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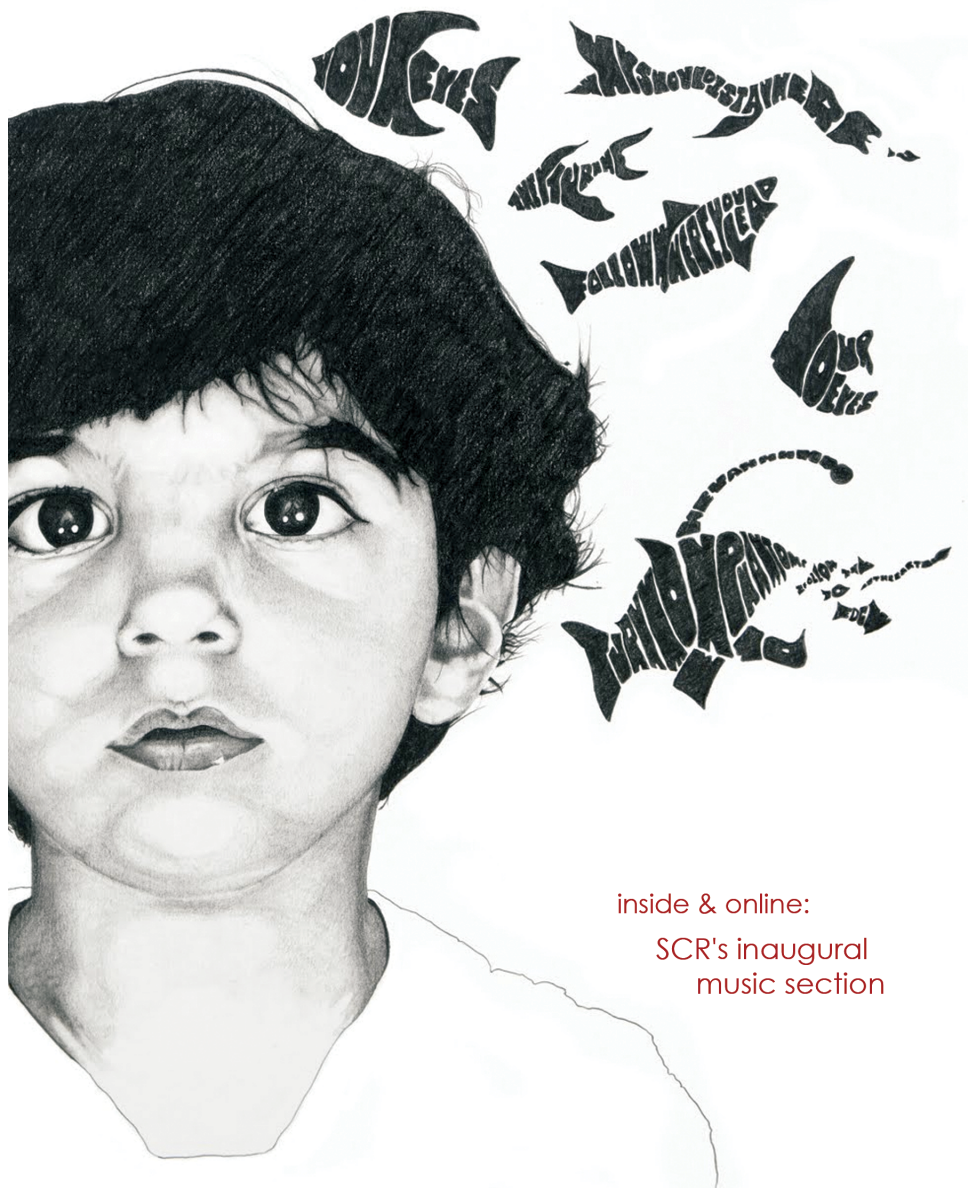
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santa clara review

volume 97, number 1



inside & online:

SCR's inaugural
music section

santa clara review

since 1869

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letter from the editor

Reader,

Out in the wilds of everyday life, the library, the neighborhood eatery, the highway, or even in the seeming wilderness of our own homes or minds, run-ins occur. Frequent as they are, it often takes a special kind of encounter to stir us to action. These moments of clarity can be as elusive as the spotting of a deer through the trees off the side of the road. Waiting at a stoplight you see it and it sees you—dual recognition. The deer stands there, as one poet put it, ears forward, eyes watchful, with latent flight in its limbs (N. Scott Momaday, “Simile”). Othertimes the deer appears suddenly through the windshield and the fog, in the middle of the road, just as writer Jennifer Hinds—featured this issue—discovered recently. Instances like these are less common. But, no matter its nature there is an encounter. Sometimes fleeting and sometimes unignorable, these events, these moments—and the ideas they rouse—are there for the capturing—with a net, a reel, a camera, brush, story, or phrase. Everyone has moments that portend import. The artists and wordsmiths featured here have merely unfurled these moments, stretched them to a frame, and brought them to market.

However, to use the word merely to describe this process is not to diminish the work, the often painstaking work it is, to fashion a proper representation of that moment. This work is always commendable, and always an act of courage because it’s a declaration of perspective. Thank you to everyone who has been brave enough to share your perspectives with the review.

Everyday the review receives these new perspectives from around the campus, around the country, and around the world (no lie! from England and Egypt even!). The small paper sailboats that reach the shores of our mailbox are taken up by our editors every morning and given a kid glove going-over. The advantage of running a smaller publication in a time of conglomerate media corporations is in being able to take chances: to showcase the wide variety of subjectivities we receive, to risk exhibiting a piece that we’re not sure will please the most people (but have found some really like), and to not worry about things like profit or advertisers. Please keep that in mind when you start to question our taste.

Even as a small publication with a modest distribution, the staff and I are fortunate to see the number of submissions continue an upward trajectory. Because of this we've chosen once again to expand our art section from sixteen to twenty-four selections. No doubt this upward trend has been aided by the steady increase across the globe in the use of e-sailboats, which these days have us tending the docks of our inbox more than our PO Box.

I mention world digitization because this is the year and issue that SCR jumps the bandwagon—with online page-turning technology. Vol. 97 No. 1 will be the first issue of the santa clara review to be released in both print and online. Spiffy right? But wait, that's not all. In addition to putting out a call for text docs and jpegs, this year the review staff put out a local request for MP3s—and the community delivered. You will see in the pages of our new Music Section four new acts brimming with funk, jazz, pop, punk, rock and soul. You will be able to listen to them online at santaclarareview.com/music. As you delight in our new online music section keep in mind that our submission page is only a click away, and that this is one more genre to which you can submit after having captured those deer encounters with your bow (and violin that is).

And, last but certainly not least, please tune-in to the new notes from our section editors at the beginning of each section partition. We're all thrilled that my voice will not be the only one prefacing the art.

With sporting regards,

nick sanchez
& the producers of the review

P.S. The review staff was very fortunate to work with Denise Krane as our interim staff advisor this fall. Thank you Denise for your warm personality, helpful input, and your office-plant contributions.

nonfiction



When most people think of non-fiction, I think the first thing that comes to mind is: simple...noncreative...boring even. However, I find non-fiction challenging. I find it exceedingly powerful, creative, and above all, intimate. When I feel called to write, I reveal a hidden part of myself on paper. The same is true of the stories you are about to read from incredibly talented writers. These artists have been called to write due to powerful occurrences in their lives—moments of pain, confusion, and discovery. The following writers have created beautifully introspective work and I invite you to partake in the journeys they reveal. Thank you, and enjoy these true stories of life's beautiful endeavors.

lydia biddle
nonfiction editor

55 Carefully Considered Sentences

When I was fourteen I sat in a circle of friends and asked the Ouija board: “How old will I be when I die?” The pointer beneath my fingertips moved to the five and moved again to the five, predicting my death at fifty-five. Occasionally in conversations or in my writing I recount little stories like this from my standard collection of memories. For whatever reason, certain occurrences weave their way tightly into the fabric of my brain, while others—for instance thousands from age fourteen—simply unravel and disintegrate.

Recently I read in a childhood memoir several scenes described in such detail that I wondered if they had been summoned up whole or if they had been painstakingly uncovered and reconstructed like fossil fragments from the earth, perhaps gently brushed and embellished by the writer’s imagination. My memories are like flashes of lightening at night: a momentary image and then nothing. I remember my mother calmly giving our choking dog two solid thumps on the back to dislodge a chicken bone. I remember my father hitting a fly ball of mythic proportions over the row of houses across the street. I remember my daughter as a toddler cocooned from ankles to neck in a beach towel and my father—with a fresh surgical scar down the center of his chest—ever-so-gently combing the tangles from her hair.

While relating an incident from my standard collection of memories, I sometimes ask: “Did I tell you this before?”—a sign of advancing age and the point of the Ouija board story because that ancient age of fifty-five seemed like a distant galaxy then, but it’s almost upon me now.

Fifty-five days before my fifty-fifth birthday, I wrote: *When I was fourteen I sat in a circle of friends and asked the Ouija board: “How old will I be when I die?”* That morning I started an experiment to write one carefully considered sentence each day for fifty-five consecutive days. Some mornings I spend my entire writing session with just one sentence, other mornings I move on to other sentences

elsewhere, but each morning I start with one carefully considered sentence. Each morning offers infinite possibilities for the sentence and day ahead, but also takes me one step closer to the end of this experiment and the end of my life, limiting the possibilities for both.

With a sip of coffee I savor a pungent paradox as I begin a Sunday morning in the predawn darkness at the beginning of the end of the weekend, thinking about what remains of my life. Sometimes I take the last bite of a meal and realize I've been oblivious to what I've been eating and this last bite is my last chance to appreciate the meal—and then finally I pay attention. Most people, according to a survey, would rather not know in advance when they are going to die—a sentiment that amazes me because I wholeheartedly want to know how much of my life remains. The closer I come to death, the more inclined I am to savor each moment and stop worrying so much about making mistakes. “Why worry,” I say to myself, “when there's so little left to lose?” After wandering forty years in the wilderness—from age fourteen to fifty-four—I believe I finally see the Promised Land, but I wonder if I'll live long enough to reach it.

Carl Jung described two seasons in an adult life. In the first season we are obsessed with biological and social needs—making babies, raising children, earning money, pursuing a career—and many of us lose touch with our original dream, our original self. In the second season “the crisis of mid-life can serve to wake up this dreaming undiscovered Self and the rest of life can provide the opportunity for its development,” presenting us with a second chance to pursue our true calling.

Here's to a healthy mid-life crisis.

For almost as long as I can remember I've wanted to be a writer. Now I'm writing one carefully considered sentence each morning for the fifty-five days preceding my fifty-fifth birthday, and next year I hope to write one carefully considered sentence each morning for the fifty-six days preceding my fifty-sixth birthday, and so on, and so on, and so on. Sadly, however, even if I spend an entire writing session on a single sentence, I can't stop myself from coming back in another session to change it, although after each day passes I have no choice but to live with that day.

I write in the early morning darkness before driving to work

to make a living killing time. I have a mortgage on a house thirteen miles from my job and I pay for gas to drive to work and I buy clothes to wear to work, and with all my purchases I contribute to a socioeconomic system that enables me and others like me to make a living killing time. I must confess I am not a devout Capitalist. I call myself a Liberal Libertarian Socialist Democratic Jewish Taoist Agnostic Vegetarian American. I am also somewhat delusional, but after years of writing poems, essays, stories, and novels that no one wants to buy, I am not delusional enough to quit my day job. Even so, I occasionally feel a glimmer of hope and tell myself to establish a writing business on the side.

Someone once wrote: "A writer addresses, and must address, his own kind of people," so I resolve to write and search relentlessly for my own kind of people and to address my sentences to them... or him or her... or maybe in the end only me. While trying to establish my writing business, I accept the fact that life is fickle because, for instance, "Wednesday's child is full of woe" simply because woe alliterates with Wednesday. "Thursday's child has far to go" simply because go rhymes with woe. As for me, I am Tuesday's child "full of grace" and I wonder if this means I should address my sentences to publishers and readers who were born on a Tuesday (my own kind of people) or if I should accept my failure as a writer with dignity and grace. Ah the ambiguity of language.

Painstakingly, I consider nursery rhymes, Ouija boards, and yet another sentence while yearning for that second season described by Carl Jung who also said, "the paradox is one of our most valuable spiritual possessions." Once again I try to become a writer and I ask myself: "Why a writer?" I write to get in touch with my "undiscovered Self" and to pursue my true calling. I write to escape the reality of another day buried in the garbage heap of another work week. I write to find meaning and magic in life.

In the beginning, one sentence a day for fifty-five days seemed a not too ambitious task, but as I make my way through these sentences and days I am reaching a different conclusion. One sentence at a time—one day at a time—time after time can accumulate slowly, substantially like deepening snow. My hope is that I will emerge from this fifty-five day accumulation "transformed" as if experiencing a springtime thaw.

Originally, I considered writing "one carefully *crafted* sen-

tence," but chose instead "one carefully *considered* sentence" because I believe that form should follow function unobtrusively. The *what* of a sentence (what it says) matters more than the *how* of a sentence (how it looks and sounds). A sentence shouldn't call attention to itself, posturing and shouting: "Look at me, look at my exquisite construction!" However, I wouldn't mind writing a carefully considered sentence that is also carefully crafted because as I wrestle with these sentences I get the feeling that language and meaning flow into and out of each other like some sort of Möbius strip in my mind.

Regardless of how my sentences are conceived and executed, they form what I loosely refer to as a life in sentences. And regardless of how my *days* are conceived and executed, they form what I loosely refer to as a life sentence. Two sentences from here and two mornings from now my experiment will end. As I prepare to take the last bite of yet another meal and try again to pay attention, I am aware that sooner or later my life will end too, leaving this or another experiment unfinished. Unless I die today, on my fifty-fifth birthday, after writing the last sentence in this paper-thin slice of life lightly basted in convenient embellishments.

Dialogues with My Mother

Prologue

My mother handled Dad's funeral quite well. Considering.

Considering that she had been removed against her will from her home almost a year before, to reside in an assisted-care facility, Tudor Hills, separated from my father who, in need of round-the-clock medical attention, lived a quarter mile down the road in the far more institutional setting of Avon Vale, among a far more damaged and dependent population.

Considering that she suffered from severe attacks of clinical depression, plunging her into states of catatonic anxiety whenever she was confused or whenever the rigid routines she had arranged to structure her days were in any way disturbed or displaced.

Considering that although she could participate in normal conversation—with her customary interest and affection—and speak accurately of the distant past, her recall of the previous days, hours, even minutes quickly vanished from her consciousness.

Considering that on the last night of my father's life—his breath wheezing in his throat, one ravaged arm waving in slow spirals above his head in an effort to communicate, his profile that of a desiccated mummy—my mother still expected to bring him home and nurse him back to health.

So, although she once asked us as we drove to the cemetery if we were on our way to the hospital, and although she broke down in tears of incomprehension and loss at the gravesite, and although she acted, occasionally, as if she were attending another kind of family function—an anniversary party or a bar mitzvah—as we sat shiva at my sister Dianne's house (the traditional ten-day period reduced to two in deference to her condition), it could be said that, considering the circumstances, my mother handled my father's funeral quite well.

Dialogues

This past year, when my father was still alive, my sister, who lived near the complex, would usually see our parents twice weekly, and I would travel from D.C. to Philadelphia about once a month. We would stop first at Tudor Hills to spend some time with my mother before taking her to visit Dad. But as soon as she saw us there, she was probably reminded of my father's deteriorating condition, and perhaps fearful of what might be awaiting her down the hill, she did not once during his last illness ask after his health. In fact, it often required considerable persuasion before she would agree to accompany us on our excursion to Avon Vale. (Once by his side, however, she seemed oblivious to his increasing frailty, his jaundiced complexion, the bruises on his thinning arms, and we would often spend as much time convincing her to return as we had trying to get her to come in the first place.)

Consequently, when we arrived to drive her to my sister's house for our final day of public mourning, Dianne and I were both alarmed and surprised to find her eagerly awaiting us, expecting to be instantly taken down the road to Avon Vale.

She was wearing her favorite cashmere sweater and a bright, floral-print dress, and as soon as she saw us, she arose from the white wicker chair in the sunny alcove and approached, smiling.

"Well, it's about time," she said. "I've been ready for what seems like hours. Let's go see how your father's doing."

Of course, we should have been expecting something like this. She had been forgetting so much so quickly. Why not also her husband's death and his funeral? But we were hoping for the best, and we were certainly unprepared for her eagerness to be taken to Avon Vale and the cheerful attitude that accompanied it.

"He seemed so much better yesterday, don't you think?"

"Mom," I said, stammering. "Yesterday. . . . Don't you remember?"

She looked toward each of us in confusion.

"Mom," began Dianne, trying and failing to progress beyond where I had left off, "don't you remember?"

"I haven't heard from the doctors today. What do they say?"

When can I take him home? I don't want to be here much longer."

"Mom . . ." and then Dianne looked toward me, and I tried again.

"Mom. Don't you remember? The funeral?"

Her smile tightened, a hint of anxiety tracing across it.

"We've come to take you back to Dianne's house. We're sitting shiva. It's our second day of sitting shiva."

Dianne added quickly that her husband, her two boys, and my wife were waiting for her there. "And Ben and Amy will be getting in from Boston any minute now. They want so much to see you. They were so sorry."

No additional explanation was needed, and as the anxiety on Mom's face turned to helpless panic, she seemed to shrink inwardly, and then she retreated backwards into the alcove, falling down into the chair. "But how could this be happening? He was getting better! You said he was getting better!"

Her shoulders were trembling, and the corners of her mouth slumped as if being yanked downward by fishhooks.

"I can't believe this is happening. I can't believe this is happening," she repeated until her words were overwhelmed by sobbing.

My sister and I drew up chairs from either side and draped our arms around her in that sunny alcove as she continued to cry and shiver like a child drenched by a sudden rainstorm, buffeted by cold winds.

After about a half-hour, we finally calmed her enough to walk her to her room, and we returned to Dianne's house without her. Fortunately, most of our relatives had paid their respects the previous day, and only Ben and Amy were disappointed by her absence.

The next day, Sunday, my wife and I stopped first at Tudor Hills before leaving for D.C. This time we had not notified the staff beforehand, but we arrived just after noon, when most of the residents would be relaxing after lunch. Mom was sitting at one of the cleared tables in the dining hall, and when she saw us approaching, she rose to meet us.

"Just a minute," she said, after embracing us one after the other, "I'll get my coat."

"No, Mom," I said, stopping her, holding her arm. "We just

came by for a few minutes. We're on our way back home to D.C."

"But aren't we going over to see your father, to say good-bye to him, too?"

Karen and I had discussed the likelihood of this happening again, and we had decided that we would try to avoid upsetting Mom by evading the truth. But with my father's death and funeral so fresh in our minds, I was struck by the awful premonition that unless we made an attempt now to imprint that fact indelibly into my mother's permanent memory, it would be lost to her forever.

"Mom, sit down," I said.

"No," Karen cried, "for God's sake, don't!" but still I led Mom over to the empty television room where we could be alone.

Of course, the outcome was the same as it had been on the previous day, and we had to delay our departure for almost an hour.

My attempt to engrave this event in her memory had also failed, as I discovered when I called her during the week. Rather than asking about the weather in D.C., her usual opening to our phone conversations, she immediately wanted to know if the doctors had told me anything about Dad's health, and over the phone, without hesitation, I again disclosed the fact of his death.

I don't believe I was being insensitive or foolishly optimistic, as Karen insisted, or needlessly cruel. Nor was I being blindly faithful to a truth that could not be easily discarded or wished away. Rather, I was convinced that Mom's failure to recognize my father's death would condemn her to a life of permanent anxiety, an endless mental torment over his fate and their future. On the one hand, she would persist in hoping for his recovery, but dread the formidable task of rebuilding and managing their lives under the daily threat of disability and decline. Yet every day she would also fear that he would never leave Avon Dale, and how could she bear watching him suffer through his final moments, endure the funeral and its attendant ceremonies, and return by herself to the deteriorating home she loved (a house and its possessions my sister and I were already arranging to sell) and live there alone without the man who had been her husband for over sixty years?

This was a condition I refused to accept, and perhaps I was hoping that my voice over the phone, distant and matter-of-fact, would help her absorb the reality of his death, relegating it to the

past where it belonged, and the following week when, instead of asking after the weather, she wanted to know what the doctors were saying, I again told her the truth.

Again, after her cry of disbelief, I heard only static and silence, and I pictured the receiver dangling from its cord and my mother trembling and shrinking and clinging tightly to herself with both arms as attendants converged about her.

My sister called the next day to tell me that the director of Tudor Hills had reached her at her office and cautioned her to be more “solicitous”—his words—when speaking with our mother over the phone, that it had taken the staff “considerable time” to calm her down the previous times she had spoken to me.

“I’m sorry,” I said, “but it’s difficult.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Well, how do you deal with it?”

“I tell her he’s the same.”

“And when she still wants to see him?”

“He’s sleeping peacefully.”

“And when she persists?”

“I change the subject.”

“And if . . .”

“I turn around and leave.”

Dianne then asked if I would be driving up to Philadelphia that weekend, and I told her we’d be there late Friday evening.

Karen and I called ahead to remind the staff of our visit and to avoid surprising Mom, but by the time we arrived to take her to lunch, she had already forgotten we were coming.

We found her in the community room, where a young woman, infectiously upbeat, was leading about half of her audience in a cheerful rendition of “Pack Up Your Troubles.” Although not singing along, my mother was swaying to the rhythms of the tune, and when she noticed us waving to her from the doorway, she smiled.

But the smile disappeared as she arose, and by the time we embraced, she was approaching the edge of panic as if she were expecting us to deliver a subpoena or a telegram from the War Department.

“What are you doing here?” she asked. “I’m shocked . . .”

“We’re taking you to lunch today. Didn’t they tell you?”

"They never tell me anything around here."

"Well, let's stop by your room. It's getting chilly. You'll need a sweater."

"Are we going to see your father first?"

"We've already been down there today," said Karen. "He's not feeling too well. We should let him sleep." After some discussion with my sister, this was the strategy we had decided to follow.

The alarm in my mother's face deepened. "What's wrong? He was fine yesterday."

"The nurses aren't worried, but they think that sleep . . ."

"I don't care what the nurses think. What do the doctors say?"

"They don't think it's anything serious," I said, jumping in. "They've been taking tests just to make sure. It's nothing. Sleep's the best thing. That's why . . ."

She stopped me in the middle of the corridor to look directly into my eyes. "There's something wrong. You're not telling me everything."

When I was a boy I was a good liar, lying audaciously to teachers, friends, my sister (especially my sister), and even my father without fear of discovery. But I was always reluctant to lie to my mother. She had an open, unsuspecting nature—tough, but with a certain modest innocence she carried with her from childhood—and although she preferred not to expose me, she invariably knew when I wasn't telling the truth.

Fortunately, Karen intervened. "Let's go to lunch first, Mom. Afterward, we'll call to see how he's feeling and if we can visit him then."

At lunch, we did our best to deflect her insistent concerns about Dad's present circumstances and their possible futures together. But no matter how often we changed the direction of the conversation—introducing the weather, our last trip to Europe (with photos brought for the occasion), Karen's new job, our hunt for a larger condo, the general cost of living—she returned us to Dad's bedside, to the length of their stay at Tudor Hills and Avon Vale, to the state of their house and their finances, dissecting our responses, our devices, like some prosecuting attorney interrogating a hostile witness, probing ever deeper for inconsistencies and perjured testimony, burrowing beneath our surface distractions for

the truth we were intent on keeping from her.

We returned to Tudor Hills exhausted by the experience, having revealed nothing.

The following day, Sunday, my sister and brother-in-law joined us on our luncheon outing. Our cover story this time was that Dad had been taken to the hospital for a few simple tests, but this tale only led to a barrage of troubled questions about hospital hours and visits, medical prognoses and treatments, release dates and post-hospital care, and, invariably, Dad's worsening condition until, by the end of the meal, we had all fallen into a protective silence. On our return, with the others in the back of the car, refusing to participate, and me, in the driver's seat, next to her, exposed to the full force of her assault, I eventually succumbed.

"I still can't understand why I can't see him now."

"Mom, the doctors advise against it."

"Then it must be something serious. Why aren't you telling me? There's something you're not telling me."

"It's not serious. It's only a bunch of standard tests."

"But how soon can I see him and when can I take him home?"

"We don't know. It could be a while."

"A while? But if they're only standard tests, why should it take a while?"

I pulled into the Tudor Hills complex. "Ok, we're here."

"Why aren't you taking me home?" she asked.

We dealt with this question in one of two ways. The first—frequently used when my father was alive, less so after his death—was that we wanted her to be close to Dad, just down the road in Avon Vale. Obviously, this was not now an option. "We don't want you to be alone," I said.

She twisted around to face my sister in the back seat. "When are you going to take me to the hospital to see your father?"

"I don't know," replied Dianne, seriously regretting the strategy we had chosen for the occasion and barely audible. "I have to work late most of this week, and then we're going to Atlantic City for the weekend. We've been planning it for some time."

Mom turned back toward me, having remembered that we would be shortly leaving for D.C. "You're going back to Washington this afternoon," and then when I said that we were, she asked

when we were coming back.

"Soon, probably. Next month for sure."

"Then who's going to take me to the hospital to see your father?"

"Mom." I replied, unable to dissemble any longer. "We'll be back next month for the unveiling."

"Unveiling? What unveiling? Who's dead?"

This last exchange prodded my sister into action, and she thrust herself almost between the two front seats. "Nobody's dead, Mom. Everything's all right."

But it wasn't all right. I had apparently dislodged a nerve close to the surface, dormant but alive, waiting to be ignited. "But that can't be. He was fine. Just yesterday when we saw him, he was fine, ready to go home!" and as she collapsed into tears, I sincerely hoped that if on the next day she failed again to recall Dad's death, she would soon begin to forget that he had ever lived, so that she could begin to recover some fragment of a life for herself, undisturbed by the shadowy presence of her absent husband.

Epilogue

We didn't take Mom to my father's unveiling, and even though she persists in interrogating me whenever I see or speak with her, I've taken Dianne's advice and always change the subject, lying whenever necessary, and continuing to lie, even though I'm sure she sees through me. I suspect that she knows Dad's gone but that the fact remains submerged, just beneath her consciousness, barely discernible and still vague enough for her to imagine that some day she will be presented with irrefutable evidence of the contrary. In the meantime, we continue to obfuscate, divert, and overwhelm her with words whenever we are in her company and escape into silence when pressed too hard. It's no answer, but it is a solution, and whenever I speak with Mom nowadays, I'm reminded of a particular conversation I had with her when I was eight years old.

It was on the occasion of the unveiling of my grandmother's tombstone. My mother's father had died when she was just a child, and she always viewed her own mother as a protector and her closest companion. Grandmom had been seriously ill for some time

before her death, but it still struck my mother very hard when it finally came. Yet, even though Grandmom had lived with us from my birth, it wasn't until the several months of accumulated absence and this morning of the unveiling that I, too, realized the immensity of what had happened.

"What's an unveiling?" I asked Mom as she was helping me knot my tie.

"It's another way of showing respect to someone who's left us."

"Grandmom's not coming back?"

My mother arose from her knees, looking down at me. "Of course not. You know that."

"She's in heaven?"

"Looking down at us right now."

"The doctors couldn't help her?"

"No."

"But when she was in the hospital, you said they'd help her."

"They tried. They could only do so much."

"Why?"

"Sometimes people become just too old . . ."

"How old was Grandmom?"

"Seventy-three."

"Is that too old to live?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why did she have to die?"

I was being as cruel and unthinking as children can be. But it was my first experience with death and loss, and I was frightened.

"Because God called her," she said. Her replies had become agitated, but I wanted to be reassured and told that everything was all right, and although I knew I was upsetting her, I persisted.

"But why?"

"Because it was her time."

"Her time?"

"Because she was sick and old . . ."

"But you said . . ."

"I know what I said," she replied, her voice now quivering, yet still sharp enough to contain a warning that I ignored. "I said it

was her time!"

"But why?"

"Because. That's why. Because."

"Because?"

"Yes! Because. Because. Just because!" and since she then left the room in tears, I had to settle for "because."

Taking Breath

Brianne and I arrived at the St. Denis metro in the 2nd arrondissement at 9pm Monday night, after I had eaten with my host family and decided against studying. I often, if not always, find good use out of the, “you only live in Paris once,” excuse when needing to justify lack of academic motivation. This night was no different.

Brianne, a fellow student from Virginia and my newfound travel companion and adventure seeker, met Adam a few nights prior at a bar in London. Adam, an American vagabond in his late twenties, was meeting us for some company. For what specific purpose this group of people was meeting at the St. Denis metro in the 2nd arrondissement at 9pm on Monday was beyond my knowledge.

She waved her hand through the air, and I turned to see a tall, burly man with wavy blond hair and blue eyes approaching us, grinning eagerly. Without hesitation, this man dove towards my face. His lips met my cheeks suddenly, almost knocking me over. He pulled back and grabbed me by the shoulders, arms outstretched, and boasted “*Enchanté!*” which loosely translates to “Hello, my name is Adam. And you must be Rachel! Pleased to meet you, Rachel.” I thought for a moment that I had met this tall burly man before, perhaps in a previous life, and we were becoming reacquainted after many years of separation.

“This is such a great part of town. You’ve got to look around when you have the time.” We followed him. “That right there is the Arc de la Porte Saint-Denis, built by Louis XIV to commemorate his military victories.” He spoke with his hands and his knees and his chest.

Adam, I learned, is a Chicago native and has been living in Paris for eighteen months as an English-speaking bike tour guide. I have always wanted to take a bike tour with a bike tour guide, but did not insinuate that he issue me a personal invitation, as I speculated that Adam would not have appreciated such boldness

so prematurely in our relationship.

Adam proceeded to lead us down various streets until we were interrupted by a perpendicular dark alley lined with prostitutes. “Don’t take pictures. They can get aggressive.” We followed him. This was the street of his apartment, which I then learned was our destination. My imagination stirred boundlessly and I could only think of the movie *Taken* and how I was about to be, in fact, taken. My apprehension grew as Brianne and I were led up eight flights of a narrow spiral stair case, and on the way passed a section blocked off by caution tape with a sign that translated as “undergoing investigation.” If we were going to be killed, I thought, which at this point seemed likely, I suppose the very top floor of an old apartment building on a prostitute street is the best place to do it. Brianne chattered casually with her new friend who had not stopped speaking with his hands. I was planning my escape.

The door creaked open to reveal a 2-bedroom flat dimly lit by hundreds of small white candles, jazz music lingering in the musty air. Another young gentleman sitting comfortably on a leather couch rose to greet us. He did not lunge at me with his mouth, which I was thankful for. He offered us slices of a rustic baguette with Camembert and poured four glasses of red wine. Adam retreated to the kitchen, and Brianne and I sat and talked with the new man whom I believe was very nervous, as he stuttered frequently. Mitch was currently studying in Paris at an institute for technology and architecture and living a few blocks up the street. We sipped wine slowly, letting the record player occupy gaps of silence, and he began to point out and explain the artwork scattered on the walls, which I had not noticed until this point.

A blonde head appeared.

“How do you guys feel about chopsticks?”

“What’re we having?” Mitch chimed from his position on the couch. I was only waiting to hear a response along the lines of, “our guests,” but the sizzling of a frying pan had drowned out Adam’s ability to hear the question.

“Adam is an artist and this, this one is a painting of a woman with her left leg crossed ninety degrees across her right, but most people, when they see this one, think she is riding a camel. This was one of his first paintings. These are views from various places in the city—like that, obviously, is Sacre Coeur. See Montparnasse

in the background? And this one I think is in the 14th. And this one here, this is an imitation of Van Gogh's famous piece, but I forget the name." *Starry night*, I thought. That one, I admit, was very good.

I began to smell aromas of Thai cuisine and my mouth watered.

The hundreds of vanilla scented candles, I found, were a gift from Adam's mother that had resurfaced while cleaning out boxes, and were not intended for any specific purpose tonight other than getting use out of hundreds of unused vanilla scented candles. I quite enjoyed them.

We emptied the three bottles of wine that lay before us, our hosts assuring the ladies' glasses were never short of half full, and finished two jazz records. Mitch brought out another loaf of bread, accompanied this time by a saucer of salted oil and vinegar. Moments later, a plate hot with steam was slid in front of my view—a well-portioned chicken dish liberally marinated in an orange tangy sauce (a recipe Adam had brought back from Bangkok) neighbored by seasoned potatoes, peppers, grilled onions, and tomatoes. And chopsticks. It must have been near 11pm when we began to feast, laughing and gulping and trading and pointing.

Brianne encouraged Adam to share stories of his travels—the ones that he had shared during their first encounter at the London bar, when they spoke for hours over cocktails. The ones that had aroused in her the enduring fascination that gave us reason to find ourselves weeks later sitting and eating Thai food in the traveling man's apartment on a late Monday night in the first place. And so he did tell stories of his travels, and how he has known the corners of the world with his own eyes and ears and feet. He shared stories in the most amusing way, often with his hand rested on his chest to control the frequent bursts of laughter, hunched over his knees, pulling us in closer. He told us how he lived in Morocco with a man who worked as a fisherman trader, spent months at a cooking school in Rome, danced in Spain (he enjoys the company of Spaniards over any other people), learned to speak Chinese in Shanghai. He used his tongue to push mangled chicken to the side of this mouth and spoke in between gulps about how he meditated in Bali and countries lining the eastern coast of South America, felt the sand of the Sahara between his toes, helped the helpless in Iran. He told stories of dumpster-diving, his loathing for Australians,

couch surfing, and Parisian bike tour guiding...

My legs had turned numb when I realized I was sitting on the edge of my seat.

He told us, finally, about his plans to leave Paris—a city he has fallen in love with—and how he recently bought a one-way train ticket to Germany where he plans to rent a 5-bed room apartment in Berlin, to which he plans to invite anybody and everybody to join him and do art. And he left it at that and continued chewing.

Yes, I am safe with you, Adam. And now it is all clear to me.

I will come with you to Germany, Adam, and I will live with you. I will live in Berlin in your apartment and we will transform it into a studio and we will do art and invite others to do art. We'll set easels up in various rooms and maybe we'll cover the floors with tarp or maybe we won't care enough. Some will draw and many will sculpt—and music! Oh, we'll have music. Guitars and saxophones and a piano—I will play the piano. We will spend our days there and let the light from the windows flood the white walls and I will write and you will paint and we will learn from each other. And perhaps people will come to the studio art apartment and want to live there with us and we will let them. And when everyone is done with their art I will tell you of the times when I thought I knew things and you will tell us of your weeks in Greece and Holland and Dubai and we will laugh about the seriousness that poisons human thought. And then we will admire our art and eat day old bread and cheese and maybe you can cook Bangkok orange chicken if you're not feeling too tired and we'll always have one extra wine bottle in the cabinet and we will live there until we don't want to live there anymore.

I had dropped one of my chopsticks. Brianne kicked my foot and I looked up to see empty plates and the American traveling men perched on the balcony clutching glasses, waving at us to join. My chest heaved. I hadn't been breathing until now.

Death of a Deer: A Roadkill Tragedy

Reality television. Food. Sleep. Getting home. Those were the only things bouncing through my mind as I illegally sped down Highway 5 back towards Northern California at 2 AM on a Sunday morning in my white Honda Civic. I was already exhausted from the long weekend partying with friends in Cal Poly; the prospect of an even longer drive back did nothing to help my already minimal concentration to the road. The surrounding landscape and looming highway all blurred into one hazy image so, of course, I didn't notice when the deer popped out in front of my car.

I screamed and immediately slammed on the breaks, which was a big mistake. The deer rolled upward onto the head of the car, shattering my windshield into thousands of pieces and showering my lap with glass. Blood began to leak through the new broken lattice design of the windshield and drip onto the dashboard of the car. My hands shook as I struggled to unbuckle my seat belt and I scampered out of the car as best as I could without cutting myself on the pieces of loose glass. As soon as I was out of the car I backed away from the sight and ran into the surrounding field to throw up. As I retched I tried not thinking about the smell of death that had not only permeated my car but also saturated my hair, my clothes, and even my soul. After I finished vomiting I took deep breaths to stop the shudders that wracked my body. After I calmed myself down a little I slowly decided to walk back to the car.

I decided to start with the fender. It lay mangled at the foot of my car, as though it had been crunched in a giant garbage disposal. I then raised my eyes to the hood of the car, where there was a huge dent from where the deer had rolled onto it. On the windshield lay the deer, limbs sprawled as though it was some kind of sadistic Christ on a cross, though the view of this particular crucified animal did not emanate any kind of sacred pacification. Blood oozed from the multiple cuts on the deer's body. The deer took deep breaths, and with each breath the car wheezed and shook with the effort from the deer trying to cling to life. Its eyes were wide and

unblinking, reflecting the depth of the agony it was suffering. It fixed on the only other living thing for miles around: me.

As I stared at the deer I started to have oddly disjointed and irrelevant thoughts: What kind of life did the deer lead? Was it a deer in the prime of its life or an elderly deer ready to close the door on its existence? Did the deer have a family? None of these made sense, but still the thoughts persisted. At the time, I didn't think of how I would explain the car to my parents, or why the road was oddly empty at the time. All I could think about was how I had taken a life away—albeit an animal's life, but still I had taken a life nonetheless. I had unnaturally disrupted the ecological chain by hitting an innocent animal. If this were a human being I had hit, I would, no doubt, have been locked away in jail. However, although legally what I did was not a crime, I felt morally accountable for hurting an innocent creature. When the deer fixed its large doe brown eyes on me, I thought to myself, "I'll match its stare. It will not die without any kind of comfort." As the deer's eyes began to widen into its death gaze, I began to pray. Although I am not religious, I hoped that the deer would die soon—if not, I would put it out of its misery, somehow, some way.

After a few moments, the deer began to shudder in the throes of death, the car shaking and slightly moving with each of its shudders. After an almost interminable period of what was probably not more than a few minutes, the deer finally stopped breathing and died. At that moment, I began to cry, which I also felt was uncharacteristic. I thought, "Why am I feeling so much for this creature? It's just a deer." I've crushed ants and bees and have kicked cats out of my way without a problem—why was this one deer's passing affecting me so much? Was it because it showed me how fragile life was? Or maybe it is because I could easily imagine myself in a reverse situation: me crossing the street on my way to school, only to be hit by an absentminded driver with more important things on their mind than my personal safety.

I closed my eyes, and in my mind's eye, I imagined that the deer was still alive and running in the middle of the road. I saw it coming and stopped my car in time, my fender lightly kissing the deer's foreleg. I got out of the car to see if the deer was okay and our eyes met. The deer seemed to smile at me with its eyes and

say, “Yes, I cheated death. I will live forever and forever.” After the brief rendezvous with our eyes, the deer turned on its hind leg and scampered off into the distance, never stopping and never glancing back.

poetry



Poetry is a mosaic: simple stones used to create a powerful piece of art. Everything depends on selecting stones of particular color, texture, size and shape. Equally, everything depends on where the stones are placed. However, poems are not made with stones; they are made with sounds, sounds that most often coalesce into words. Those words are then joined into patterns and those patterns create meaning to a reader depending on the context of his or her life. A poem isn't about achieving perfection; it's about communicating reflection. If one of these pieces catalyzes the reader to create something beautiful or profound in turn, to me, that would be poetry.

joshua fredkin
poetry editor

(Second) Chance Infinity

“[Scientists] estimate that your closest identical copy is
10²⁸ meters away.”

— *Scientific American*, May 2003

Cosmologists postulate that the cosmos consists of an infinite number of parallel universes. *Your parents made every mistake that they didn't make on this earth, somewhere else in outer space.* However, they also posit that a finite number of particles were released by The Big Bang. *You have dropped out of school to form a domestic partnership with Rush Limbaugh.* If an infinite amount of space is filled up with a finite number of possible configurations, then countless duplications occur of every configuration. *You have dropped out of school to form a domestic partnership with Rush Limbaugh, and you live in a trailer with seven German Shepherds and all of your in-laws.* In other words, everything that could possibly have happened has actually happened somewhere in the cosmos. *Sarah Palin is apologizing for a life poorly spent, Al Gore is inventing the Internet, Osama bin Laden is working for Lehman Brothers.* In different parts of the cosmos, copies of every person live identical lives to their counterparts on earth, some remaining identical forever, some identical until last week or until yesterday or until just this moment . . . *You bungi-jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge this morning. You died in your sleep last night. You are playing chess with Che Guevara on an island off the coast of Panama.* Everything you ever regretted doing, you didn't do. Everything you ever regretted not doing, you did.

Nightmares

He said write them,
write those that haunt you,
those that loiter in your soul
and can never be arrested,

find a way to write them
and then take the edges
of your hands, take them
and brush away everything

that doesn't make you afraid,
move your hands across the poem,
brush words away like the burnt
gray shreds from a pink eraser,

and what doesn't move can stay.
I told him about those dreams
in the weeks that followed — when I was
on the planes or in the buildings, seeing

it each night from a new angle.
I dreamt I stood safe in one
while the other burned so hot
my back began to sweat.

I saw a man appear at a broken window,
looking down then across the distance
at me, his tie flapping in the open air —
it was the color of the sidewalk.

The woman who told us to leave
stayed behind. I never dreamed of her
again. I had no right to these nightmares,
I was six hundred miles away,

but for weeks they played like b-reel
projected on the white curtain of my mind.
I watched it in my sleep so many times I can
see it right now without closing my eyes.

He stubbed out his cigarette
and said *Write it*. He was old and sat
awkwardly in a wooden café chair,
but his voice carried no doubt: *Write it*.

I said this was not a poem I could write
and he slapped the glass-topped table
with his palm. The room stopped
but the silverware kept singing.

He leaned back and spread his arms,
said he *didn't care who heard this*,
we could *run it as a headline in the*
New York Fucking Times,

because *no one owns a tragedy*,
the *goddamn joke of life*
is *that everyone who pays attention*
has nightmares,

especially you.

Sometimes

Sometimes he
seems so far
and it doesn't
even
matter
that we fall
asleep, dreaming
of the others'
feet between our own.

Shook from the Blankets

I can still hear Long Island Sound coming:
bringing its salt to your hair—a season

that stuck to the corners of your mouth
and where you stand, though on the sand now,

barefoot and without expression—drops
of ocean drying to your back. I see myself

walking towards your hand, kissing it, and pulling
your body to mine, as if you're the beach

umbrella I am tilting. I always felt our days leaving
us like sand we shook from the blankets;

I could taste the crushed rocks in your hair,
even as your tan kept the face shy and surprised.

I remember you never fighting with words,
always staring towards the trapped Atlantic, waiting

with your ears. But I remember another time
by our ocean, in a damp hotel room, when waves

were the white bed sheets pulled above our heads,
when beach restaurants turned weekend trips

into real vacations. And I'll never forget the sound
of grown couples making love in the other room—

this transformation coming from the view, the bare feet,
and the blue plastic monkeys hanging from our drinks.

Sunday's Lecture

Why lift myself when I can lift the world.
Why kiss the crutch when I can kiss a girl.
Why ask why when the answers never change
All I give's an excuse; all I get is the same
But the street never strays, only cars on its way
And the horizon we see's the horizon we made
We know not the other side of the hill,
Don't trust you'll find it, just trust, and you will.

Plebia

I am the human canvas,
I bear what is written unto me,
I stand amongst clay men in the hall of mirrors.

Gilded ambitions, imprinted identities,
Each a reflection of another.

An evanescent hand, a faint stroke;
The canvas transforms, the clay conforms;
One resists, one succumbs.

The terra cotta men relive the collective life,
Subject only to the whole of themselves,
Coaxing, coercing, corrupting.

The canvas fights this force,
And finds itself in its resistance,
Not a construct, but a self borne of the whole.

Poem

he wanted women
I wanted wisdom
while the other
wouldn't stop talking
I heard a guitar
across the table
while I drank a
double rum and coffee
she looked at me
like I was a lawyer
but I just wrote this
on the table

Death

squashed
insects
and felled
trees

drunk
half-brother
and father

Intermission

This is intermission, the waiting room
between being lost and being found,
the sleepless night before the mutiny,
the pause before the kiss, lips half open,
eyes half shut, the lights dimming down,
the world watching, momentarily attentive,
popcorn hanging midway to the mouth.

This is the crossroads, the tipping point,
the suspended bridge to who-knows-where,
the day before the day of reckoning,
the blur of waking at the finish
of a dream of darker days, weary eyes
peeping at the light around the corner,
hesitantly folding back security blankets.

This is anticipation, the swaying balance,
the countdown to the thunderclap,
the calm in the eye of the hurricane,
the coin spinning heavily in midair,
waiting to come down on one side
or the other, breaths held, waiting
on pins and needles for heads or tails.

This is the potential, the tiny stone
precarious upon the mountain slope,
the rush of air over glowing embers,
the empty page waiting to be filled
with the record of the consequences once
the other shoe has dropped, echoing until
the people have spoken, broken the silence.

This is intermission, the restless mumbling
and fumbling through the program of events,
the cacophony of chatter from the lobby
speculating who will live and who will die,
wondering who is waiting in the wings, poised
to steal the spotlight from the audience,
the watchers unaware of where the story ends.

Meditation on Flying

1

The early Wrights crossed the Ohio and stopped—
Not plunging on, not seeking to quench a thirst in that
 ruttled edge ward trek.
Instead, they turned to shudder of wings,
 blurring feather and bone,
 tip and whirl.
It happens still on nights
 Adam joins angel, forming girl.

2

Daylight.
A well-dressed man, facedown,
Nested his hips in a wooden frame,
Hands gripping forward-jutting sticks,
Well-shod feet braced in a T-bar wired to a spiral twist,
Hips' swivel full of consequence.

At each open side, they stood
 At the start of something new,
when the prone one, in wild prenuptials, yelled,
 "Let go!—"
rising in the salty breeze.

And the wind was right.
He, too, rose, from the ground:
 he began to fly.

Exploring winged form in secret on the dunes
of the Carolinas,
riding the salty air,
a seeker of tao altered
letter by letter his grammar,
twinning a new
being from his ribs, now big as condor wings,
now monstrous,
now haunting.

Interstates

Circling bright cities, we arc,
crisscrossing the curve of water
or swooping down the ramp
from 101 to 80,
our coursing, blinkering lanes
leading one to another
like veins pulsing with blood.
Night transforms us. Travelers
become stars shooting low
on the skyline, lost to
themselves, to the others
speeding by in the dark—
high beams on dim, racing
mile by mile to find
the wet pavement, the black
macadam, soft and hot.
Bound together, we rush
like falls of water, as one,
accomplishing our arc
by instinct, through pure drive.
On and on, we travel,
the Earth unfolding along
its seams of rock and soil;
we score the ground as we go,
not knowing whether we're
coming now or going.

Inevitable

Here sprouts a streetlight from the coldest soil;
the seed interred by hand I do not know.
Its slow steel roots reach down to drink spillt oil;
its trembling tendrils crack the walk to sow.
As dark approached we children gathered 'round
to play beneath its glowing face. The nights
we spent swinging from limb to limb, the ground
so far below as though we were in flight.

The lamp still stands across the street, my home
within its light. I fear one day I'll wake
to finding it creaking toward and with a moan
collapse upon with all its awful weight.
So forced to take refuge within its steel,
I'll just grow numb and learn to be still.

The Passage

The City of the Living:
Stones upon steel, piling higher.
And beyond, the River.
And beyond, The City of the Dead:
Split, jagged stones left rotting.

There is only one, casual
At the edge of this thickly-black water,
Who knows which is which
—But he's not telling. And besides,
It does not matter;
I've not the coins for passage.

Forecast

Then Love was dead,
the hearse laden with ersatz flowers.

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc:
what occurred earlier was the sure
cause of what came after.

For the horse had been ashen,
scraping roots of the dying grass.
Rivulets ran dry; snow had long ago
become sand. Lupine and evergreen
turned to rust; erosion and dust
had reached their tipping point:
a ravaged land possessed by ghosts.

When storms blew in, I stood against
flickering clouds and prayed for drought.

Hag

Consider the hagfish, jawless, tube-shaped
creature of the deep that enters its prey
through the other creature's mouth,
gills or anus, then eats its way out.
Like the supernaturally ugly woman
of European folklore, it "rides" its victim
until death, wearies it with vexation.

Beldam, weird sister, fury, witch.
The poet divines with oracular powers,
writing on wind, writing on water.
She straddles the hedge of the civil village,
a wilderness beyond.
Flies about like a ghost or smoke,
having eaten your dreams.

art



I can't presume to know what you may or may not like about this art section. I can't assume you'll find any meaning in any of my selections, nor is it necessary to find any meaning within these pages in the first place. What do I hope for this art section? Talk about it, share it, and remember it.

D.

Runaway Train



mike larremore |

wardrobe: sweetz clothing company | makeup: sabrina cayne | model: alexandria torrescano

digital photography

12" x 18"

Hours Early



| kimberly aagaard
digital photography
7" x 5"

Blossoms



jackie herring |
digital photography
12.9" x 8.64"

Typographical Study



| sharon oshana
print
20" x 15" each

London Eye



henry sotomayor |
digital photography
27" x 21"

The Garden of Exile, Berlin



| katie larkin
digital photography
11" x 14"

380B - Brown Paper Bag, Artists with Huge Egos



380B

380B-4 ^P
Daffodil Yellow

380B-5 ^A
Neon Light [†]

380B-6 ^A
Lemon Tart [†]

380B-7 ^D
Marigold [†]



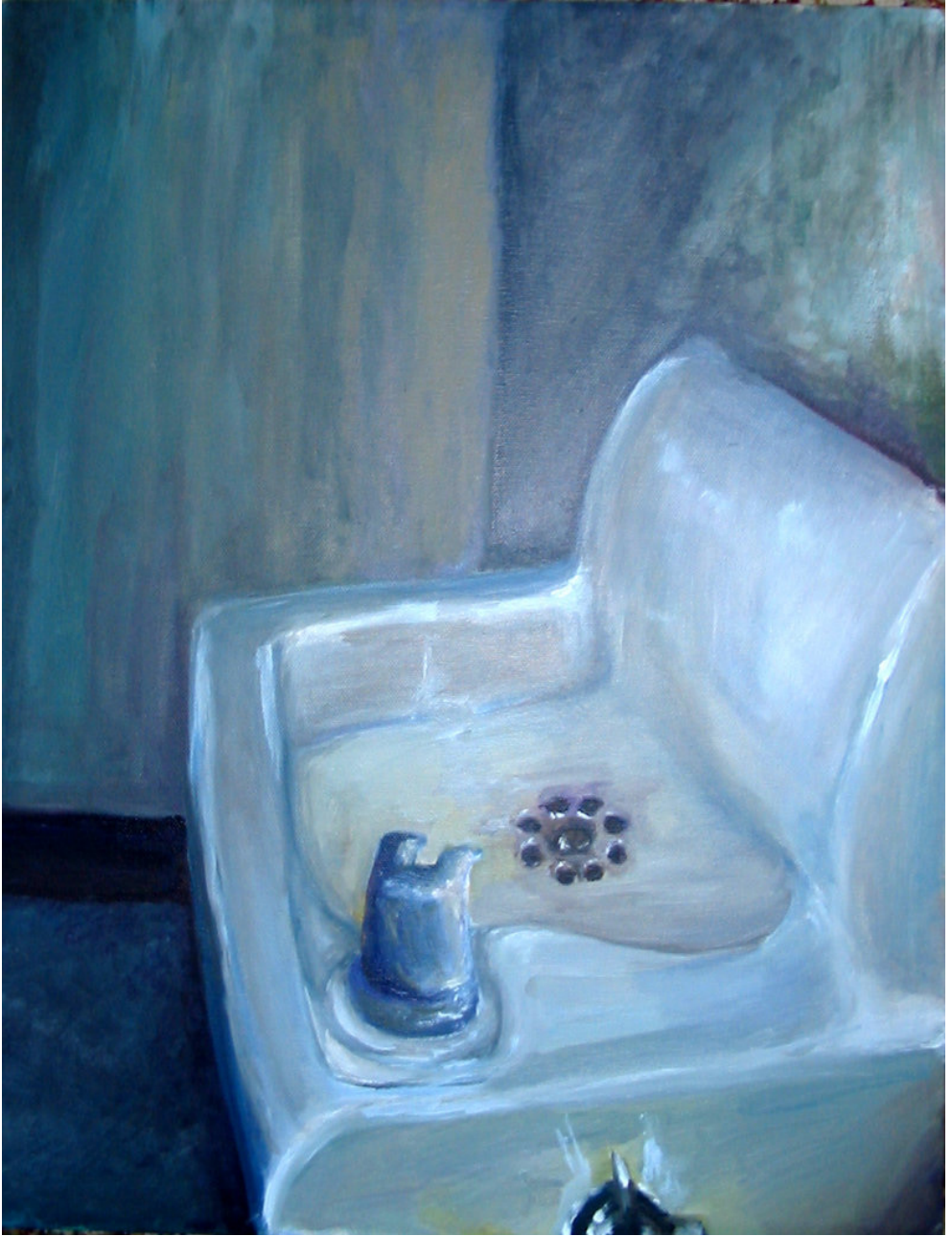
shawn huckins |
acrylic and latex on canvas, mounted on MDF
49" x 40"

Mother Mother Sunshine



| brandon jones
photography
8" x 12"

Grunge Fountain



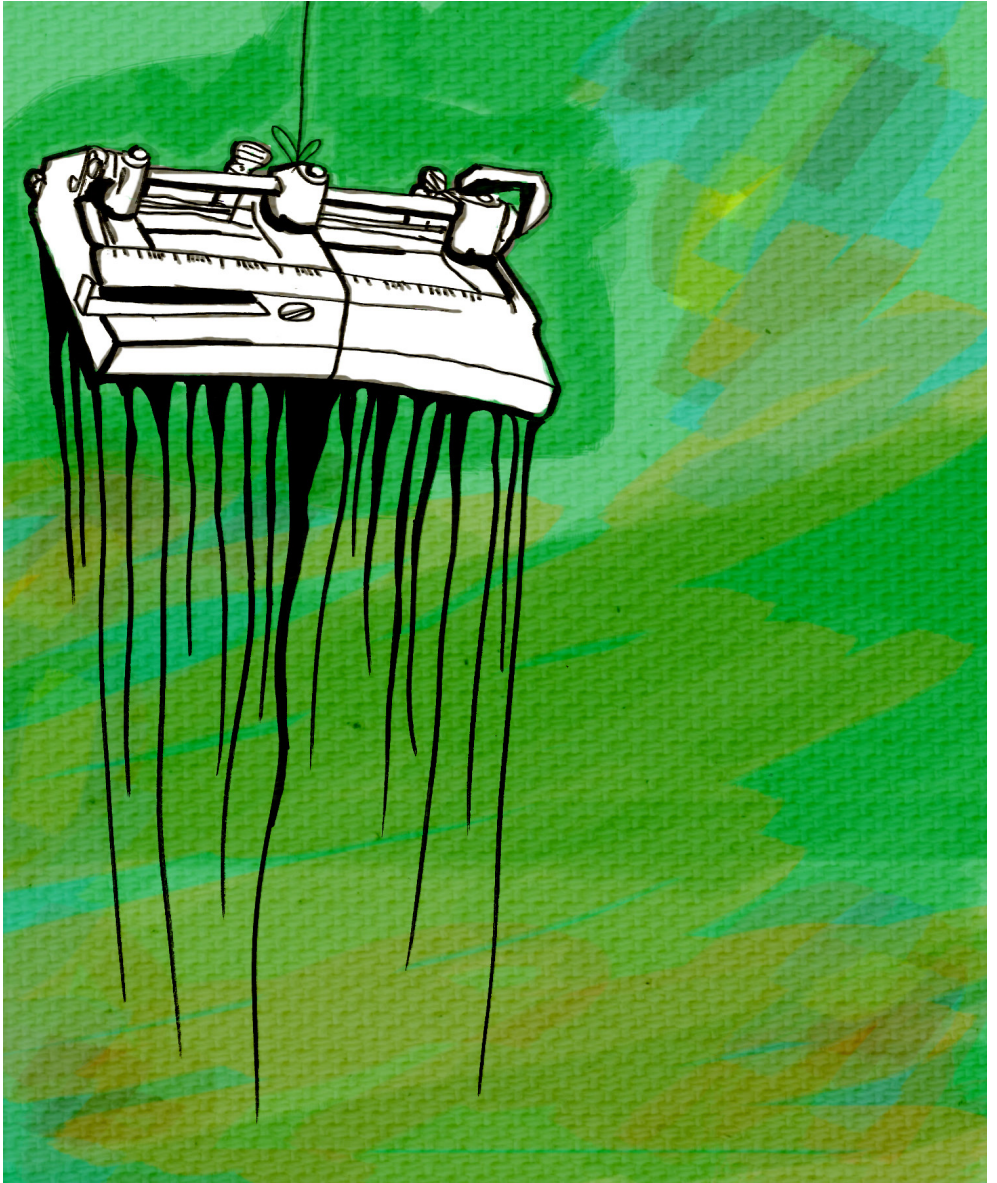
natasha wallace |
acrylilc on canvas
14" x 20"

Boy Before Mirror



| reid hudson
acrylic on canvas
24" x 30"

Mechanical Engineering 10 Drawing



emmanuel mendoza |
ink on paper
5" x 6"

Alana 1



| rené lorraine
oil on canvas
40" x 40"

School Boy, El Salvador 2007



renée billingslea |
b&w silver gelatin print
16" x 16"

J (adapted from Joel Peter Witkin's 'Cupid and Centaur')



| kellie flint
acrylic and feathers on canvas
24" x 18"

East Meets West



kate bradley |
digital photography
8" x 10"

Elegy



| eric tseng
watercolor on paper
10.5" x 13.5"

Painting for Kellie 2



mary plante |
acrylic on paper
8" x 11"

Untitled



| daniel escobar
b+w photography
10" x 8"

Stockholm, Söder



charlotta kratz |
digital photography
6" x 4"

Untitled



| kathryn fraser
clay
24" x 19"

The Crystal Ball



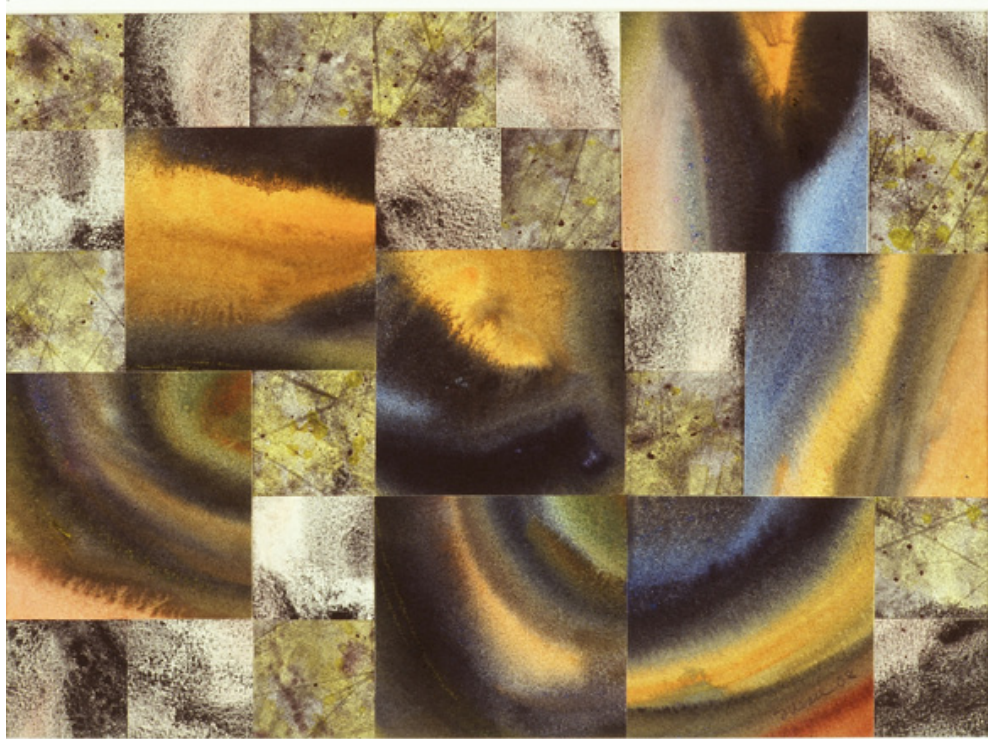
marcela villegas castañón |
digital photography
11" x 8.5"

Venice (Italy)



| edy madsen
oil on canvas
16" x 14"

Fire Storm



susan black |
watercolor
16" x 12"

Your Eyes



| chris winterbauer
pencil
25" x 19"

fiction



Fiction allows writers and readers to step into different roles, to speak with new voices, and to experience the unfamiliar or the familiar anew. I enjoy the following seven short stories because they present strong, new voices that guide me into new worlds, or even just right down the street. Each story features very different author and character voices, among them: a father painstakingly trying to connect with his sons, residents of unfinished houses enduring individual tragedies, and a hopeful apple awaiting harvest. I hope you enjoy experiencing the everyday and the fantastic with these characters and their authors, and that they inspire your own voice and ventures.

cantie nguyen
fiction editor

First Man, First Woman

It is said there were four worlds before this one. The first was a land of mountains, and the people hunted the sheep and goats of the valleys. The earth was rocky, and they could not grow the squash and corn, the pumpkin and beans. Bears and wolves attacked them, and life was hard. First Man and First Woman knew the people could not survive that world, so they prayed to the gods for another.

Antonio came from a small mountain town south of the Rio Grande. He and his brothers crossed the bridge every day to El Paso, over water sometimes slowed to a trickle. They gathered at crowded corners with the other day laborers, ready to build, herd, or dig for whoever would pay.

At night, when they had crossed back through Ciudad Juarez to the fire at home, they would lay on the ground in their room, sharing dreams in the flickering darkness. Boys who could never show hands void of outlining dirt became Mexican soldiers and mayors of small mountain towns. In the dark, Antonio was a rancher with ten thousand head, married to a rich man's daughter. In the fall of 1936, he met Guadalupe Silva. She lived on the nearby Pueblo reservation, and worked downtown cleaning bathrooms. They met in Ysleta Park at lunchtime, seeking shade from the only available tree.

She smiled at him.

Under that tree, he found a new dream. She'd read about California, and was saving every penny she earned. His grandfather had talked about California, how some of his people fled west when others went south.

"*Su gente?*" she asked.

"*El Diné,*" he said.

She arched one thin eyebrow his way. "*Eres Navajo?*"

"No," he said. "*Soy mexicano.*"

"*Bien,*" she said, and when he asked if she would be there

tomorrow, she promised she would.¹

The next summer he crossed the river one last time. Juarez was bustling as he came through, women selling carnitas and corn, chickens with their heads spun off.

But it all drifted past, quieted by the image of her smile. He couldn't feel the pawing of small hands. Couldn't hear the groan of wagon wheels, or creaking leather straps on the burros. None of it could match the crooked way one corner curled higher, the top row tooth jutting slightly aside.

Halfway over the bridge he paused at the railing. The current flowed smoothly beneath him, high from heavy rains. He looked at his rippling face, the wavering sun, the flight of birds drawn with a shaking hand.

Behind him were family and friends. Some already slept underground, others soon to be buried beneath miles and years. Up ahead was America. A new family. A home to be filled with boys of his own, dreaming brighter, better dreams of their own.

Staring down there was nothing but water and reflection. He spit, watching part of himself float away.

On the other side, she waited. Smiling.

They married in her church before heading west. Across dusty plains in a truck bought for twenty-five dollars from an old rancher's widow, held together by baling wire and prayer. Antonio and Guadalupe Velasquez. Heading west to California.

They landed in Bakersfield, in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, bought a two bedroom house with the rest of their savings, and he went to work picking peaches. It was that or the oil fields, and the pick-up he jumped in was heading for peaches.

Within two years, the first daughter came. Nene, with her mother's eyes. Nene, quiet and watchful. Like her mother.

He would watch them in the night, Nene and Lupe. *Tú papá está durmiendo*, she would whisper. *Mira, hija, ese es tú papá.*² The baby was so quiet. Lupe cradled her, rocking and singing. Her voice crept through the room, curling up in the corners. Her song

1. *Your people?*

The People.

You're Navajo?

No. I'm Mexican.

Good.

2. *Your papa's sleeping. Look, look, that's your papa.*

surrounded them, her American song for her American girl. *Hush, little baby, don't say a word...*

In the mornings he walked to the corner store and jumped on a truck. From June through September it was peaches, but there was plenty of fruit to pick through the year. He liked the peaches. They drove past store windows filled with mannequins dressed in their finest. His Lupe would shine in those clothes.

The gods heard their prayers, and delivered them into the second world. This world was filled with water. Floods washed away the squash and corn, the pumpkin and beans. The people struggled to stay afloat, and life was hard. First Man and First Woman knew the people could not survive that world, so they prayed to the gods for another.

Many seasons passed, weeks and months becoming years. The little white house had shrunk, quiet spaces disappearing in the wake of seven girls who flooded every room. Nene had just begun high school. Still quiet. Still watchful. Thatcha, Rachael, Maribel, Ruth, and Carol went to the red-bricked school house three blocks away, holding hands every morning as they left together. Isabella was walking, her stubby legs carrying her in the shadow of her older sisters.

Antonio rose for work every morning, just before sunup. The truck still drove the same route, past the shops with the big glass windows. The sun still filtered through the branches and buildings, the wind still snapped his flannel shirts when they reached the highway.

But he rarely saw the stores, had not noticed changing styles of plastic women. He felt the sun warming his cheeks, but did not lean back and gaze at the horizon. Not anymore.

Ridges ran the length of the truckbed, alternating valleys and plateaus. The white paint bore scars, silver and rust. Twelve pairs of brown boots gathered in the center, belonging to men who took no days off. Twelve men who had years ago taken ownership of the back of the truck, chasing away teenagers and other men through relentless consistency.

They rode to the orchards, heads bobbing on the washboards of backcountry roads, staring at blurring dirt through the hole in the bed, rusted fist-sized and growing. Peaches waited, but

they were not what the men came for. In those trees they found food and clothes, passing them in baskets down ladders. They looked for many things, high in the branches, but not for peaches.

Dreams vanished in the leaves, evaporating one day at a time. There would be no ranch, no large herd of cattle. There had been no sons to join his daughters. There were no fine clothes for his Lupe. And while he would never trade her for the richest man's daughter, sometimes he wondered how she could still smile when he walked in, night after night from the orchards, older and tired. He wondered how she could love a poor fruit-picker. Wondered if the smile masked battered dreams of her own.

Dust, kicked in the air by trudging boots, clouded the distance, brought focus back to the workglove covered in fine white fuzz. There was the branch and there was the ladder, the basket and the glove.

But there was something else. When the sun rose to the highest point, the men took their break, resting beneath the shadow of green leaves. They ate, tortillas with beans and rice, tamales wrapped in husks of corn, and a single peach from a full basket.

Antonio would bite deep to the pit. Sweetness filled his mouth as juice dribbled down his chin. It was cool in the shadows, under the green leaves.

When he returned home, the sky mirrored the morning, only darker. Deeper. Lupe would have tostadas layered with beans and rice, chorizo or chicken, and a bowl of menudo on Fridays. The girls' homework was always scattered in the living room. They spoke rapidly about history, geography, literature, and math. Facts and figures echoed as they quizzed each other, flowing from English to Spanish, Spanish to English.

The little ones spoke mostly English because Thatcha and Rachael said they must, school was hard enough without struggling to speak. They said it would be better, and Antonio agreed, though he spoke little himself. The way his tongue tripped and stuttered brought blood to his cheeks.

Lupe teased him for not trying. She learned from reservation schools, where only English was permitted, and translated his words for the white men.

"*Sólo español para ti?*" she would ask, poking him in the ribs. "But you understand everything, don't you?"

He would smile. “No, no comprendo...soy muy tonto,” he would say, and they would laugh together.³

Again the gods heard them, and delivered them into the third world. This was a world of wide fields and big skies. But there was no water, and they could not grow the squash and corn, the pumpkin and beans. The people grew thirsty, and life was hard. First Man and First Woman knew the people could not survive that world, so they prayed to the gods for another.

Rows of bottles faced him, labels out front. He wandered the aisles, searching. It was strange territory to him, the liquor store, as he rarely drank, and only beer then. But this was special. He could feel it.

It was the spring of 1952, and Lupe was pregnant. Number eight, only hours away. He had been smiling for months now, at the rusty hole in the truckbed, at the fuzzy workglove in the treetops. There were still dreams the sun and dust could never reach.

It was a boy. He could feel it.

The women, with their old world magic, thought otherwise. “No, Antonio, es la otra niña,” they said.⁴

But he knew better. There had been no visions or signs, but still he knew. His boy would be here soon.

He searched the whiskeys. He would celebrate, pour a drink for every man until the bottle ran dry. They would remember the day his son came.

A single bottle of Old Crow stood at the end of the aisle. Last on the shelf, for the last of the Velazquez children. He took it to the counter and paid, then walked to the car.

“Mija, lo podes en la bolsa,” he told Nene, handing her the bottle. She put it in the bag of clothes, and he turned to Lupe. “Listos?”

She rolled her eyes. “Sí, can we go now?”⁵

He smiled and nodded, pointing the car towards the hospital.

3. Only Spanish for you? But you understand everything, don't you?

No, I don't understand... I'm very stupid.

4. No, Antonio, it's another girl.

5. Daughter, put it in the bag. Ready?

Yes, can we go now?

Again the gods heard them, and delivered them into the fourth world. This was a world of darkness. There was no sunlight, and they could not grow the squash and corn, the pumpkin and beans. Wild things hid in the shadows, and life was hard. First Man and First Woman knew the people could not survive that world.

There was before, and there was after.

He held Lupe's hand before they wheeled her away. Her face was pale, eyes worn like mornings when a baby wouldn't sleep. Strands of hair clung to her cheeks. He pushed them away and she opened her eyes.

"*Ay mí,*" she said. "*No más, verdad?*"

He squeezed her hand. "*No más,*" he agreed.⁶

In the waiting room he stood near the window. Nene sat in the corner, ready to speak English for the doctors.

Outside it was sunny, with a western breeze that carried the slightest whisper of the sea. He went over the name – Mateo Luiz Velasquez. Mateo. He would be smart, like his mother and his sisters. He would be handsome, with thick, black hair and dark eyes and bronze skin. He would be strong, with the heart of a warrior, fearless and kind. Mateo.

From inside the room he heard loud voices. Then quiet. A nurse came through the door, holding a small bundle of blankets, and moved quickly down the hall.

There was no crying.

The after was empty. Nurses coming in and out. Nene's quiet, watchful face. The doctor in the waiting room. "Mr. Velasquez?"

"Oh papa," Nene said.

He went to her room, found Lupe lying in bed. A moment of peace. Then her brow furrowed and she reached for him. He caught her hand. Her lip quivered, then steadied.

He wanted to, had to see, just once before leaving. As the nurses helped Lupe dress, Nene told the doctors. They led him down the hall, to a room where his son lay on a counter, eyes closed, motionless. Mateo. He stroked the matted black hair for a moment, then followed a doctor back to the room.

6. *Oh my. No more, right?*
No more.

First Man said, "I will find us a new world, with plains and mountains, water and light. I will find us a new world to grow the squash and corn, the pumpkin and beans."

"It is better you should stay," said First Woman. "There are wild things in the shadows."

"I will sing as I make my way to the light," he said. "I will sing as I return. I will surround myself in song."

First Man stood at the edge of the fire's light. He stared deep into the shadows and listened for the wild things. Then, surrounding himself in song, he stepped into the darkness.

The girls were sleeping in three beds wedged into the room, Isabella lying between Carol and Ruth. Lupe had fallen asleep almost the moment he laid her down, pausing only to put her hand to his cheek and attempt a smile.

"No estás triste," she said, voice rising just above the rustling sheets, hair sweeping the pillow. Her eyes closed, lids heavy with strange medicine. "*Mi Antonio, qué valiente es mi Antonio.*"⁷

He leaned over, kissed her cheek, and pulled the covers over her shoulders.

She deserved better.

They deserved better.

"*Valiente?*" he asked the moon through the window.

The bag of clothes lay near the bed. He unzipped it and pulled out the whiskey. The label gleamed, and moonlight swirled, yellow and muted, dancing on the walls. The cap twisted, snapping the seal with a sound of breaking bones.

He slumped into the rocking chair and lifted the bottle, holding its lip along the outline of the moon, right edge waning towards darkness.

"*A mi hijo,*" he said⁸, hushed voice cracking, and poured a long drink down his throat. It lit him inside, fumes pouring like smoke through his mouth and nose. He swallowed hard, squeezing his eyes shut to keep it inside. When it was safe, he opened them, saw his reflection in the window. He turned the chair until it faced the wall, and took another drink.

The door creaked open. Isabella padded into the room. He

7. *Don't be sad. My Antonio, how brave is my Antonio.*

8. *To my son.*

put his finger to his lips, then motioned her over.

She walked to his side, and climbed in his lap. "What's wrong, papa?"

"*Nada, hija, todo está bien,*" he said. He pulled her close and kissed her forehead. "*Ahora, vas a dormir.*"⁹

She nestled against his chest. "Good night, papa."

"*Buenas noches, hija,*" he said, and leaned back, drinking and rocking in the dark.

9. *Nothing, daughter, everything's fine. Now, go to sleep.*

Sentry

I watch the fog settle on the mountain slowly, quietly, as the forest's tenants slip into a peaceful slumber. He slides up the mountainside, touching everything, seeing what has changed from the night before, keeping track of new dens and old nests. Another songbird had hatched during the day, and the mother sleeps with her wings outspread over her treasured offspring.

The fog is in no hurry. He moves thickly through the purple thistles, all gone to sleep for the night. The tree branches greet him with pleasure, letting him surround them with complete whiteness. The dense silence of the forest comforts them, and the weeds among the fallen pine needles are content to sleep in the wake of the fog's careful, enveloping passage. He warms the sparse blades of grass, shielding them from the sharp night air, so much harsher than at dusk. The fog makes sure everyone is sleeping as he spreads, perhaps lingering here and there to ensure that the badgers have snuggled into their cozy dens and the flowers are tightly curled into themselves. Sometimes, if a flower doesn't rest well, she won't bloom again in the morning, and the surrounding flowers will worry, and a constant stream of chitter-chatter will dominate an agitated night, making it difficult for the fog to do his duty.

A sentry's duty is very important, for he watches over the mountain's inhabitants and protects them from outsiders of any sort. The fog hides the forest from exiled predators. Sometimes, he even stands in Mother Nature's way. He can soften the rain or make himself so opaque that even the owls can't fly at night. He gives them security, safeguarding them from every threat. My mountain's residents rely upon the fog, and he is more than willing to stretch his vast arms over the mountain in a loving act of protection.

This night is quiet. Not even the stars dare to peek out from behind the soft blue blanket. The moon, a tiny fingernail far away, glimmers in the purple dawn before beginning to fade into the brightening sky. As the forest awakes, birds stir and flowers open their petals, eagerly welcoming the sun. The wild boar yawns

before going out to hunt for the morning's breakfast, and the ants march into another day of collecting food.

The fog watches the start of another day with the satisfaction of a shepherd who has once again protected his flock from the dangers of the night. Then, still slowly, he begins to rise into the warming air and dissolve until suddenly someone, perhaps a lark, notices that he is no longer there, gone until the purple dusk of another night.

Annals of a Suburban Paper Route

It's still black out as the paperboy takes off his satchel and leans his battered bike against the newly placed signpost. He grabs a single paper, starts down the fresh blacktop toward the lone mailbox at the end of the quarter mile stretch: lot number five on the cul-de-sac.

Normally the boy would curse having to go all the way down and back for one house, but in the two weeks since the family put their box up, the paperboy has learned to savor this walk. He's always enjoyed pedaling down deserted streets in the nigritude of the night: the zipping of his chain and the seasonal clipping of the crickets the only sounds, ink-beryl shadows and moon-tinted haze the only sights. It feels like a dream—ironic, because he's the only one awake. But occasionally he'll see a bathroom light go on and hear a shower, or some man will come out to yell at his dog—and this ruins it—forcing the boy back into the absolute.

This street is different. Empty shells of half-finished houses are on each side, and it's too surreal to pedal past. And so he walks, listening only to his footsteps and the absence of crickets that are off doing whatever it is crickets do when the frost comes.

On other nights he's taken it even slower, creeping through lumber-framed doorways to explore unborn homes. He knows them all. But tonight he stays the course, passing the empty windows as he makes his way to the one completed home at the end of the strip.

* * *

As the boy walks he'll pass lot one, with the beginnings of a wide back deck where years from now a Chinese professor of history will sit in the morning light and work on his manuscript, a memoir about growing up in Nanjing decades after the massacre. He'll sift through photos of disemboweled women, young girls bayoneted through lower orifices, charred bodies left without re-

morse. He'll read through transcripts of an American reporter who describes the streets so strewn with bodies that one had no choice but to drive through them to reach the safety zone; an interview with a woman who survived days of near-constant gang rape and nearly twenty bayonets through her chest and neck before being found, nearly lifeless, by passersby and nursed back to a state of health checked by scars, disability, and venereal disease.

When he's finished and sitting on a growing pile of rejection letters he'll ask the administration if he can read a chapter in the central quad, and they'll set up a podium twenty yards from a group of sorority girls selling raffle tickets for an all expense paid trip to Cabo. But few will look and fewer will listen. The sorority girls' solicitous screams will drown out talk of rape and mutilation and Japanese denial and omission from history books, and a circle of friends will joke behind cigarettes while cell-phoned students cross the professor's back and front on their way to class.

The man will come home, and fall into a depression. Stop going to work. Stop going anywhere. When his neighbors mail him a letter asking him to mow his lawn he'll respond by distributing his collection of transcribed notes and postmortem photographs to their mailboxes. When they fail to respond he'll distribute the full manuscript, and when they deliver a second letter informing him that his use of their mailboxes is a violation of federal law and asking him to please mow his lawn, he'll take a machete to his bushes, a hammer to his mailbox, rocks to his windows, and a crowbar to his roof. He'll lose his footing trying to peel up shingles, and fall beside his mutilated bushes.

He'll come back from the ER a few hours later with a line of stitches, a concussion, and a leg cast—but not before making friends with the physician who treated him: a Japanese man whose wife, a fledgling assistant at a New York publishing house, will get her first break with the acquisition of the professor's memoir, *The Broken House of Nanjing*.

Lot two, where the now empty garage will soon be home to a car that will journey from here to Florida and back again each year until the owner, set on conquering his crippling fear of flying, will sign up for lessons at the local airport. *I don't want a license*, he'll tell them, *I just want to solo*.

He'll then spend the next sixteen Sundays with a guy who calls everybody Cowboy, except for his plane, whom he calls Cow-girl. And the man with the garage will sweat, shake, tear, and vomit—and in between learn to check the yoke by angling right then left and eyeing the ailerons, to ease on the throttle fast enough to generate lift but slow enough to avoid backfire, to watch for crosswind and always bank into the wind, and to press firmly on the right rudder pedal during takeoff to counteract engine torque.

Each week the instructor will expect the cowboy to quit. But he'll keep coming back.

And on the sixteenth week when he's ready for his solo, the man will check the yoke, ease on the throttle, calculate crosswind, and press on that rudder pedal.

And he'll fly—alone.

He'll listen on the radio as the instructor tells him that he's doing fine and that he's got more heart and determination than anyone he's ever met. But the cowboy will be too busy with prayer to answer back.

After a near-perfect landing the cowboy will toss his instructor the keys, wipe the sweat from his forehead, and disappear from the airport forever.

The rest of his family vacations will be to the Jersey shore—a much closer drive than Florida.

Lot three, with the his-and-hers sinks, where a single mother of one will find an unfamiliar folder hidden away in the program files of the family computer. She'll open it to find photos of her daughter, arranged and labeled by weight—*111 lbs.*, *104 lbs.*, *92 lbs.*—along with assorted pictures of runway celebrities collected from entertainment sites and before-and-after photos of other teens, friends the girl made through online thinspiration forums and chat rooms, labeled as low as *63 lbs.* And there will be other images—reverse triggers, her daughter will call them—of pregnant women and the grossly obese.

The mother will search her daughter's room, find the jars of vomit in the closet, the diet pills in the drawer, and the misspelled diary entries mapping out food intake:

Breakfast:
Three cigarettes. Two cups coffee. Water.

Lunch:
Sugarless gum—half a pack. Jello—two cups.
Skimmed milk. Frosting from one cupcake.

Breakfast:
Four cigarettes. No coffee. Half bag Doritos.

She'll read other entries graphing weight changes, expressing the "geeniusness" of eating ice cubes and lollypops for dinner, and quoting the morbidly misunderstood conceptions of history's finest:

"We never repent of having eaten too little."
Jefferson

"Things sweet to taste prove in digestion sour."
Shakespeare

"Quod me nutrit me destruit"
(What nourishes me destroys me)
Angelina Jolie

The mother will realize then how little she knows her daughter. She'll confront the girl, who will deny and cry and retreat to the bathroom to calm her nerves under bubble bath and behind a locked door. But minutes later when the girl fails to answer from behind the door, her mother will pop the lock with a bobby pin and find her daughter in the tub, wrists sliced with a bread knife and sticky with blood. She'll pull her out through the hot and pink bubbles to find that her daughter's fully dressed—a hooded sweatshirt and jeans, the cotton waterlogged and steaming—and that she's several pints lighter.

The daughter will be saved with her mother's blood, and afterwards will get help: group therapy, psychiatrists, inpatient facilities. And years later the girl will be happy and plump, tattoos of butterflies over each of her scars: a Cranberry Blue on her left—

Vacciniina optilete—a Mourning Cloak on her right—*Nymphalis antiopa*—the raised and jagged cut marks hidden in the veins of blue and black wings, imperceptible to all but the two who know them best.

But the single mom will save the photos from the hidden folder she found in the program files of the family computer. She'll keep them as reminders—reverse triggers, she'll call them, things to be happy for—changing only the file names, replacing the churlish weights with random letters: *asjkl. jkljp. dsagdu*.

Lot four, where a woman will lose touch with her father, who will lose touch with life. He'll leave his home, the shelter on Wayne, twice a day to sell flowers from his bucket to sidewalk diners and red-lighted motorists, spreading bits of joy, apprehension, and untaxed commerce.

But the two will come back into touch on a clouded afternoon on either side of the woman's car door. The father will give his daughter a flower for free before the light turns green and she's forced to drive on. But she'll find a space two blocks down, pull over, and begin to cry. Her daughter, the toddler in the backseat, will cry too, out of fear and sympathy, before asking in her puerile tongue who the man was and why mommy's sad—two questions the girl will never know answers to.

And lot five, centered on the cul-de-sac—the only home presently completed—where the paperboy slides the single paper into the box of the newly-wed physicians. The husband will open up a practice in town that will be closest to the paperboy's house and listed first in his mother's insurance booklet. She'll take him there for a back-to-school checkup a few summers from now, and the doctor from the cul-de-sac will read the notes faxed over from the boy's pediatrician and ask the lad how he's dealing with his father's suicide.

And the paperboy's face will turn white and then red.

He'll tell the doctor, in defense, that his father died from natural causes, and the doctor's face will go straight to red as he apologizes for his mistake and proceeds awkwardly through the rest of the appointment.

When they're finished, the doctor, still red with shame and

sympathy, will shake the mother's hand as he tells her that her boy is as healthy as one gets. And when they leave he'll check his notes again, read the same details of suicide, and write *they never told him* in parenthesis beside the fax-blurred words *carbon monoxide*.

On the ride home when the mother asks her son why he's so quiet, he'll offer an excuse while he uncovers repressed fragments in his head. When they get back he'll phone his sister, who will uncover fragments of her own, and later that night they'll confront their mother.

And neither the boy nor his sister will ever again see the world as they used to.

* * *

There is dew on the grass and the sky is painted with strokes of opalescent clouds when the paperboy returns to the post. He picks up his satchel and begins to reach for his bike. But the moon is still out and his shadow is still blue. And he doesn't want to pedal through the retreating hush of dreamlike silence—the one hour left before the world wakes up.

So he walks, pushing his bike beside him, away from that empty street—the only sound around him, the zipping of his chain.

And he smiles, his father—for now—still a victim of time and not depression; the houses behind him—all but one—empty and peacefully incomplete.

And he wonders about the crickets, about where they go when the frost comes, about just maybe becoming an architect someday, and about next week's baseball game—his last pitch left before the season's over.

Daddy Cool

America had made Goverdhan into Gov within two months of arrival. But Goverdhan never complained. "I am lucky," he would joke to his Indian friends decades later, "that people call me Gov without having to run for office." For three decades Goverdhan had paid America the ultimate compliment by electing to stay in a country that did not birth him. Today, America decided to return the compliment. As Goverdhan took the Highway 237 to his home, he could not stop breaking into involuntary smiles every few seconds. The mayor's words reverberated in his ears: *Gov Yadav is not just a fine entrepreneur; he epitomizes the spirit of innovation that has made America the pride of the world.* The mayor's voice alternated with his dead grandfather's baritone. *A new school for the village, jobs for extended family, who would have thought a cowherd's grandson capable of all this? No one, except me.*

A stray tear rolled down Goverdhan's cheek and he said softly, "Who else but you, *dadaji*,¹ who else?" The fragrance emanating from the rose bouquet on the passenger seat of his Mercedes brought Goverdhan back to the present moment briefly and he changed lanes. But it was hard not to relive the events of the day - the exciting energy of the Convention Hall, the admiring glances of colleagues from the community. On his way out a young man with an accent similar to his had asked him eagerly, "Goverdhan ji², what is the secret of your success?" Goverdhan smiled beatifically and said, "Just understand the system *bhai*³. Just that. America rewards those who understand its systems."

Five minutes away from home, his cell phone rang.

"*Kahan ho?* Where are you?" It was Nalini.

"I am almost home," Goverdhan replied animatedly. "I've had the most amazing day, can't wait to tell you."

As he pulled his car into the driveway, Goverdhan's heart pounded like it wanted out from its cage. Where were his two boys?

1. *Dadaji* (Hindi): Grandfather

2. *Ji* (H): A suffix traditionally added to proper names as mark of respect.

3. *Bhai* (H): Brother

Arun and Varun. Or Ahhroon.....Vaaharoon as their kindergarten teacher Ms Trudy (and subsequently most of America) had christened them. He rushed right in, wanting to take them both by the scruffs of their necks and crush them close to his chest. Wanting to tell them that fifteen hours had been too long to go without seeing them, never mind the honors of the day. But once inside his house he stood dazed and unsettled as he encountered Mr. Lane and his thirteen-year-old son Daniel, Arun's best friend, sitting comfortably on the Yadav's plush marmalade and coffee sateen upholstered couch.

"Ah Gov. We missed you." said Mr. Lane cheerily, "We were talking about how much fun we had skiing last winter." Goverdhan grinned absentmindedly at Arun, his body suddenly tense.

"Oh, I didn't know we had company," he said. Arun blushed, transforming himself into a paler, thinner, younger and more Americanized version of his father, at which Nalini crinkled her nose just a little, her eyes darting between father and son before fixing them on Goverdhan.

"Chai?" she asked. Goverdhan nodded and Nalini excused herself to her kitchen.

"Mr. Lane, our last meeting was rather brief," said Goverdhan, trying to lighten the atmosphere. "I'd love to learn more about you. Arun tells me that you tried out for the Olympics once."

"Mr. Lane's a fabulous skier and a great athlete," said Arun, the adulation transparent in his eyes.

"Nah! It's no big deal. I bet you and Daniel will outshine me in a few seasons,"

At that, Varun sitting on the arm of the love seat next to Daniel coughed a small cough.

"That goes for you as well, Varun," laughed Mr. Lane, his large frame shaking just a little. And then he looked at Goverdhan and with a conspiratorial look said, "We'll just add another two years to our estimate for Arun and Daniel!" Goverdhan half-smiled and shifted uneasily in his seat while fiddling with the rings on his pointer and ring fingers.

"We must get going now." Mr. Lane looked at Daniel. "It was great to have you boys with us last season. But this season I want to extend all of you an invitation to join us at Heavenly. We have a cottage all to ourselves and I am sure it'll be a lot of fun."

"Oh but Dad doesn't ski," said Arun.

"Dad's learning," interjected Varun.

The boys spoke with a self assurance that had taken Goverdhan three decades to accumulate.

"On the bunny slope?" asked Arun his brows arched, his voice sharp.

Mr. Lane took a deep breath, "Well, you know what they say boys, it's never too late to learn."

Nalini returned with Goverdhan's chai.

"Nalini, I am so glad to have finally met you. Varun tells me that you make the most delectable samosas," said Mr. Lane.

"Perhaps when Mrs. Lane comes back from her conference, we can get together for high tea," said Nalini.

In the driveway, Mr. Lane rolled down his BMW windows and said, "I sure hope all of you can make it to Heavenly. The ladies can bond over massages and shopping while *we* men get our bones warm." Then in true swashbuckling style, he zoomed off as smoothly as he had arrived.

At night Goverdhan reclined against the bed frame of their California King bed reading under the illumination of a tiny book light, thinking Nalini to be asleep. Abruptly, Nalini turned around to face him and said, "It's alright. He's just a boy."

"I was such a different kind of a boy," Goverdhan said quietly, his balding forehead shining in the reflected light. Goverdhan felt a sudden longing for a childhood spent cleaning windows in dining cars, washing and milking cows. There was order in that universe.

"We lived in a different world then," said Nalini before going back to sleep.

Except on Diwali, Goverdhan very rarely missed India. He had no time for it. Every few years, America presented him a mountain to climb, something he did with relish. But that his newest and fuzziest challenge should present itself so soon after his last success stunned Goverdhan. Or perhaps, could it be possible, that this was *not* a new problem? Perhaps this volcano had become active from the moment his Arun had set foot in the world thirteen years ago and had been lurking in the background all while his

preschoolers laughed their effervescent giggles. Lurking while he told them the same story with a different cinematic flourish each time, their puppy eyes shining with pride... *The climatic moment of my life was at the beginning of my nineteenth year...* Then suddenly, everything changed a few summers ago. Stories were not enough anymore. Unlike his *Babuji*⁴ who could do no wrong, his boys, especially Arun, measured Goverdhan's worthiness in tangible terms. *New clothes every semester check, dependable Dad check, no Ivy League cross, no hiking, fishing, playing tennis and swimming possible with father, cross, cross, cross, cross.* With each year he could feel that gulf becoming wider, its trenches deeper. How could he explain to his boys, whom he had failed by not giving them any empty spaces necessary in their life for gratitude, that he had never had any time in life to learn anything, save for how to live?

The following afternoon Goverdhan scarcely worked on the redesign of the motel that until yesterday had consumed most of his waking thoughts. He spent the first part of his lunch hour gazing at a picture of the three people who made his world. Nalini. Loyal and choiceless, except for the solitary choice of happiness that she had made and decided never to go back upon. Arun. The boy who held his tongue at school and carried his father's burden of assimilation on his shoulders. Varun, the third man in line, his shoulders resting easy under the protection of an older brother and the affluence of his father. He opened his desk drawer and pulled out a yellow notepad from a stack he had bought at Costco and made a small list. The questions that pushed him in directions that brought him to America returned again. How do I project myself? How do I become the person who makes my family proud?

It was list of things he knew his boys liked to do. He struck off some items from that list. Then he looked at his work schedule and made some calculations. In the end Goverdhan left himself with a three-item bulleted list—gym, tennis and swimming. At night he shared his decision with Nalini, and when he saw the unspoken questions in her eyes said, "My *Babuji* did so many things for us. Why can't I be a little stronger physically for my boys?"

The next day Goverdhan cut work to attend to more pressing matters. First, he enrolled himself in the neighborhood gym, then he signed himself up for an adult tennis class at the commu-

4. *Babuji (H): Father*

nity center, and finally, found himself an indoor heated pool that offered adult lessons as well as flexible practice hours. Goverdhan smiled inwardly with anticipation; every experience in the new world had taught him the meaning of an old word afresh. Which meaning would revise itself this time?

Now Goverdhan woke each morning at the crack of dawn, showered, did his morning *puja*⁵ and breathing exercises and went to the gym. There he spent forty minutes on the treadmill and twenty minutes on the stationary bike. One morning he met a young man who seemed strangely familiar. Then he remembered that his face was plastered right next to the stationary bike captioned *How I lost 45 pounds in 11 months*; twenty minutes everyday in front of the “Before” and “After” picture of this young man emboldened Goverdhan sufficiently that he could assume an air of intimate formality with him.

“I spend two hours in the gym everyday,” said Goverdhan matter-of-factly.

“That’s great man, but I think a trainer is the way to go,” said the highly-toned and newly-improved Mr. After.

Goverdhan pondered that advice for over a week and when even after three weeks the scales refuse to budge towards his left, decided that \$80 for an hour didn’t sound like such a bad deal after all.

The trainer was a ruddy faced, affectionate man. He took one look at Goverdhan’s forty-two-inch waist and insisted that besides his customized stamina building routine Goverdhan start with dynamic yoga classes as well. Dynamic yoga turned out to be a bastardized version of the original yogic movements, designed to combine the benefits of high level aerobic activity with the strength of yoga. Goverdhan was nothing if not an obedient student. He showed up twice a week and on time with his purple yoga mat. Within ten minutes he would be sweating voluminously and dizzy in the head. People nodded and smiled in sympathy when Goverdhan would have to step in a corner, sit, drink water and catch his breath. Some newcomers who might have otherwise rolled off the edges stuck on because they were inspired by his example, by his repeated standing up after falling down, like an infant learning to walk. These classes made Goverdhan feel like what he had felt

5. *Puja (H): Prayers*

when he had first tried to read the BART timetables. But he continued to work with the single-minded devotion that America had unlocked inside him. *Bhakta*. He had once learnt what a *bhakta* was. It fell somewhere between the gentle thuds of the BART that took him to his evening MBA classes and the meticulousness with which he served his customers at the restaurant. *Bhakta*. Devotee. Once America had taught him that it was not important to have, it was important to want and that wanting would pave the way for larger, more wondrous things. Now he would learn it again. He thought.

Early evenings, the labor of his mornings was replaced by P+P = P (Position + Preparation = Point) with Coach Barry at the Community Center Tennis Courts. The Coach never asked Goverdhan the question. A question, he was pretty sure, that was lingering on the tip of the Coach's tongue. *Why now?* Instead, Coach Barry made Goverdhan and another thirty-something squash player run around the court juggling balls, learning the mechanics of serve, forehand and backhand. Goverdhan ran, his thighs ripping with pain, still warm and sore from his mornings practice, his head cloudy, his shoulders scrunched together mirroring his knotted brows.

At nights he dreamt of his youth. He saw himself reading a book on a second-class berth under the flickering night light of a Western Railways train. *The biggest regrets are those things that we have never done*. He saw himself eating puris and aloo⁶ at the mid-way station. He saw himself in the exact moment when he decided that he would see America and teach himself English. He dreamt this dream many times; the train moving fast, fast, fastest, Goverdhan running, panting, running, barely managing to keep up.

Mondays were dizzy, Tuesdays and Thursdays were sore. Only the water was kinder, gentler. In three weeks he had left the wall and in six he had learnt how to float. But he stayed at four feet, afraid of five, six and seven, unable to swim in depths he could not stand firm in.

When he floated, Goverdhan meditated. He felt like a coconut in the waters of the Ganges. Was he the valuable water filled coconut his mother and grandmother coveted and haggled for with street vendors? Or was he dry? Then he remembered the other coconuts in his life. His first motel. A rundown east ender. Nalini wear-

6. Aloo-puri (H): A combination of spiced potatoes and fried bread

ing a fabulous Benarasi silk sari borrowed from an Indian neighbor. Nalini breaking a coconut each in front of the temple deity and the entry gate of the motel to propitiate the gods. More years, more coconuts, more new saris for Nalini.

But now Goverdhan worried that life might stop handing out coconuts soon. At the motel people looked at him, with his sprained neck and his unevenly tanned skin, oddly. Afternoons he was often tired and involuntarily snoozed in the warm and rusting futon in his office (a remnant of his early days).

In the evenings, Arun avoided Goverdhan ever since Goverdhan had eagerly sought Arun out for their only set of tennis. Goverdhan had failed all his serves in that solitary set. Arun had tried to slow his serves in an attempt to generate some volleys, but Goverdhan was always at kissing distance of the ball never quite managing to rally more than once. As they shook hands after the set, Goverdhan ruffled Arun's hair and said, "I am so happy to lose to you *beta*. Perhaps you can help me get better."

"No Dad, it's supposed to be the other way round," said Arun quietly, and started walking back home.

On the other hand, uncomplicated little Varun was always busy with basketball and biking and only seen at the Yadav household during mealtimes.

Week after week, Goverdhan could feel his breath becoming progressively shallower, his body shutting down, begging for release. He felt like he was carrying a tornado inside him that would burst sometime soon. It was only a question of finding a safe place to release it. "I know what the problem is," he would tell Nalini at whispered moments at nights. "I don't have stamina...I must build my stamina."

Then one afternoon, while showing a guest her room, Goverdhan was visited by the word he had been waiting for. He felt a wave of nausea sweeping through his body. Goverdhan excused himself and ran to the nearest restroom, trying to fight the crushing sensation in his chest. His body sinking in a whirlpool, tears rolling down his brown sunburnt cheeks, staining his white stubble, he remembered a word his mother had used only sparingly. *Luupt*. Evaporated. Just like that. *Luupt*. Vanished like it had never existed. There is nothing anywhere. When Nalini met him at the ER seventy minutes later that was the only word he could find for her. *Sab luupt*

ho gaya. Everything has gone. Evaporated.

That evening Varun saw that the table was not set. Instead Nalini was crying on it. Varun ran to her wordlessly.

"Where's Arun?" she asked wiping her tears.

"You've forgotten, Ma. He's at Daniel's. It's Mr. Lane's birthday; he's sleeping over after the party tonight."

"Do you boys ever remember your father's birthday?" Nalini howled.

Goverdhan was sleeping when Varun entered the room.

"It's okay. I'll come back later."

"No Varun, come *beta*, sit next to me."

"Shall I press your feet Dad?" said Varun. He had never offered to do it for his father before. But from Goverdhan's stories he knew that feet-pressing was the least common denominator of devotion and filial love.

"How was school?"

"Good. We had a guest speaker today. She talked about the joys of traveling ..." and then breaking off, "Tell me about how you decided to come to America Dad,"

The request filled Goverdhan with an immediate pleasure and he started....

"When I was nineteen and..." He stopped. "I've told you this story one too many times Varun." He shook his head back and forth many times, half-delirious with the Ibuprofens swimming in his guts.

Then one rainy January evening on a phone line filled with static, he heard his grandmother's voice the second time since he had landed in America. "Come beta, I have plucked the freshest rose in this town and kept her safe for you. Come now. It's getting late."

"I want to travel the world too, Dad. I want to be like..." Goverdhan thought he heard Varun and then Nalini.

"Shh. Go now Varun. Do your homework. Your father needs to rest."

When he came back that summer with Nalini he learnt the meaning of a word he would learn again and again for the coming decades of his life. Anand. Anand. Bliss.

The fever was still strong. His knees ached. His thighs were sore. Nalini dipped a small white cloth in a steel bowl, saturated it with water, then squeezed it dry and put it on his forehead. He

wondered if he should ask Nalini to call Varun back.

“Where’s Arun?” said Goverdhan.

“Try to sleep. He’ll come back soon.”

...There is nothing in the world. It is all present at home. There is nothing in the world.

“Do you remember, Nalini,” he said, “when Arun was little and had just learnt to walk he’d say move, *haato*, to all the furniture that came in his way...”

Revere

Revere, Massachusetts, is a gray town. The weather is always, more or less, gray; the people I've met, the people I see on the streets, are also very gray. The two-storied houses lining the streets are graying, the paint fading—but I welcome this, for bright coloration would look absurd.

I sit often on one of the benches at Revere Beach, about ten minutes from my little place: a small room in a small gray house tucked behind a cement sea wall, seven feet tall, with large stones piled between the concrete and the viscous water. In my years here I've never once seen the waves put the wall to good use. (But I do. Nights, if it's clear and not too cold, I sit on the sea wall with my feet dangling over the sea-side edge. The water advances, recedes, echoes rhythmically below the stacked boulders. Across the dark water the lights stretching the length of the town are like so many flickering candles. Nights, it's peaceful. I can't see things for what they truly are.)

To get to the beach from my place I hop from boulder to boulder along the sea wall. I could walk the streets, and sometimes do; but I prefer this route because at a certain point the sea wall bends and I see the bay, a curving crescent ringed with sand. Sitting, I see a long stretch of empty benches. The water meets the sky to create an indistinct horizon... and on the offing ships obscured in haze make steady progress to and away from shore.

One wet afternoon, much like the many others, I met Reverend Wilson. The Reverend appeared to be about forty-five years of age. His was an honest face, wrinkled around the eyes and to the sides of the silver moustache resting below a very long, very narrow nose. The thick lenses of his glasses made his large eyes seem even larger, made them dance and reform—depending on the angle of his face. Below his overcoat I noticed the stained-gray collar of a priest.

He'd asked if the space on my bench was available. Sure, I said, though I did find it odd that he'd chosen to sit adjacent to me; every other bench along the boardwalk was empty.

Before very long his voice began to rumble out of his large chest. He spoke of his wife, who had been unfaithful; he spoke of his son, doing poorly in school; he talked about the weather—about how gray the weather was here in Revere. Between his long sentences he would look out over the sea and his face would wear a kind of puzzled expression. He spoke of everything he could. I remained silent. I looked out over the sea, at the gray gulls parading on the sand, at the empty benches all around.

Then his voice lost all confidence and became sort of hesitant. His words were ejected in bursts and without flow, as if his tongue was a skipping record. A woman of his flock, he began, found her daughter in bed with a young man. Three days later she was dead—a suicide. She'd taken a large dose of sleeping pills and she never woke up. But that's the abbreviated version; he'd gone on a very long while, often saying, "Why the hell they didn't come to me, God only knows."

After he finished speaking he seemed to visibly deflate. He turned towards me. Through the thick glass of his lenses I saw his eyes as he said, "I hope you don't mind me going on like this, son. But you must understand it's difficult to find someone I can unburden myself to. You must understand. You must. You see, I've done a great wrong."

"Sir," I replied after a time, "I'm not at all religious." I'm not sure why I said that. He looked at me a great while; and I looked back at him, at that twitching moustache on that too-honest face, at those pleading eyes behind thick glass.

On the sand gulls strutted, wings out to the side; others swept circles under the leaden sky. So what if I broke my eyes away? His face was gray—too gray to bear to look at. The same damn color as everything else.

From the corner of my eye I watched him, neck arched, almost limp, hand over his eyes as he peered out over the water. I knew he was searching for something beyond the horizon; and I knew he would never find it. Look at that water, that thick water too timid to even crash the shore—how would that ever take you anywhere?

He broke the silence with a soft word. Then he stood and left. And I watched him walk the length of that fetid beach, slowly, until he was just a black spot against the gray monotony of sea and sky.

Zambian Poker

Her smile masking her fear, Kate balanced a tray of samosas and sausage-cheese balls on her fingertips. The key Embassy staff sat around the poker table, including her husband David, Jim, and for God's sakes, even the Ambassador. She must please the Ambassador, whose gaze never rose to meet her eyes, because David's promotion rested in his hands. "Roland, try one?"

The Ambassador, his white shirt straining over his belly, popped a ball into his mouth. He pointed the toothpick. "David, your wife is the finest of the Friday night poker hostesses."

Kate floated the tray over the players' heads, thinking the ambassador wasn't really a swine. He catalogued people and in his lists, she was a social asset.

"I certainly couldn't do this without her," David said. His long fingers shuffled and dealt the cards. "Five card stud, gentlemen."

David's praise was pleasant—he wasn't usually so open in front of others. David didn't know about Jim; he mustn't ever know. Across the table, Jim's blue eyes tracked her, ignoring his own wife Trish.

At the opposite end of the table, Trish flirted with the doctor and the communications officer; both men leered at her breasts riding up in her tight dress. Yesterday, she had announced to Kate her campaign, using the knit dress and high heels, to break into the all-male poker game.

As Kate walked past, Jim stretched, his broad shoulders nearly bumping her. She twisted away and felt her heel snap. He wore the same red polo shirt that he had worn last Monday; his musky aftershave seemed out of place in her dining room.

Wobbling on her broken sandal, Kate offered the tray to the departing Deputy Chief of Mission to deflect Jim's attention, but Jim had already leaned across the table toward the Ambassador. "Roland, what does your wife do on poker night?"

"Needlepoint, I think. She won't have cigars in the Resi-

dence." The Ambassador tapped his cards on the table. "Who hasn't anteed?"

Kate tried to glide over to the sideboard, depositing the tray among the South African salt and vinegar chips, the imported American pretzels, and the bowl of Zambian groundnuts. Everybody wondered who would be named the next Deputy Chief. She and David worked for just such an opportunity but it had come up so suddenly. They'd only just arrived two months ago. She knew David wanted it.

"Ready for cigars, gentlemen?" Among the beer cans, she noticed a bottle of French brandy. Why was David wasting it on this crowd who would drink more and more all night while the stakes climbed higher? She called, "David, bring more cold beer for the fellows. And the single malt scotch. It'll taste better with cigars and sausage cheese balls than the Calvados."

"I fold, boys. Beer duty calls." David walked behind Kate and squeezed the base of her neck. Before Zambia, his hand on her neck signaled their unspoken agreement about everything — their joint ambition, their assessment of other people, even their sense of style. Tonight, she wasn't sure she liked it.

She faced him, loosening his hold. "Not like New Delhi Friday nights, is it?" she whispered. She dusted crumbs off their green Ghanesh centered on the sideboard. So ugly, it was their private joke from her last year's project, a charity art auction. "Poker nights are too exclusive and too purposeless."

"Men playing at poker are playing at other things," David whispered. "Besides, Trish adds to the mix."

"She isn't here to see me." Kate shifted the pretzels in front of the beer. Trish was a welcome distraction. Kate would be invisible tonight, drifting around and keeping away from Jim, even though she wished she was helping with David's strategy. Odd — she wasn't certain what David's plan entailed. "You don't need the Calvados for this."

"Trust me. Office politics hides well in poker." David's forefinger followed the line of her chin, his jaw clenched, but when he turned to the poker players, his mouth switched to a grin.

Kate gripped the rosewood humidor; she always developed the skills to adapt to each new place, but poker's rules were unclear, and so far the murky politics of this posting defied her.

From the open humidior, the cigars' aromas of grass and ready-to-rot wood preceded her as she offered it to the Ambassador. This Embassy, top heavy with old timers like Roland, employed no women in the lower diplomatic ranks, no women at all except as secretaries. No job for her.

Zambia was their smallest Embassy posting so far and worse yet, the Americans were insulated from the larger diplomatic community. Poker nights and movie nights at the Marine House were the regular entertainments. Kate missed the progressive dinners and charity events with the Brits, the Dutch, and the Japanese of Delhi. She had searched here, but there were no projects that put Americans in contact with locals. Her one attempt, volunteering at the local library, had been a disaster; the Zambians had served her tea and waited for her to leave.

Roland rolled his choice between his fingertips and his thumb. "How did David get Cubans, Kate?"

"They're Dominican, rolled by little old men listening to storytellers. They're called griots." Must she act daughtery? "I'll leave you to enjoy them. Gentlemen. Trish."

Kate snatched the brandy and hop-stepped through the dining room archway. Out of their sight, she stripped off her destroyed sandals and escaped through the living room door.

The poker players didn't have to drink the last bottle of the case she and David purchased on their honeymoon. For seven years, as they climbed the diplomatic hierarchy, they had carried it with them from Europe to Asia to Africa.

This Embassy house was a maze of doors: wood doors, locking metal gates, and a wall of glass sliding doors on the living room. The doors offered her egress to the house's best feature, a flagstone veranda that wrapped the house. During the day, blue-headed lizards played on it and at night, the stars felt so close. Under the soles of her feet, the mosaic of stones exuded the day's warmth.

Resting against the frangipani tree, Kate breathed in the sweetness of the pink blossoms, dispelling the cigar smoke in her nose. The night air blanketed her in a loose weave.

Overhead the Southern Cross, a diamond-shaped kite, hung lower and brighter than the other stars. Four bright points anchored the ends of the constellation; Kate had read somewhere that the European explorers who first saw it interpreted the four

stars as Christ's wounds. The Milky Way ran through its center as the fifth wound. She'd never seen it so clearly before; Zambia's lack of light pollution provided an advantage over Delhi. She picked out the constellation's tail, a lovely j-shape. Tonight she would watch it rotate all the way round the center star, a peaceful evasion of the personalities and politics inside.

Alone in the dark, she was dodging her usual role of smart wife and equal partner, but this group entailed too much risk. So be it, let the Cross spin.

The constellation had turned one quarter of its way, when Kate heard the back door bang. Little clicking heels tapped on the steps. Trish's attempt to penetrate the poker circle had failed.

"Kate, where are you?" Trish sounded quavery.

Kate couldn't hide or ignore her. She had to face her, confrontation or not. Kate called, "Are you all right?"

As Trish struggled in her spiked heels across the flagstones, she looked more thirteen than thirty-three. Her blonde highlights caught the starlight as streaks. Kate liked Trish, in spite of everything, in spite of Jim, but she wished Trish's behavior was less erratic. She didn't want to hurt her — the couple of afternoons with Jim had been a game. It had started innocently with him helping her tennis backhand. His shoulders, powering the ace serves which she couldn't return, were sexy. Kate recollected all the bits and snatches of adultery she'd seen in other postings; it hurt the worst if spouses overheard the self-righteous gossip at parties. She wouldn't let that happen.

"I'm going home. I hate those men." Trish wiped her fingers across her cheek.

"Who said what, Honey?" Kate asked. Did Jim let something slip? She walked them away from the open windows.

"They laughed when I bet on a pair of threes." Trish plopped onto the veranda's steps.

"I'm sorry they made fun of you, but you didn't really think they'd let you play, did you?" Kate sat next to her, relieved the tears were over a stupid card game. Jim predicted that his wife would fail and get drunk, but neither he nor David understood the frustration of this posting's preference for all-male events.

"They're all a bunch of jerks," Trish whimpered.

Kate hugged Trish, rather than answer. Her guilt dried

her mouth, constricting her throat. Outside of Zambia, Kate knew they'd never be best friends, but Trish was as trapped in this tiny community as she was.

"We never get any chance to dress up. It's not fair, just because Roland's wife likes craft fairs instead of charity balls."

"If the Ambassador and his lady set a certain style, we follow," Kate said. Trish wasn't thinking straight; they both had expat experience and foreign service parents. They were stuck. At last month's craft project party hosted by the ambassador's wife, all the wives of the Embassy learned to stencil wall decorations. Kate and Trish dabbed a chunk of wood together at the back of the room, both wishing they were anywhere else.

"Jim isn't listening to me," Trish cried, dropping damp tears on Kate's shoulder.

Kate handed Trish a tissue. David wasn't listening to her, either. In spite of her own frustration with the male dominance of Zambia, she needed to change the subject from husbands to neutral ground. "We should have gone to the Marine house to see the movie, but we didn't. Now all we can do is enjoy what's here. Look, there's Orion. See the three stars in his belt?"

"What are you talking about?" Trish blew her nose.

"Orion the hunter is the only northern constellation we can see down here."

Laughter rolled out of the open living room door. Kate closed it, catching a whiff of cigar smoke, acrid and sharp. David and Jim stood on opposite sides of the table with Roland glancing from one to the other, his voice laughing the loudest.

"They're laughing at me," Trish wobbled as she stood.

"No, they're not." Kate caught her elbow. "Their collective memory isn't that long. Probably my husband tried to bluff your husband."

"At least one bluff failed. Jim says he's going to get the corner office, not David." Trish raised her fingers to her mouth. "I'm sick of their games. I've...I want...I don't think I like your parties. I'm going home."

Kate steadied Trish, biting back a retort of how drunk she was. So that was David's plan for tonight and he has lost. Probably the first time ever. The office must be the signal of how the DCM position would be decided. Curiosity about the promotion would

have to wait until she was certain Trish wasn't going to throw up. She certainly shouldn't drive herself home.

"Let's walk." Kate propelled her away from the living room door. Trish was often out of bounds when she was drinking, even if she spoke the truth. Best to play to what Trish liked and avoid dangerous subjects. "Let's go shopping tomorrow. Check out the new shipment at the duty-free shop downtown?"

"Okay," Trish gulped, repressing a burp. "I need a drink."

"How about some tea?" Kate linked arms with Trish and led her to the kitchen door, bypassing the card players. "I have that lemon herbal blend you like."

Kate left Trish in the kitchen in the care of Izala, excusing herself to go retrieve the brandy bottle abandoned on the veranda. Kate would hide from all of them: Roland patronizing, Trish disorderly, Jim pushy, and David uncommunicative. What else could go wrong tonight?

As she walked, fallen jacaranda blossoms tickled her feet; the blossoms were creamy, not blue, in the starlight. The living room sliding glass door opened as she passed.

"Kit," David's voice low, her nickname a puff of air. "I need our Calvados. I told the boss I'd give him a taste of it. He's never had it."

"I'd rather you didn't." Kate knew she sounded unreasonable. It was only a bottle of brandy, but she wanted to oppose him and this sexist network. "Let them drink the scotch."

"It'll give me an opening. Where is it?"

She picked up the bottle from behind the frangipani tree. He had not bothered to tell her the details of his plan. He'd failed already, if what Trish said was true. But they—he—never failed at office politics. At least they never had when they worked as partners, a team. She'd been so distracted by trying to adjust to Zambia. The bottle was covered with a curving script. "Remember my French and your charm?"

"I always thought it was my French and your charm," David said.

Kate remembered their picnic in a vineyard's garden and how she was his equal then. The plans they dreamed up that day—they'd head up an embassy before they were forty. They had both worked in every embassy before this one. "I'm not your partner

here."

"This country and this Ambassador require a different approach, where I work and you handle the social obligations."

"I don't like feeling like support staff," Kate held the bottle against her, her stomach sour with anger. "I hate not working at something."

"You're using your charm; that's what we need in this environment. It's certainly more like what your parents had twenty years ago." David slid his hand down her arm, catching her wrist. "I'm sorry you feel cut off."

"You do realize that this is the last." Kate swayed the bottle by the neck. David didn't reach for it, but waited, his fingers cradling her wrist. He was slim, not broad. His dark eyes, not blue like Jim's, reflected starlight. David was clever, even when she didn't know where his strategy was leading them. She bit her lip, swallowing any more challenges about Calvados or poker. She handed him the bottle.

"I remember the plans we made over the first bottle." David's thumb circled the center of her palm. "Trust me — I'm working on them."

"If you say so." Kate didn't see how this night could help anyone.

"I'll take you back to the village in Normandy. Like the first time." David lifted her hand, kissing it before he released it. "This one goes to a good cause."

He disappeared through the door, but it screeched as it slid on its track. At the noise, a nightjar rose out of the lawn. Its breeding plumage, pennant feathers, were like a Thai silk scarf. Kate froze, watching the bird spiral and swirl over the grass, so free in perfect flight. David wasn't being open with her.

Standing in the doorway, Kate inhaled the dank and acrid odors of cigars and scotch. The light from the dining room archway shone, blinding her after the darkness. She stopped to compose her smile before reassuming her hostess duties.

"Katie, you're finally coming to see me," Jim emerged from the shadows.

She hated that name. "It was fun, but it's..."

"Are you sure you wanna stop?" Jim's mouth, smelling of scotch and sweat, hovered near her face. "We'll keep it quiet. A gen-

tleman never tells. I never tell."

Kate stopped, her fists crushing her skirt. Jim was one of those men who snatched and fooled around in every posting. She hated herself for being his most recent conquest. Even though he had been unique to her, she wasn't anything special to him. She smoothed her skirt to fight off a wave of dizziness.

"Jim-bo, your ante? Are you coming?" Roland called from the dining room.

Footsteps clicked on the marble tile and David appeared in the archway. Kate couldn't move — what had he heard? David approached. His hand cupped her elbow, and he guided her around Jim. "Your wife is in the kitchen, Jim, drinking tea, very unhappy."

"I don't think she should drive." Kate wanted Jim gone. "Why don't you go be nice to her? Take her home."

"Whatever you say, Katie." Jim shot back.

"Don't call me that," she snapped. David's fingers gripped her tighter. She flushed. Why did she have to respond to Jim's trick? He might be sexy but he was self-absorbed. David wasn't stupid — she was sure now he knew.

Jim chuckled and left to seek Trish. Kate knew he wouldn't tell Trish because he never has told her before. Trish had probably been another fling before they married.

"I think Izala has some appetizers. Will you come?" David's tone was calm. His face registered nothing as they crossed to the dining room. Maybe David, busy manipulating, wouldn't have noticed. Maybe her marriage would be unchanged. She played at the hostess game for hours and served more appetizers, chips, and beer, not looking at Jim, monitoring Trish's drinking, but flattering Roland.

On the veranda, Kate settled in a chaise to watch the Southern Cross. At 3 a.m. she registered the sound of chips clinking into their case and cards being stacked. The players were leaving. She peeked around her chaise and watched Trish swaying on Jim as they exited the dining room. David and Roland each held a brandy snifter. Roland muttered something about a DCM's wife. Something about "things you can control, like when to drink a grand vintage. Others, like women, not so much."

Kate shuddered and felt naked. She was not a social asset but an object. The two men's voices faded and she heard the front

door open and close.

"They're gone." David stroked her hair. "You've caught some blossoms—blue in the black."

"How much did you lose?" Kate captured the blossom from his hand, rolling its silky petals before dropping it.

"A lot of money, but the night worked like I hoped. Roland will appoint me DCM on Monday," David said. "The Calvados did the trick."

Kate struggled to comprehend. "All this over cards, cigars and beer. I don't know if you should trust promises made under these conditions."

"The boss told me after Jim left. That's how I know it's real."

"You get the promotion, but Jim outranks you? He has more time in grade?" Kate sat up.

"Yes, but he's not very discreet. There's a slight problem with the Minister of Tourism's secretary." David's gaze held hers. "Jim competes for everything. Didn't you know?"

"I didn't know." Kate gathered her sundress around her thighs; suddenly the night was colder. He knew everything about Jim. Maybe if she challenged him, it would give her time to figure out a response. "I thought you'd lost. Trish said something about the corner office. Doesn't that make him DCM and you second?"

"Consolation prize." David laughed, his head tipped back, his face pale under the stars. "Roland offered Jim the office when his three-of-a-kind lost to Jim's inside straight."

"That's silly. Poker's all testosterone." Kate turned away. Jim and a Zambian secretary and her—ouch.

"Kit, I pick my battles wisely. I win." David's hand touched the back of her neck. "You're cold. I'll get your shawl."

"David, it's just that..." Kate spoke to his retreating back. She wanted their partnership, but it now depended on him.

David slipped her silk shawl around her, blue as jacaranda blossoms, a present he'd given her in Bangkok.

"Here's the last of the Calvados," he said, offering her a cordial glass.

Kate rolled a bit on her tongue. His ordinary kindness was suddenly important, his gestures buoying her spirits. If he could be solicitous of her, he was not angry. No, it was worse; he was hurt. The brandy burned softly on the back of her throat.

"The sun's starting to rise on the other side of the house. Come see it with me," he said, standing over her.

Kate gazed at his face; even in shadow she knew him. He still valued her; he would never mention the affair. How could she repair the damage and restore the balance?

"Let me find the Cross to show you." Kate scanned the sky, wanting to offer the constellation and yet remembering Normandy, Delhi, Bangkok. All with David. Places were just places. Stars were only stars. They would mean nothing without him.

In the fading sky, steel gray creeping up the edges, she searched for the diamond shape of the Cross.

David extended his hand. "Give up the southern stars. Watch the dawn with me."

David was generous; he would not bludgeon her with this mistake. Her fling would be forgiven, but never forgotten. He would set the terms of their partnership; by abdicating her status as equal partner, giving him control, she would heal the injury she had caused. He would listen to her voice, but keep his own counsel. That would have to be enough for now; Kate gripped his hand and let him pull her to her feet.

Golden Delicious

I was so naive then. I spent my days dangling from my branch, basking in the sunlight and talking with my sisters, blissful and ignorant of anything beyond the orchard. Our world was a peaceful one until the day that the leaves around us rustled with a new word: harvest.

It had been overheard at the edge of the field, by the apples hanging lowest and closest to where the farmer parked his tractor. These apples often gathered bits and pieces of news from the farmer. It gave them a sense of authority to share what they learned with the rest of us, though they could rarely be counted on to give an accurate recitation of the facts. If they were to be believed, the harvest was coming soon, and on that day the prettiest of us would be taken away to a place called “the market.”

Speculation was rampant. The pessimists among us predicted annihilation. My neighbors and I remained optimistic, refusing to believe that our fate would be anything short of eternal bliss. Awful things just didn’t happen to such luscious fruit. We predicted that the market was a place of rainbows and warm breezes. We made up songs about fields free from frost and worms.

A few weeks ago, the voice of my closest sister faded from the chorus around me. She no longer daydreamed with the rest of us about the harvest. She became pensive and withdrawn. As the sun was setting one night, she cast her gaze down at the ground below us and whispered to me that her stem was weakening. Her voice was shaky, and I told myself it was the wind against the limb of the tree, but I think now that she was scared. The grass beneath us was littered with the corpses of our fallen treemates, dirty and subject to the ravages of bugs, birds and field mice. I told her that she was still youthful, with plenty of life left in her. I reminded her that the harvest would be here soon to take us away to the market, but the next morning, when the first rays of the sun warmed me, I woke to see that she was gone. I stared at the hole in the leaves where she had hung so near to me for so long. Then I turned to look down.

There she was, in the dirt, still round and glistening with a layer of morning dew. A Blue Jay landed beside her and pecked at her body. I felt sick and forced myself to look away. A deep loneliness overtook me and in the same moment I knew that I had to be strong. The harvest would be coming and I had to be ready. I had to get to the market. It was my destiny.

I spent my days scanning my surroundings for anything out of the ordinary, for a sign that it had begun. Sometimes I dreamed I had missed it and was left all alone, waiting to fall to my death. I worried about being good enough. What if I didn't make the cut? I did my best to ignore the twittering gossip that surrounded me and devoted all of my energy to sculpting myself into the perfect shape, adding small, delicate swaths of pink and orange to my already golden skin.

One day, while I was working on a particularly perfect patch of pigment, a smiling couple came walking in the orchard. They held hands and stumbled on the uneven ground, pausing beneath our tree. This is it, I thought.

The young woman reached up to a low-hanging branch and cupped one of my older sisters in her hand. The young woman had chosen well. This apple was the envy of many. She was perfect; round, bright in color, at the peak of her game.

I had only ever known the passing stroke of a leaf when the wind picked up. I had never been touched like that. I tried to imagine how it would feel. As the young woman's fingers wrapped gently around the apple I was filled with envy. The harvest had started and I was not the first one chosen.

The young woman pulled gently, but did not pluck. Instead she raised up on her tip toes and brought her mouth to meet the slightly dusty skin. With glinting white teeth she bit into my tree-mate's flesh. Juice rolled out from between the young woman's lips. She took another bite, and then another, pausing to chew, but never loosening her delicate grasp. It was terrifying. I could not take my eyes away.

Soon nothing remained of my tree-mate but a ravaged core, still hanging by her stem. At long last the young woman let go, and the branch bounced back to its original spot, so much lighter than before. This was not the harvest, I told myself. It couldn't be. It was too awful, too gruesome. The harvest would take us away from

eager mouths like that, rescue us from such a fate.

I was still trying to process what I had seen when the young woman's companion stepped very close to her. He pressed his lips to hers and I recoiled in horror, expecting him to devour her as she had the apple, but he did not use his teeth. With his lips locked to hers, he slid his arm around her waist. She ran her fingers through his hair. They were entwined and must have lost their footing because they fell together into the dirt. She climbed into his lap and wound her legs around him. Her sun dress was pushed up, exposing thighs that were a soft pink. I was struck by the delicate color and made a mental note to try to duplicate it.

For the first time I worried that I might not make it to the harvest. What if these two were the beginning of something that would get to us before the harvest could come? I imagined the orchard flooded with similar young men and women, saw our entire tree covered with churlish mouths, leaving nothing but trees full of shaking cores in their wake.

A low sound came from the pair, though it was hard to tell which was making the noise. It reminded me of the rhythmic creaking of our branch on windy nights. He held her very close.

* * *

Early the next morning whispers were passed from tree to tree that it had started. The apples at the edge of the orchard were being harvested and taken to market. The excitement spread with the morning sunlight.

The dew of the dawn had burned off before we actually saw them. It was not the young woman and her friend, but rather a group of dark skinned men. They worked quickly, moving ever closer. They did not pause to taste, but rather grabbed, plucked and tossed my sisters into large boxes. I desperately hoped that when they got to me, they would be mesmerized by the firmness of my body, my perfect coloring. When a rough hand encircled me I shuddered, but the pleasure was short-lived. I was tossed in with the others without so much as a moment of appreciation. The feeling of that hand, warm and rough against me, consumed my thoughts as I was bounced from box to cart and finally landed on this shelf.

It is being here, but without the warmth of the sun. It's not

how I thought it would be. I have stopped growing, and my body is softening. I don't think anyone has noticed yet, but it worries me. I was meant for finer things. This is no better than the cold dirt floor of the orchard, waiting to be eaten by ugly scavengers.

Occasionally hands reach up to our shelf and select a few of us. I have felt the brush of these hands, soft and clean. I am enticed by their touch, but I am afraid that they will leave me like my sister back in the orchard. I see her, at night in my dreams, hanging by her stem, ravaged and left dangling.

I dread being chosen, but if I'm not selected soon I don't know what will become of me. I consider asking the other apples, but I'm frightened of what they might say, and besides, once you get them talking it's nothing but an endless, rambling line of gossip; what the carrots said about the broccoli, how rude the Chilean grapes are. It's intolerable. So I sit here, waiting for a fate I am unsure of, not knowing whether or not to be afraid.

Two days pass before a woman with long, red finger nails reaches up and takes hold of me. She squeezes me gently, and her hand is warm, but the bliss of being lifted from my shelf and held with tenderness is quickly replaced by the familiar bouncing and shuffling of being transported. When I am pulled from the bag it is a new hand that holds me. His fingers are rough and scratch a little as he presses me to his lips and inhales deeply, taking in my scent.

The fear that has been building inside me fades a little when the stubble on his upper lip tickles my skin. He rubs me on his shirt and holds me up to see my color in the sun and in that moment I am sparkle embodied. He looks me over and I proudly display my colors for him to see. He takes it all in, and I feel something I never have before. I feel loved. There is a true tenderness in his touch now, as he brings me back to his mouth.

I relax and know that it won't hurt after all. I know now what my sister learned back on that beautiful spring day. I was made for this. This is my destiny. He bites into me and I am pleased at the loud crunching sound, happy that I have not yet gone soft. My juices run out and into his mouth and we are one. A low humming sound grows up out of his throat and vibrates my whole body as he bites into me yet again. I melt.

music



*Is it not strange that sheep's guts should hale souls out
of men's bodies? —Shakespeare*

With the arrival of this issue in your hands, dear reader, comes the arrival of St. Cecilia—that noble patron saint who died singing—to the pages of St. Clare's Review. For the very first time the review staff is pleased to present you with auditory amusements—and from our very own backyard nonetheless. The four acts represented here in our inaugural music section were all hand picked from the Santa Clara community for their exceptional talent. It is our intention that with the success of this pilot we will begin to elicit music submissions from around the globe, just as we do in the fields of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and art. It is exciting to imagine what lies ahead. In time we hope this small seed will come to flower, and with its trumpet sound out a melodic diversity to match the diversity of our readership. What I'm trying to say, dear reader, is that we look forward to all of your hip hop, salsa, country, metal, barbershop, and space disco submissions.

n.s. & s.c.r.

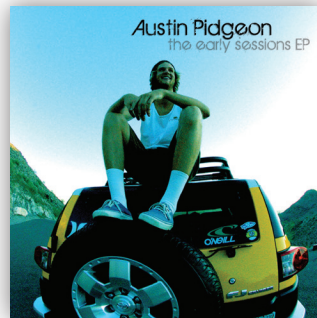
Austin Pidgeon



“Music is one of God’s greatest gifts to us, and I’m blessed to be able to share that with others.”

Austin Pidgeon, recently signed with Inspired Recordings, LLC, is a singer-songwriter from Phoenix, AZ. Exposed to a variety of music genres growing up, Pidge takes influence from the grooves of reggae, hip hop, blues, surf rock, and jam bands to produce his own style of acoustic reggae. His love for music is matched only by his love for writing, which is evident in his mellow melodies and developed lyrics.

“Wake Up (I’m There)” is the first track off Austin’s new EP, *The Early Sessions*, set to drop in winter of 2009.



Jackie Gage



Jackie Gage has been singing since she was a little girl, performing at her church Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, as well as various venues in Santa Clara County, including Antioch Baptist Church and both the San Jose NAACP's 100th anniversary gala and the 100 Black Men of Silicon Valley's 15th annual gala. Only recently has she started to compose her own music.

Jackie first began writing song lyrics in 8th grade. Nowadays, she takes both her old works and her

new ideas and composes them for recording.

Jackie has finally found a happy medium between composing songs and singing while accompanying herself on piano. She has a six song sampler to be released within the year called *Motionless*. This sampler is meant to inspire fellow peers who are facing difficult situations in their lives and encourage them to continue with their goals. Jackie's music is categorized as Pop/Soul.

Though songwriting is her main passion, Jackie's first priority is school. She is currently a freshman at Santa Clara University, pursuing a degree in business.

To find out more about Jackie Gage, or to listen to more of her music, visit her at myspace.com/jacquelinegage. Also, coming soon is her official site: jackiegage.org.





Project Blue Book

Project Blue Book is a Funk/Jam/Psychadelic gut-busting groove band. Germinating through the Boston music scene, we've added a seasoning to the sound from Jersey, Northern California, and Albuquerque adding a fuller, more wholly delicious sound as it touches the palette of the listener.

This sound derives from the mold of bands like Phish, the Allman Brothers, and Grateful Dead, but it feels like Soulive, P Funk, and the Meters. Still, we try not to shy away from a catchy pop hook in the midst of our larger musical compositions. Our sets provide a buffet-style variety of influence from jazzy/funk tune "Chicken Herb" in the vein of Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock to their reggae/pop sing-a-long "Gas in the Tank." In this way, there is a little something for everyone throughout the course of a PBB set.

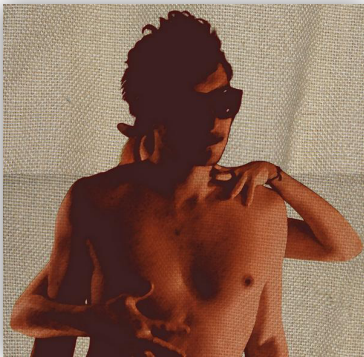
We've been working on an aggressive tour schedule that began in the Bay Area and traveled back east to the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the City of Boston, where we settled for the summer. Each show saw packed clubs and stinky funk, taking advantage of the shortened sets. Some of the highlights included Sullivan Hall (NYC), The Stephen Talkhouse (Long Island), and Copperfield's (Boston) before launching the most ambitious undertaking in the history of the band: a cross-country tour in September. Highlights of the tour included a week-long stint in Austin, TX and ending with our extended run in Santa Clara, CA.

We've settled down in Santa Clara for a while now, using it as a launch point for Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Tahoe, and beyond. Our new album *Lampin'* has just been released and is available on www.myspace.com/theprojectbluebook and will soon be available for download on the official site: www.projectbluebook.fm.

Butterfly Bones

Butterfly Bones is half man / half electronics. Most often, in the early predawn hours, they can be found buried under a maze of wires and blinking lights manipulating the various sequencers, randomizers, synthesizers, samplers, and effects loops that have eaten their way to the forefront of their sound. The final product of their mid-night machinations takes the form of a full live band backed by laptops, loop machines, and sequenced beats.

Butterfly Bones, comprised of Reese Donohue (guitar/vox), Austin Fraser (bass/electronics), Joe Gray (drums), and Steve Lance (keys), released their debut EP *Pretty Feelings* (Secret Sauce Records) on 8/19/2009. What began as a lofty, guitar-heavy shoegazey full-length, *Pretty Feelings* evolved during the recording process, and was eventually parsed from 14 tracks to 5. All the songs on the EP were written during the recording process, and not one track from the original list remains. Inspired by the heat of the dance floor and memories of carefree summers, *Pretty Feelings* is the first of many releases from up-and-comers Butterfly Bones.



Contributors' Notes

nonfiction

mark adel writes on a word processor in the predawn darkness of North Georgia. "55" is his second published essay; the first was written on a typewriter in the after-dusk darkness of Central Connecticut. He was born and raised in South Jersey.

rachel hammel: I'm a third year double Philosophy and French major at Santa Clara University. I wrote this piece during my semester abroad in Paris after an encounter with a man whom I seriously believed was planning to kill me.

jennifer hinds: English major, political science minor, member of University Honors Program, Sigma Tau Delta, Pi Sigma Alpha, University Track team. Loves reading, exercising, and plans to go to law school.

joseph weintraub is a published Chicagoan writer of non-fiction, fiction, essays and poetry. He has also won writing awards from the Illinois and the Barrington Arts Councils.

poetry

j. w. aarons hopes you enjoy his poem "The Passage" and his short story "Revere," as he enjoyed writing them.

e. louise beach: My poem, "Hag," was inspired by an informative piece on the hagfish in the children's section of the Washington Post. I had fun playing with the various meanings of the word as well as being somewhat self-referential.

kate giles' writing experience includes publication in various literary magazines and composition teaching. In addition to language pursuits, Kate enjoys exploring, cooking, and striking up friendships with felines.

toria johnson is an engineering physics student and carpenter-poet born and raised in San Jose's East Side. Intermission was composed in June-July 2009.

min k. kang attends San Francisco State University and lives in Union City.

stephen layton is a freshman Electrical Engineering major.

greg lauro is a senior at Mountain View High School who aspires to become a professor of mathematics. When not up to his usual shenanigans, he works as a web technician and tutors as part of the AVID program.

rocco lungariella earned his MFA from Bowling Green State University and is currently leaching composition and business communications at Brown Mackie College in Findlay, OH. His work has appeared in several journals; this piece is from his manuscript, *Italian Wind*.

austin pidgeon is a musician from Phoenix, Arizona studying English at Santa Clara University.

zara raab's poems and literary journalism have and will soon appear in Flash, West Branch, Arts & Letters, Nimrod, Spoon River Poetry Review, and elsewhere. Her Book of Gretel will come out this year. Much of her work draws on her roots in rural northern California, where her great-great-grandparents settled. She studied at Mills College and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and now lives and writes in San Francisco.

anthony sams is pursuing an MFA at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His work has appeared in The Los Angeles Review and at McSweeney's.net.

jacob uitti: Born and raised in New Jersey, now living in Seattle. I must thank Julie, the Fam and Flowers. Caleb, too. I am 26 and will do my best to continue. See more (jcuitti.com, theglassnotes.com)

kimberly aagaard: Concert going is a serious matter to my friends and me. Therefore, we usually show up unnecessarily early and wait around for a few hours with only each other and a camera. "Hours Early" was taken before an R.E.M. concert at the Greek Theater in Berkeley, California.

susan black: I moved to San Francisco in 1996 after a 20-year New York-based career in corporate communications; I hold a BA in Literature from Connecticut College. After having made my living for so long using words, I found that California's light, scenery, attitude and whole way of life awakened in me a desire to communicate in visual terms, so I have become a watercolor painter. My work has appeared in local, regional and national juried shows since 2005. www.susanblackonline.com

kate bradley is a junior at Santa Clara University double majoring in Biology and Public Health.

renée billingslea is a photography lecturer at Santa Clara University.

marcela villegas castañón is a senior at Santa Clara University majoring in Communication and Spanish with a minor in Italian. She has a passion for photography and film and hopes to pursue a career in the film industry.

danny escobar is a Santa Clara alum, and graduated June 2009 with a degree in studio art. The concentration in his degree was graphic design and photography. His photo was taken in Renée Billingslea's black & white photography class in the summer of 2008.

kellie flint is living, working, and creating art in Santa Cruz, CA. "J" is the inspiration for this piece and whom it is dedicated to.

kathryn fraser is a senior Studio Art major at Santa Clara University from Danville, CA.

jackie herring is a Mechanical Engineering major graduating in June. Her photo was taken of one of the trees on campus at Santa Clara University.

shawn huckins The Paint Chip Series explores color choice and its meaning in our daily lives. Mimicking the exact proportions, font, layout, and hues of miniature paint cards found at a nation-wide home improvement store, bands of color we may choose for our most intimate spaces -- bedrooms, kitchens, family rooms -- are an ideal stage to examine the everyday people and objects that occupy our world. For a complete list of works, please visit www.shawnhuckins.com

reid hudson This piece is a response to a self portrait assignment in which I had to put myself in a famous work by another artist. I chose Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror" for my reference work because not only is it a wonderful painting but it also allowed me to do more than just insert myself into a scene. Outside of the mirror I adhered to Picasso's distinct style, changing only the gender of his figure. I then used the space within the mirror to insert my own stylized self portrait, replacing the figure Picasso had originally rendered as a tribute to Matisse in their ongoing stylistic dialogue.

charlotta kratz teaches in the Communication department at Santa Clara University. Homepage: www.charlottakratz.com

katie larkin is a senior at Santa Clara University, studying Psychology and Studio Art. This photograph was taken in The Garden of Exile at the Jewish Museum of Berlin.

mike larremore www.mikelarremore.com

rené lorraine Since December 2005, René Lorraine's work has involved the tattooed figure. Her motivations and inspirations come from the interesting people she surrounds herself with, many of which happen to be tattooed. While she does find fascination in the tattooed figure, the fact that her subjects are tattooed is never the sole reason she finds them interesting. René Lorraine received her BFA degree in Pictorial Arts from San Jose State University in

2009. Her current work continues to explore the body modifications. For more information on René Lorraine or to view her work, please visit www.renelorraine.com.

edy madsen went on a trip to Venice in the summer of 2009, took a picture, and then painted a piece of the picture.

emmanuel mendoza is a Civil Engineering major at SCU, but he enjoys art and its many forms just as equally. He loves photography the most.

sharona oshara www.sharonaoshana.com

henry sotomayor is a freshman at SCU. He took this photograph while on vacation in London this past summer. He has a strong interest in photography and plans to continue to pursue art throughout college and beyond.

brandon jones: photographed collage, no digital manipulations.

natasha wallace This painting depicts the drinking fountain outside the women's bathroom in the SCU Art building (don't worry, in reality it looks much less foreboding).

eric tseng is a Psychology major in SCU and a cadet in the Army ROTC program. He hopes to continue his art and creative writing in the future.

chris winterbauer is a junior at Stanford University and is majoring in English. This piece is one of four in a series of works based on Radiohead's album "In Rainbows."

mary plante: It has always helped me when I find the means to express myself. Influence is ubiquitous.

fiction

kelsey sadler is a Senior English major at Santa Clara University. Her piece was inspired by years of camping and a class assignment.

radhika sharma is a writer based in the South Bay. She received her MFA in the creative Writing from San Francisco State University. Her byline has appeared in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The San Jose Mercury News*, KQED FM's *Perspectives*, *The SoMa Literary Review* and many others. She is currently at work on a novel.

matt siegel earned his MFA in fiction writing from Georgia College & State University and currently teaches at Southern Connecticut State University. His works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry have appeared in *Pebble Lake Review*, *Redivider*, *So to Speak*, *Buffalo Carp*, *Press 53*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Pearl*, and elsewhere.

julie wakeman-linn edits *The Potomac Review* and directs the creative writing program at Montgomery College, Rockville, MD. Her stories and nonfiction have appeared in a variety of literary magazines and anthologies, including *Enhanced Gravity: fiction by Washington Area Women*. Her novel *Chasing the Leopard; Finding the Lion* was a finalist for Barbara Kingsolver's Bellwether Prize in 2008. For more information go to www.julie.wakemanlinn.com

jared ward has had work accepted by *West Branch*, *New Delta Review*, *Evansville Review*, *The Dos Passos Review*, *one 4*, and others. He is currently in the MFA program at the University of Arkansas.

april davila is a fiction writer living in Los Angeles, California. She is currently hard at work on her first novel titled *The Feathered Tale of Talula Jones*. To find out more visit her website at www.aprildavila.com.



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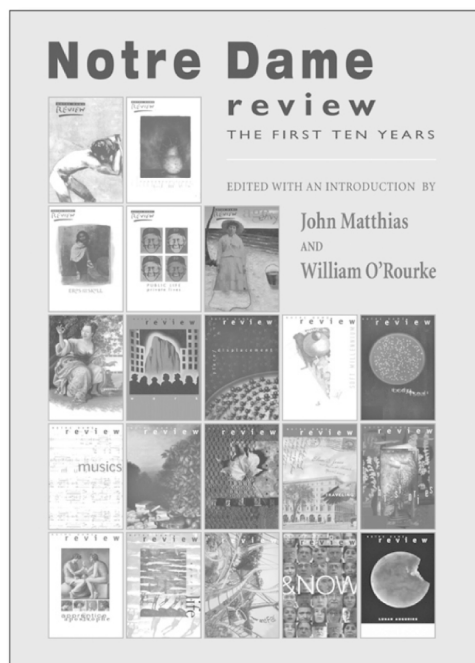
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