Suspend all
sexual activity.*

*I breathed in,
and out, with
the pace
of a child
about to
go into a
tantrum.*

my recollection—no one was prodding me to see the value in trying. The experience was alienating. It felt like an apt moment to make an investment, having finished high school a year prior. Going to meditate was the first time in my life that I made a concerted effort to get to know myself without a mirror, a report card, or the scene at home.

In the meditation hall men and women were divided. At the front were a couple of twenty-somethings, an old man, a large tapestry and a television screen on a rollaway. Every day we received a message from N.S. Goenkaji, instructing us in Vipassana. We would sit for hours on stools that turned the ass into a mixture of rubber cement and corn starch. I breathed in, and out, with the pace of a child about to go into a tantrum. My right shoulder would rise defensively as if to support a single-strap backpack loaded with textbooks. I would actively lower it, only to have it automatically elevate once more.

The sessions were between two and three hours each between 4am and 9pm, accumulating from ten to twelve hours a day, but the average for me was nine. The lost hour was usually spent awkwardly investigating reality, trying to see if I could see things differently. I’d find myself standing by the side of the trail that led between the meditation hall and my tent, staring piercingly across the ford towards the parking lot masked by willow trees.

After the rains came, I was moved from my tent to a camper’s hut with two other men. The three of us shared the lodging, sleeping in three of the twelve parallel stacked wooden bunks. One of the men bore an unsettling similarity to the anglicized Jesus Christ. I would later learn he was known professionally as “DJ Jesus Christ”, or “DJ J.C.” for short. Our second roommate was an exceedingly orderly man in his early thirties with a tightly packed, internal frame backpack designed for long expeditions. Every morning at 4 a.m. when the wake-up call of the brass chime came floating out of the night tapped by a course volunteer, his wristwatch would simultaneously emit a screeching second reminder to wake up. He would jerk up, fully alert, and begin making his bed with precision and haste. Me and Jesus got up about the same speed and with the same groggy enthusiasm.

People would walk in quiet refrain along damp trails underneath the misty oaks, cozy in their camping clothes. The moisture breached my sweats and gave me a shudder as I saw

my friend from the drive up to camp, stacking rocks by the trail. I watched him create a jagged tower of smaller and smaller stones—like a pile of baby turtles. Later on, I added a pile of my own up the trail.

People would periodically fart loudly in the meditation hall. This would set off a cascade of inner confabulation, “Don’t laugh,” I would inwardly say. “Don’t speak inwardly!” I would then retort. And then I would compliment myself on not doing these things, and then I would reprimand myself for complimenting myself. And eventually, I would let it go. On and on, I tangled in the Chopin etudes of my thoughts. The clamor of heightened sensitivities brought on by the ability to focus and detach—or “depersonalize”—my thoughts as mine gave me an understanding not unlike Charles Manson—he said prison bars were an intervention around his reality, and that they did not imprison him. In his mind, he was free. I began to wonder if I was going through withdrawal from the past nineteen years of steadily injected social programming. I feared I would be as amoral as Manson if I couldn’t find an original source of goodness in my character beyond the software of identity—if the exorcism was a success, the reboot achieved, would I still be myself? The prospect both terrified and tempted me.



On day six, I contacted management—so to speak. His name was Joel¹, a mathematics major in his mid twenties who I recognized from Santa Rosa’s Junior College where we both studied. He had curly dark hair, and wore a puffy down jacket. I met him by the kitchen and asked to speak to the assistant instructor. Only in select situations were we allowed to speak. Joel seemed taken aback. His disposition was warm and respectfully servile, with the sadness of a shy man or a recovering introvert. He led me along the fire road at the edge of the camp in shared silence. His dark brown eyes were fixated, hawk like to the proverbial horizon obscured by the deep forest green. Our feet squished the damp foliage while mist condensed onto leaves and dripped to the forest floor. He led me to the assistant teacher—the man responsible for sitting motionlessly while a volunteer pressed play on the

1. This name has been changed by discretion of the author.

*He then broke
eye contact, gazing
downward into a
pool of jackknifed
memory.*

VHS recordings of Goenkaji. I met him in his private cottage. For the first time since I’d arrived, I didn’t feel alone. The relief was jaded, knowing I was surely going to finish the ten days.

The man’s eyes were blue as the sky beyond the afternoon rainclouds. His beard was pure white like his hair. From a cross-legged stillness, he smiled with several concealed facial twitches. “What seems to be the problem?” he asked. He did not come across as the New Age type—more like a grandfather. A few sentences escaped my lips, but they felt unimportant, and I trailed off. Then, reestablishing eye contact, I blurted out, “—I hate myself—so much.” He gazed at me with pitiless solemnity. After a beat, he responded, “You have no idea how lucky you are to be doing this at your age.” He then broke eye contact, gazing downward into a pool of jackknifed memory. He smiled more easily, and lifted his attention towards me. “You’ll be fine—just stick with it.” And there’s something vastly impressive about someone who can say that to your face without a shred of doubt in their delivery, even if you don’t believe it—which I didn’t—it made you want to.



I squeezed the rock in my fist. I had more awareness of my will power than I’d ever known. I wondered if I could see it, measure it. I threw the rock as far as I could across the creek towards the forest. I did this repeatedly one afternoon as other hunched men sifted by, some stopping to join the rebellion. It felt incorrect to hurl rocks as a social activity. I left for the dining hall. There were more stacks of stones. Was my friend sending me a message? I stacked a pile—for him, and to occupy the misery of my idle hands.

For the last three days of silence I had a trio of Aerosmith, Elton John, and Big Band Jazz ensembles playing endlessly in my head. While leaving the meditation hall, I heard heavy drumming as I imagined dashing to the car, turning on the engine, and running back to the littler problems of the world. It was vividly cinematic—I tried to ignore this. It reminded me of Nikola Tesla reading peacefully next to an active tesla coil, appearing to barely notice the blaring electrical storm he’d invented—I also tried to ignore this. The silence was overwhelming, not unlike visiting New York City for the first time, but eventually it became normal.

I burned for familiar contexts. Every person who had made me feel like myself came to mind, and there was nothing to do about it. To reject the thoughts was wrong. To personalize the emotions they brought up was wrong. To hate that they came up was wrong. To berate yourself for reacting to them was wrong. Yet the idea of meditation had always struck me as problem free. They almost insisted that nothing is ever wrong—but don't be proud of seeing it: that's wrong too. It all started falling away. An endlessly peaceful, primordial silence began to appear beyond the static.

The imagination that had bunkered me from compulsory education fired flaming pianos from trebuchets of self-amusement. I became a freelance self distractor—inhaling, actively lowering my shoulder, exhaling, and closing my eyes again—breathing for freedom. The density of my consciousness went from a cotton wad on the surface, to a lead ball descending miles into the ocean.

The blank expanse in my vision heightened the other senses on my body. The sound of my own heartbeat puffed like a goldfish going in circles around a little plastic castle and a strip of fake kelp from a neon pit of rubble. My mind was a pile of glass shards, as silver as the sparks on the surface of the sea. Every word I thought was a form of escapism—an act of defiance. To say I missed my friends was to witness Ariel Herman, an idea, admitting he was lonely. Slowly, my life of sensations began to seem like they belonged to a character who only existed in some other narrative. Like an unobserved particle, I had no absolute location in reality. It was kind of like being fifteen years old in a mosh pit as a great homunculus in a spiked, leather jacket hurls you at a nineties, gutter-grunge, lesbian in a boy's undershirt. I stopped being angry with anger, curling my middle fingers down and placing them against my thumbs. My rebellion was useless to me now.



Nobel Silence ended, and as we left the meditation hall, the silence was instantly hilarious. All the men—still separated from the women—began gasping like the hissing of so many pressure cookers.

It was ecstatic.

“What the—What the hell! Who are you people?” I exclaimed. At dinner that night we all spoke about our experiences. We'd been advised not to speak to members of the opposite sex, but I sought the few I'd distracted myself with for the past ten days. It was pure ecstasy to experience true reciprocity again. I was giddy inside, and yet as sturdy as the iron ball left over from a supernova. If any insecurity was there, it absolutely didn't matter. “Who are you?” was all I wanted to get from everyone.

*The platitudes
Jesus offered
were full sheets
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but I didn't have
the character to
contradict him.*

When the prohibition of silence fell on the tenth day, DJ J.C. would be the first human on the planet that made me miss our vows of Noble Silence. I really liked the idea of Jesus, then at length, he told me of his truth—and it hurt. As I drifted to sleep that final evening, Jesus spoke to me from the darkness, waiting intermittently for me to respond with “hmm” and “uh huh” before continuing his lament of social injustice and depictions of a not-far-off utopia. He pontificated in New Age musings: the foundations of which would save our humanity. The impartialness I had been fostering during those ten days began to backslide into narcissistic judgmental thoughts before I could fall asleep. The platitudes Jesus offered were full sheets in a doldrum, but I didn't have the character to contradict him—nor did I have an ulterior plan to save the world. Where his convictions were total, I was unimpeachably cynical. The historical Jesus was considered a master of the heart, and not the mind—that was the Buddha. To me, DJ J.C. had drunk the Kool-Aid, punched the ticket, doubled the dose, and opened his mind so broadly that it had fallen out. Although his ideas were truncated and grating, I liked him—but I couldn't tell why. As I finally drifted to bed, I became worried for the man with the digital watch. Even after we were allowed to speak he offered no conversation nor did he reach to join one. That evening he had reorganized his belongings with his back to us, itemizing the tightly rolled cloths into new neat rows on the bed.



I am in a mom and pop general store somewhere in Mendocino County just off the 101. I'm very slowly chewing single pieces of popcorn, and doing a slow investigation of a building inhabited by strongly colored products. The butter and salt are

strangely acrid, yet satisfying. The walls of the red and white wax paper bag makes a soft cutting noise against my fingers. My carpool and I left the volleyball court less than an hour ago. The old woman behind the counter asks if I'd like anything besides the popcorn. It takes me a moment to remember myself, "No, this will be all. Thank you." She takes my money. "I can't believe how little this woman gets it—" I don't even know why I thought that. Did it occur to me, or did I realize it? I don't think I thought it—it was just there—was it me? Or mine? "Alright, that'll be—\$1.08." I take my change and leave, bare feet swiping absently on the worn wooden floor.

I step onto the porch into the afternoon sunlight, gazing with scrutiny at the world returning. The highway is drying out and the tips of the redwoods steam in the sun's rays. The colors out here are superior—sacred, I think. The physical world and the non-physical within feel like divorced parents sharing custody of my mind, each tugging on a different ear, and talking shit about the other one. But as the doubt of it all comes crashing in, I get this feeling of reassurance that this Americana roadside store is as true as the void I was just brined in. I sit in the passenger seat as my friend drives southward home. The view unfolds like a serene unending painting.

❧ ❧

"How was it for you, man?" asks my friend.

It was great. "It was great—"

"—Do you think you'll keep the practice?"

Yes, I should try to. "Yeah, I wanna try." Will you? "How about you?"

"Eh. Maybe. Kind of intense, if ya know what I mean."

—yeah. "Either way, I'm happy we did this." ❧

*The physical
world and the
non-physical
within feel like
divorced parents
sharing custody
of my mind . . .*





IT WILL RAIN

By Katherine Hurley

I was bare foot in Tanzania on a dirt and dust path, with some golden cracking grass here and there. The African moon was yawning in the thick, blue sky—lying on his back, ready for dusk, but not worrying too much about it.

The birds bellowed, giggled, and whispered calls that crept into my brain and created rhythm. The long-tailed cuckoo had mastered a way of always finding a silent gap in the cacophony of voices in order to sing out:

It Will Rain It Will Rain It Will Rain

My naked feet ran to the tent where I hoped there was still water. I had plans to pour it over my head, and feel each drop turn from cold, to warm, to steam.

With large, presumptuous steps, I hopped along that dust path until I saw something lying beneath my descending heel. It was a snake.

I jumped back, stood still, and watched him. He lifted the front half of his body to watch me.

We stared at each other for about ten “It-Will-Rains.” His yellow eyes were hot with the thought of attack. The snake’s strong, beige body held itself up with a disturbing thickness, and his slimy eyelids slid back into his smooth head—I saw hate and emptiness in his gaze.

It was when he showed me his wings that I knew he was a cobra. Listening to my brain rhythm, and the rhythm of the birds, I backed away slowly and whispered to him, “We don’t have to do this.”

He scoffed the way a snake might scoff and wiggled away.



Jacob¹ had been slithering in and around madness for months. Always on his hands he wore maroon mittens, but he had cut the fingertips off with garden scissors. The wool unraveled around his fingers, and created loops for things to get caught in. Along with his mittens, his mind unraveled—and I was one of the things that got caught in the loops.

He was so dark except for the moments he tried to hide his smile. He would bring his mittened hand to his mouth, attempting to cover his crooked teeth. But the creases around his eyes told me he was happy. It was a look of disarming, and alarming tenderness that you had to trust. He was shy, but he could thaw out a whole room.

His eyelashes were heavy and black—they made you search for his eyes, and stop breathing when you found them. His hair was thick, dark and wild, like concentrated smoke, and I was:

Coughing Coughing Coughing

For months we tunneled through burnt-out craziness and snuggled up to darkness to hold its hand. I was taking my skin off, and breaking my bones down in order to descend with him into the cold and into love.

It only took one snowy Seattle night for him to really attack, and I wasn’t sure if I had the venom in me or not.

He walked into my room with a cheap bottle of red wine, a copy of *Frankenstein*, and a pocketknife. His lips and teeth were stained red as though he had been ripping apart flesh.

1. This name has been changed by discretion of the author.

From the way he paced in the room—feeling every pocket of air, surveying every shadow with his eyes—I knew something had gone too far.

I cooed soft words that I hoped would calm him. I made no sudden movements and used slow gestures. We stared. “Jacob? Will you sit down? We don’t have to do this.”

He didn’t hear me. Instead he brings out the knife—but not in a dramatic way that catches the light. Suddenly, it’s just there, and I’m dialing 9-1-1 for the first time ever, panting and tripping, watching him jump out the window.

I look down and watch his silhouette creep away through the snowy streets. I breathe again, but never really sleep.



This one is a dream, but here I am again, in Africa.

I am in a Masai village, holding a little girl’s hand and studying fruit. The sky is that fleeting dream-blue that makes the red garments on the women pop and smile.

Things are peaceful and bright until my brother turns to me and says:

Civil Unrest Civil Unrest Civil Unrest



He walked into my room with a cheap bottle of red wine, a copy of Frankenstein, and a pocketknife.



CONTRIBUTORS

COLIN BARRY was born and raised in Greeley, Colorado. He is a senior studying Sociology with interests in Environmental Studies and Creative Writing. His favorite thing about writing is that it grounds him. It takes him away from the stresses of the world around him and allows him to focus on the details of the here and now. To him, writing is focusing and meditative. For the past three years he has been spending his summers in Denali National Park and wintering in Europe, South America, and Southern California. He recently returned to Boulder to finish his undergraduate degree and make a few bucks bartending on the weekends. His real passion is travel and he hopes that he will soon be able to return to the road and further his interests in creative travel writing.

AMY BURNETT comes from Lakewood Colorado, although she did attend high school all the way in Mbabane, Swaziland. She has spent and plans to spend more time traveling throughout Africa. Rock climbing is a serious hobby and skill of Amy's. As an Economics major, she plans to defy the norm with her writing—which is a skill she believes most economists do not possess. She strongly feels that her writing can be used to expose the reality around her, as well as recreate special moments for herself and others.

KIM CAMPBELL is a junior studying both Math and Anthropology because she decided she didn't want any sort of social life. She's from San Diego and came to Boulder for school because having actual seasons sounded cool. Her favorite authors are J.K. Rowling and Julie Kagawa. She enjoys reading and binge watching TV shows right before finals. She wrote "SEPARATE WORLDS" for her upper division writing class.

HEATHER CLARK is a Business major at CU, hailing from nearby Niwot Colorado. She enjoys writing as a form of self-expression as well as a means to push her to have new experiences and try new things. She hopes writing will help her in her future endeavors, whether it is writing a blog or writing emails. She is an avid tandem biker, roller blader, and swing dancer—she insists that all are best done with friends.

ALYNN EVANS was born and raised in Fort Collins, Colorado. She is currently attending CU where she is studying Neuroscience and Art History. Animals are a real passion of Alynns', who admits that she has developed a habit of visiting the lonely

puppies at the local humane society. She is an admittedly picky eater, which was something she must have needed to cope with while traveling to Tanzania and India. Alynn claims that her inspiration for writing comes from the need to express things that only seem to make sense in her own head. To Alynn, our whole life is encompassed by our experiences with people and our surroundings, and it's important that we "never underestimate an experience."

EMMA GARDNER is from Centennial, Colorado. Since high school, art has been an essential part of her life, and now writing is a secondary outlet to express herself. Writing has been a great source of relaxation. The accumulation of day-to-day stress can be wiped away by the ten minutes it takes to fill up a few pages. When asked about her future she referred to the quote, "Every man must decide whether to walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness." - MLK

PARKER STEVEN GRIGGS is a junior from Aurora, Colorado studying Political Science at CU. He writes because it is the only way he can figure out what the hell he is trying to say. He plans on being a writer and loves revising his works and receiving critiques to improve his writing. Parker doesn't really know where he's headed, but as long as he continues to make progress he knows he'll be okay. Revising allows him to get technical and particular with his word choices and metaphors. He says the most difficult part of the creative process is actually taking the time to sit down and write. "This world moves so fast and often we overlook our basic ability to just sit, write, think, reflect, and create," he says.

TALIA HALFON is an ambitious CU student from Denver. She strives to utilize everything CU has to offer outside of the classroom, and often finds inspiration from these experiences. She writes to remember these experiences and finds great satisfaction in the finished products of her writing. Primarily though, Talia seeks to captivate the different cultures she is exposed to and hopes to work abroad in the future.

PETER HASSINGER is a junior at CU Boulder studying Environmental Engineering. Raised in Evergreen, Colorado, Peter is working to develop clean drinking water solutions in developing countries around the world. He has always enjoyed using writing as a tool to propel ideas through space and time, and strives to continue creative writing despite his scientific background.

ANDREW HECOCKS grew up in an area roughly ten square miles large in Westminster, Colorado. Such an upbringing developed his love for the poetics of suburban space and piqued his interest in writing about them. Currently in his third year as an English major, he has spent most of his time as an undergraduate looking for an opportunity to spread his work. Podiums like **JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY** have provided him with the mo-

tivation he needs to pursue his dream career of being a published writer. He still lives in Westminster, and kills time by waiting tables and reading books by John Green and Chuck Palahniuk. Included on the long list of things that fascinate him the most are airports, parking garages, and the human condition.

PAUL HENNING is from Mission, Texas. Inspired by the support and wanderlust of his family, Paul worked in the Navy as a helicopter mechanic after leaving his home state, and traveled the world before coming to CU to study Evolutionary Biology. In his professional career, Paul will be writing scientific articles and the precise technical studies of the academic realm. But as an artist, Paul explores writing as a tool for expression and reflection. When he is not producing environmental films, Paul is probably having fun manipulating the language and syntax of his written pieces like a puzzle. Like a literary mechanic, Paul is diligent in developing and exploring his pieces to find the best fit for himself, and his audience. He decides he is finished with a piece when he is ready to let it go, and walk on its own. Paul intends to continue writing and committing himself to new experiences and expectations so that he can realize the limits of his potential.

ARIEL HERMAN is from a small town in Northern California. Ariel came to CU to study astronomy, but was drawn towards the English degree because it better suited his desire to become a better writer. His interests are broad, and have included theater, philosophy, politics, ontology, astronomy, music, and cooking. He wrote "**DOING NOT-DOING**" for a personal essay assignment. It was an attempt to illustrate an experience that defined him that he did not entirely understand. Themes of self-reliance, self-knowledge, and the nature of happiness appear in "**DOING NOT-DOING**." His favorite authors include Neal Stephenson, Orson Scott Card, Art Spiegelman, David Foster Wallace, Hunter S. Thompson, Hermann Hesse, Alan Watts, and Shel Silverstein—to name a few. Writing for Ariel reminds him of being seven years old and trying to catch blue-belly lizards from underneath old plywood and rotting fence posts tacked with barbed wire. The process requires patience, being sneaky, poor odds, and the anticipation that you might find a snake—that would be way cooler—provided it isn't a rattler. He plans on attending grad school to pursue creative nonfiction and travel writing.


MADISON HOSACK was born, or more likely hatched, near Littleton, Colorado. She is currently double majoring in English and Humanities at the University of Colorado, enjoying all the finer things such as art, literature and, more pointedly, pizza. She spends too much of her time reading in the bath, which with her natural clumsiness has resulted in many a water damaged book by authors such as David Foster Wallace, Franz Kafka, and Michael Ondaatje. Although she understands the benefits of electronic books, she loathes them just the same. This is why she wrote "**MURDER BY E-BOOK**;" or it could have been to get an A in Topics in Writing: Best American Essays—either way.

KATHERINE HURLEY is a senior from Chicago studying English and Film studies at CU. She writes because the only way to give existence to beauty, purpose, and structure is to translate the mundane into an artistic medium. She says, without art—love, life, and death are hard to digest. Her favorite thing about writing is finding an unusual combination of words that create a specific sensation that is so unique, it could not be described in any other way. She says writing is a skill that establishes a strong foundation for critical thinking.

JE'LEIGHNA KILLET was born in North Carolina. Jeleighna said she once despised writing, so much so that she got in trouble at work for her e-mails because they weren't written well enough. She wrote "VICTORY LAP" simply because it was a requirement for a writing class. She chose to write about something that meant a lot to her—losing. She and the girls earned first place in the 4x100 meter relay after the race. She does not have any particular favorite authors and is a Psychology major at CU and is currently working on a minor in French. She would love to be a nurse and if she had the patience or funding for more school, she would choose to be an OBGYN.

CONOR KUCZKA is senior from Longmont, Colorado studying Psychology at CU. He enjoys exercise, hiking, writing, and drinking—a future writer, indeed—in his free time. "WARFARE'S LIFELINE," originally written for a class assignment, was submitted to JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY at the suggestion of his professor. This piece was inspired by Conor's experiences growing up during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and how these experiences influenced his decision to enlist in the U.S. Army following his graduation.

BEN O'LEARY is a Spanish major at CU. When asked if he thought how his writing would benefit his major or career, he explained that he only writes for enjoyment. He enjoys recollecting and writing about his experiences and hopes that he can entertain others with his stories. His favorite part about writing is scribbling out the first draft, because in his opinion, after that he has a tendency to second-guess himself too much. While writing my not be his major, Ben has found his writing and rhetoric classes here at CU to be some of his favorite. He wanted to thank his writing professor, Eric Burger, for encouraging him to participate in JOURNAL TWENTY TWENTY.

CLAIRE ZAI is from a tiny, one stoplight town called Franktown, Colorado. She enjoys playing almost all sports and her favorite team to follow is the Colorado Avalanche. While she enjoys the creative process associated with writing, she has found that much of the editing work can be tedious. Claire thoroughly enjoys any outdoor activity. 

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