



QUADRANGLE

2008

{ LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE }

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LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS MAGAZINE {2008}

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It's not what you look at
that matters; it's what
you see.

Henry David Thoreau

Jesse Baier

Padre Pio

Three hundred pounds easy
drags squeaky wheels over
slush-covered sidewalks—
brown hair to his shoulders
wears only t-shirts in the snow
stops most nights at nine o' clock
to stare at Padre Pio outside the church—
hangs on tight to his papers
keeps the dirty wheelbarrow at his side
and stares for a while,
prays

 or just looks
until he gets up and walks down the street
makes a game of dodging cars

Diamonds

It was during the bathroom break on Wednesday, after library and computer, that I stumbled upon a proposition. Emily and Danielle were sitting close together on the wooden bench across from the doors marked “Boys” and “Girls,” leaning in toward each other, whispering and glancing around. I noticed them when I turned back from the water fountain—I was wiping my mouth with the sleeve of my navy blue dress code sweater when my eyes met theirs and Emily called out, beckoning, “Sarah—come over here.” It was the “Sarah” that caught my attention. I was a skinny, quiet kid with messy hair, the kind of kid who played make-believe games during recess while the other girls were practicing cheers, the kind of kid who wore snow pants from the first snowflake until the last little heap of gravelly ice had dissolved into a puddle—and then I wore rain boots. I was not used to hearing my name unless Mrs. Edgerton called on me.

I approached warily. The rest of our half of the class was either still in the bathroom or standing in the hallway, waiting to be led back to the classroom. The two girls on the bench seemed almost enthroned, surrounded by their unknowing subjects, and even as I stood before them I felt like I was really looking up instead of down at them. “We have Louise’s diary,” Emily informed me with pride. Emily had curly dark hair and round glasses, and even the boys were friends with her. I glanced down at the small book she held on her lap.

Danielle smiled, gleeful and catlike. “We’re writing in it, bad things about her mom. If you write in it too, you can be our friend. But you have to fill up ten pages.” She paused. “If you write more, it’s extra credit.” Danielle had straight brown hair, freckles, and a thin mouth with very fine hair on her upper lip. Her voice was full of secrets, and we listened closely in hopes of catching one, since they always seemed just about to spill off her tongue. I had never thought of being their friend, but the way Danielle said it left no doubt that it was something that I wanted very, very much.

Louise was the kind of girl that no one wanted to be friends with. She was tall and at odds with her limbs, with a face that had just a shade of a horse in it; her long, straight hair, appropriately, was held in a ponytail; she always wore the same faded blue plaid jumper, and she smelled faintly of salami. No one paid her any attention except when she deliberately or inadvertently drew it to herself. A few months before, people said, she stole a book from the book fair. There was a company that came two times a year and set up a book sale in the multi-purpose room, and each class was taken there twice each time: the first day to make a wish

list, and the next day to make our purchases with the money we'd wheedled from our parents overnight. This was the second day. We were standing in line with our glossy new books, *Sweet Valley Twins* and *Goosebumps* and *The Babysitters' Club*, waiting and waiting to head back to class, when a whisper went up from one end of the line to the other: Louise tried to steal a book. "She was hiding it under her shirt," Katie said to Tory behind me. "I guess her grandma didn't give her money." Everyone knew that Louise lived with her grandma. No one knew why Louise didn't live with her mom.

About a month after that, we were trickling in from recess when something in Tory's hand glinted and caught my eye. I looked closer and saw that she was holding a strand of diamonds. Envy crept swiftly into my veins. Katie appeared beside her and asked where she got them, and Tory replied that Louise was giving them to anybody who said they would be her friend. By the end of the day I spotted Katie holding a matching strand—and I wanted those diamonds. Their pure, angular sparkle had burned into my vision until I felt I couldn't live without the addition they would make to my collection of treasures found all over the place and hidden away in drawers, pockets, desks and backpacks.

The next day I approached Louise after school, as she was sitting at her desk packing her book bag. "Hi..." I began timidly.

"Hello," she said, and smiled. "How are you?" Her voice was clear and gentle.

"I'm good," I said. "Do you really have diamonds?"

"Yes, they're from a necklace that was my mom's... I only have a few left now, but you can have some." She handed me a strand of five drops of glittering magnificence. I smiled back and thanked her, wondering absently if this meant that I was her friend. On the bus, I held them in my glove and admired them all the way home; they seemed to radiate their own brilliance against the drab November browns and grays chugging past my window. When I showed them to my mom she turned momentarily from the TV to dismiss them as rhinestones—which was a word that sounded just as fancy and even more exotic, so I was content. They eventually joined the assortment of animal-shaped erasers and pretty stones that resided in my pencil box.

That afternoon I knelt with the diary spread open before me on the blue carpet of my bedroom, in the space between the two beds so that I would be invisible from the doorway. I shut out the sounds of pots banging angrily from the kitchen below and the voices of the cartoon my brother was watching in the family room, and the louder voice of my mom ordering him to turn down the volume, and the scent of the pasta that would be our dinner, as I sat poised with a pen in my hand like a weapon, intent on the task that lay ahead of me. What had seemed so simple before became difficult as I struggled for the words to write—I had to do a good job, to show Danielle and Emily how well I could do it, so that they would be impressed. I thought about Louise. I thought about her grandmother. I thought about her mother. Then I thought

of words; bad words, strong words. I thought the word “hate.” Then I lowered pen to paper, my hair swinging down as I bent over the little book, and I began to write:

I hate my mom.

I hate my ugly, stupid, fat, terrible, awful mom.

I HATE HATE HATE MY MOM SO MUCH!!!!

The words grew until they took up entire pages. I was trying to meet my quota, but soon I’d surpassed my ten pages and I was still going. I thought up new adjectives, new combinations of words; I stabbed at the paper with an anger that I didn’t understand and which had nothing at all to do with Louise’s mom: there was a hurt and a fury pouring out of my fingers in capital letters. At last I sat back on my heels and took a breath, satisfied that I’d done well enough for Emily and Danielle, envisioning their delighted expressions and the conspiratorial smiles I would share with them after they’d seen my handiwork.

I wasted no time on Thursday morning in returning the diary to my new friends. As soon as we came in off the bus, while the exhaust fumes were still lingering in our frozen nostrils and before the snow clinging to our pant cuffs had begun to thaw, I was standing at Danielle’s desk in my puffy coat, slipping her the book. “I did a lot,” I whispered proudly.

“Good,” she responded without feeling, and she accepted the diary while turning to talk to C.J. I reluctantly wandered back to my own desk and began to take off my coat.

Before recess I finally met up with Emily and Danielle at Danielle’s desk. I was puzzled to find the little book pressed back into my hands with the phrase, “We think you should put this back in Louise’s desk,” before the two of them raced outside to go sledding. I lurked around the classroom, re-tucking my snow pants into my boots, until everyone else had disappeared through the door—then I quickly slipped the diary into her desk before following everyone out to the hill, where I found myself sledding alone as usual.

Back in the classroom that afternoon, Language Arts was interrupted for a minute when Louise asked Mrs. Edgerton if she could go to the nurse. Her eyes and cheeks were damp and shining; she held her back straight and her chin high, and there was something behind her eyes that looked like knives. As she passed me leaving the room, I slouched into my chair and kept my gaze carefully on my notebook. Language Arts recommenced. Mrs. Edgerton began to write on the chalkboard, and as I reached for a pencil my fingertips grazed the five diamonds I still kept in my pencil box, as clear and sharp and bright as the winter itself.

Jean Gier

cat burglar

beyond a
weather-beaten
NO TRESPASSING sign
pussy willows
tempt me

i break off
slender twigs
inflicting
green wounds
on the bark

forgive me
it's spring

Poets of Autumn Maples

Avant-garde poets praise maples in prose
And herald their flamboyance without rhyme.
The lyricists celebrate all that glows
And curls and swirls from dawn till twilight time.
The imagists verbalize their delight
In tiger-colored leaves that blaze and crawl
And leap upon hillsides making the sight
Of tawny maples manifest to all.
The sonneteers behold then glorify
The leafy tapestry that nature weaves.
Too soon fiery scarlets fade and die
And fierce north wind scatters all the leaves.
Until then, these poets celebrate all—
All the flamboyant foliage of the fall!

Imprints

one by one
the deer emerge
from a lavender mist
streamlit reflections
mirror a buck
fawn and doe

a willow twig snaps
streamwet hooves
spring into action
print calligraphy
on lines of clay
and vanish...

Lauren Hackford

bread as a metaphor

that angst
seeping through the
 acne-pocked
 testosterone-pumping
 wet dream-espousing
fifteen-year-old male

dinner table slices
(verbal/physical)

butter me up i'll talk back
until the crust
hard flaky exterior
hangs hollow
(like entrails of stale dreams
piled on dinner plates, large, small,
 gory)

Emily Doscher

Untitled

often I've wandered down
the tight embarrassed hallways
of your past, the kind with
shaggy threadbare carpets
and no attempt at maintenance.

behind the doors with
once-reflective numbers,
who lies pulling apart
tapestries,

what roaring waterfalls of
abuse turn your ears inside
out.

what lack gave you such
needs, such gaping attempts
at quiet for the blustering
frequencies with which you
cannot bear to be alone.

how did a small embryo
of body become the only
balm to your internal
flames,

the only way to cope with
all your dungeons of
fear.

your instincts
wired down all the
darkest alleyways...

and like a ram to his master's
whip I followed you through
deceitful houses full of meek
stagnant floods
and felt the smell of you
take the place of my own—

why did I never tell,
why was my mouth so
dry and silent,
why were my arms too
tight to let go,
why did I still crave
rescue by strong
supporting arms,
why do I still flinch at
fathers kissing babies,
at simple hands leaning
on each other, giving
wings.

Untitled

what man first realized
that

his hands could be

used not only to carry
(caress chime clap)

but to break
(batter butcher bond)

that fists are for more
than fields

that knuckles can
leave scars on even
the hardest hearts.

what man first realized
that

his hands were monsters

barely under his control
(masticating murder)

that a palm too wet
with anger can rear up
as a provoked snake and

wind its way around the
necks of white deer.

what man first realized
that

his hands held the
potential to kill, to
plug up all the pink
secrets within children,

to hang innocence on a
line made of desire—

white fingers fluttering like
flags on holiday.

Kevin Koch

Cronus

I splinter the bones of my memories
to suck out the marrow of their vitality;
it dribbles down my chin like tree sap,

while the ineffable beauty of an October sun,
laughing over the wind-whorled dunes
of highway asphalt, slows to amber
on my lips.

I vomit up the stone I walk on,
walking on four strong wheels while
reeds stand, a listing bulwark against
the browning hordes of frost-touched.
The barbarian caterwauling of mangled pulps
along highway asphalt.

My feet are two parched horses,
bent to the ground and greedily drinking
the throbbing of the earth,
until they can take no more.



Jessica Lee
Wishful Thinking
digital photography



Dena Bowman
12 O'Clock High
digital photography



Laura Basil
Untitled
painting



Laura Basil
Untitled
painting



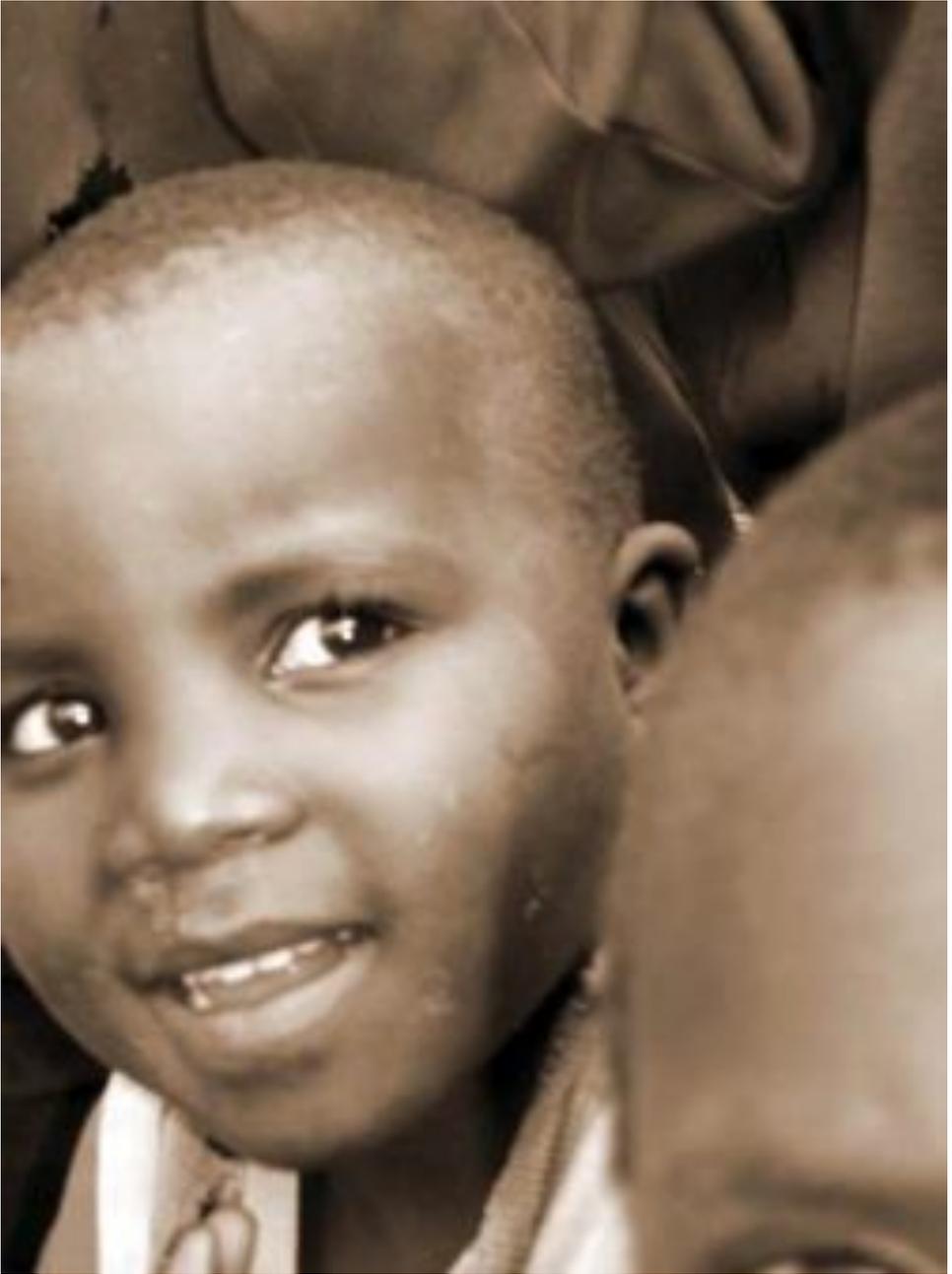
Dena Bowman
Giant Torso
digital photography



Dena Bowman
Firewall
digital photography



Rachele Simon
Mary Alyce
digital photography



Keyla Zintek
He Caught My Eye
digital photography

Jonathan Wheelock

Apartment

The clamor of blustery nights
When the cold stealthily seeps in
Through a crack in the window
Warrants the somnolence of half-open eyes

It feels like a ghost
Thin and wispy and frigid as it creeps
Down the wall of my scanty apartment
Until it's under my sheets

I like to think that it's your ghost
My hand feels the wintry air for
And that lifts up the covers so slightly
To let you slip under their shroud

But I realize there's nothing but chilly flannel
To occupy the space your body filled, fleetingly
Like the air that steals the words "I love you"
From my shivering breath

Fleeting like the season
That once permitted my fingers
To trace figure eights
On the small of your back.

Jonathan Wheelock

Close Quarters

Your uncles tell a story that no aunt ever gets to hear. Every year after the Christmas Eve party, the uncles drink thick, dark glasses of bourbon under the dim light at the kitchen table, and tell a story only among themselves. This year, watch the blustery night snow, drink red wine in the living room with the cousins running around. Your mother proudly exhibits a ceramic Mrs. Claus figurine and the aunts agree that it looks good next to the ceramic manger scene. You wonder if you'll ever start agreeing, or if you'll ever refuse to put anything but icicle lights on the front of your house. You wonder if anything will ever be that important. The uncles, hiding in the shadows in the other room, tell thousands of stories. But there's one you can feel, whether you've heard it or not, when the kitchen fills with deep, perpetual laughter.

It's not definable by any buzzword. Cold front or lake effect or "flurries." It's not measurable by any solstice, record low, or annual accumulation. It's not temporary, but always present, crippling. In the city, people on the street still try to keep up against the fierce cold, knocking into cars, buildings and each other. Trying to talk on cell phones even though the only thing anybody can hear is the shrieking wind and little grains of snow hitting your coat at machine-gun pace. People climb, crawl even, into SUVs and return to white suburbia at 5:00 every day. It's not so much warmth that you long for during this endless season as it is real contact. You press up against the people you bump into, catching their arms even though they're not falling.

What was it? The story? the cousins ask, hanging from their thick biceps, the way you'd hang off tree limbs. All the uncles ever say is, Later. Please? With one meaty hand swept around you, an uncle bends down, rubs his bristly beard on your cheek and says, You don't want to know. The aunts never try to figure it out, they just shake their heads, ask your girlfriend questions in the living room. The aunts know that whatever makes them laugh so hard simply must be funny.

Go to college, come home only on holidays. Driving back up, the city lights look far and apologetic behind the incandescent presence of the frozen white lake. It looks like a lunar landscape as you drive along the coast, past groups of vacant beach houses, with blackened, staring windows. The waves on the lake are frozen in their last desperate crest.

A friend says that this is supposedly the best Chinese even though you have yet to have Chinese that didn't all taste alike. You both order General Tso's with rice, talk loosely about hockey while you wait in line. Half-heartedly agree when he mentions player stats, even though you know they aren't on the team anymore. That ambiguous orange-brown sauce dripping in small blobs off his plastic fork, he tells you things you think you're supposed to want to hear from a friend back home. He asks why you don't come home anymore.

Your fortune cookie says, "Learn more Chinese."

"The snow looked like dust," one uncle starts. "And people are packed like frozen fish on the subway." You're afraid of how you might react to the whiskey, though you wouldn't think about mixing it with coke or sour mix like the aunts. Old enough now to hear the story, you start to feel the intoxicating glow all the uncles show on their faces.

One bum they call Jersey Shore 'cause he said he's from there even though it was probably bullshit. Shore liked to set up on the platform and beg the people leaving the game when we won and the fans were feeling their most generous. People fuckin' throwin' him quarters just so they could get around him and out of the blowing snow. So the uncles told him, get on the train, get warm, and ride it to the end. Get off at University and wait in the lot there for someone to come and give you the grand prize.

"Prize for wha?" the bum asked.

For collecting the most coins, an uncle responded. That's right, the guy on the Westside only got twelve bucks' worth and the guy downtown you beat by four bucks. He dragged himself into the cramped train, people nudging a little closer to avoid coming into contact with him.

Other stories, they're reserved for the non-cops, set aside for the friends and family, brothers-in-law who need "straightening out." Stories told while adults, still drinking red wine, listen, hoping that someone else is watching their kid. Some stories, people have heard them so many times that the uncles don't seem real anymore. More like some mythic titan who appears to tell his story, destined to leave again. They tell about taking out the biggest drug dealer in the city—the one who said he wouldn't hesitate to kill any pig if he'd gotten the chance—and pressing a boot down on his skull. Watching his tears freeze his face to the floor.

They park and trudge through the lot, the uncles do, planting each foot laboriously into the deep drifts. All around them, white, except for one blue wool cap fluttering in the drift between two cars. They dig until they see the jacket, the blue, red, and white waves of color. They dig, see his face frostbitten, pale blue and rigid with ice.

"Like a freezer-burned hamburger," somebody says.

More cops show up. They dig, chip away at the ice binding his back to the hubcap of the car, shoveling room around his rigid body as if they are excavating some extinct mammoth. Someone suggests separating his body from the hubcap by chipping away in between with an ice pick. With one powerful motion, an uncle raises an ice pick above his head, and strikes down in one effective blow, spraying ice shards in all directions. Then, *crrrrrrrrack*. The bum's head falls off at the neck, like a broken statue. *Crrrrrrrrack*, just like that, an uncle says, raising and lowering his arms in the air. An uncle buries his head in his hands, your father, he's almost spitting up whiskey he's laughing so hard. Outside the kitchen, cousins hear and mimic the sound, *crrrrrrrrack*. They scream it.

Take her out when she says, "Let's listen to jazz somewhere." Pick a dark, amber-looking beer to seem as though you know good beer. She gets a stale-looking yellow beer, but mainly listens to the trumpet player swinging eighth notes without drinking any of it. Start saying something like, "The snow looks like dust," until you notice that she's swaying to some Latin piece, letting the gentle, rising flourishes of the clarinet take her someplace else.

You try to walk in it, stepping further into its deepening chokehold with every lunge. Your calves are burning and soon your hamstrings begin to feel as though someone is plucking at every miserable tendon. The soft, white hills of the blanketed cars on the sides of the street make you feel as if you are riding in the middle of some giant white wave. Later that night, climb into bed and search for her permeating warmth under the covers. Tell her you've finally heard the story and you've had an epiphany. She says sleepily to stop taking drugs 'cause they're bad for your heart.

Every year the aunts get a cousin to put baby Jesus in the manger. It was you once, but now it's another sweaty, shirtless kid they snatch. A cousin clutches the bubbly, smiling figurine, and looks at its nakedness with his careful eyes until an aunt patiently shows him the right way.

A recurring dream: you're on the road at night, there's a light, floating snow. A red SUV tries cutting you off but you speed up because, fuck them. You hit because he comes in anyway, sending you and the SUV skidding against each other like bumper cars. Everything is whirling closer—the snow, the rear headlights of the person's car—and suddenly your seat falls back. Wait for impact.

Say, "Dad, we've all heard that one." Pour more red wine even though people have noticed your face flushed all night while saying things like, "Had enough, champ?" He turns and squints quizzically, his glasses reflecting the shifting, multicolor glow of Christmas tree lights. Everyone agrees, there are plenty of stories. Maybe he was trying to remember, *crrrrrrrack*. It was probably too old of a story for him to remember now anyway, the uncles dead and unable to help with all of the parts—the voices, the characters, the whole life of the thing. Now it's just a story that's been used again and again until it's finally used up. Or it's used you up.

Recipe

From jail, Michelle sends me a letter asking if I would please give back the recipe for her wheat germ brownies. Other than that, she says that she's fine, trying to make the best of it, that she's already enrolled in a few culinary classes, and that there're ten channels in her cell. There is a kitchen, she writes, and even though she gets shackled to the steel counter and can't use knives, a simple puree can still be done using two flat pans that fit inside each other. She says she needs the recipe back for the brownies for her block's Christmas party, but I know why she really wants it.

I envied Michelle for being clever enough to hide yams and cauliflower in macaroni and cheese, envied her charity, her plastic husband and the cookie cut-out kids that ate mac n' cheese without ever knowing. My kids still slobbered soda around in their mouths and ate things that turned their tongues blue. I struggled to pull together a late weekday meal, trying for a while to incorporate a regimen that would allow me the liberty of not having to think about dinner when I got home from work. I came up with something along the lines of "taco Tuesdays," my kids bearing the predictability of watery beef mix sliding out of stale taco shells like sewage. "Submarine Saturdays" meant subs. "Fun Fridays" was pizza night, a bit more ambiguous than the rest of the scheme, but it worked nonetheless.

The pillared house at the end of Amora Street was Michelle's—big, expensive and white. Her husband could buy it because he did something with computers. It didn't matter what. I likened it to a "royal colonnade," a palace threshold dwarfing our colony of vinyl-sided boxes and carved-out lawns.

Michelle, she would give me little index card recipes, her rich bubbly writing enticing me to include sweet mashed potatoes and rolled oats in peanut butter and jelly muffins. She would slip an index card in my purse here and there, at church or the grocery store, winking at me like she was communicating some valuable piece of knowledge crucial for sustaining the survival of inept mothers and wives. She said I shouldn't have to bribe my children to eat healthy. Across the street, I watched her kids play with the dog, lying on their backs watching the sky, amusing themselves in simple ways my kids never could. I would come home from work to find my youngest son Wikipedia-ing "sex" on the computer, or my oldest arguing with me in that half-baked nihilistic tone of a teenager who has just discovered Nietzsche. Would they know the difference between a regular Rice Krispie treat and one made with beech-nut? I used to wonder.

When they found Michelle's husband dead with a high dosage of tranquilizers in his

system, they suspected her after finding the drugs in her bathroom cabinet. All of the news stations covered it, a typical story of suburban filth veiled under a seemingly normal appearance. From jail, she writes to me about how her lawyers are building a strong case to prove her innocence, that she will probably be re-tried and acquitted. The news is beginning to portray her as wrongly accused, a victim of romantic entanglement between her husband and a woman from his office.

It's only November, but in her letters she's still asking for the recipe for her Christmas party. I picture Michelle, shackled to the steel counter of the prison kitchen, writing as fluidly as her handcuffs allow. I dig the recipe out of my purse, my fingers finding the square edges of the index card: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons wheat germ, 1 cup chopped walnuts, 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, 5 Thorazine. I pull out one for French onion soup calling for methamphetamines. Cinnamon buns with a cocktail of diet pills and Adderall.

From jail, Michelle tells me she's taking bible classes and asks if I know what Amora St. means. She says that whoever named it must have thought it was a variation of *amore*, love, but it's actually a Hebrew translation of the biblical city of Gommorah. The city God destroyed because of its sinfulness. She says this is going to be the premise of her new novel, which she has already begun writing. Digging more recipes out of my purse, I walk across the street to the crime scene. Cops still sit outside to prevent people, mainly teenagers, from breaking in to experience the novelty aura of a room that once held a dead person. I tap lightly on the squad car window, the officer slouched in his seat and sleeping. He looks up and the window slides down.

I ask him, Do you like wheat germ?

Ed Taylor

Aztecs Overload My Pony

Aztecs overload my pony,
cruel in feathered capes. A low-
land gorilla knuckles off
with my wife, who smiles shyly

The cat, het up on jungle funk
tears my calf in half. I rise

bleeding from breakfast nook to a knell
of doorbell; the president & hounds

in a state of siege need my house
to change swimsuits & check my taxes

as they are in the neighborhood
Strip-searched & flipped out

naked, I limp to the curb & squat
till the block club votes: I

must go—depressing & bad
for land value, so out come

the pitchforks & torches & I
stand up to run but—fear &

despair have cleared the air, I feel
more alive than in years & smile

at the porches I pass & open
my mouth to howl—

it might

be an error to think badly of terror:
it's better to feel than to kneel

Dream Fragment

Morning or evening is steered by Ahabs burning earth in search of the white
sale, & a confused foot alone in the sweaty cell of shoes

& how to wake when a grave tree

steps away from the race

hoping for adoption by a gay couple of decades

before swimming where there are no arms

only fish glittering like leaves as they sift

toward the dark summer at the bottom of the heart

Logos for Togo

on-demand video won't get your toast done
don't let the man come & sell you some service
when what's really needed is sleep & the truth

about

glistening honey now flooding the earth
& sea & sky & why bodies
float in this tide, smiling & swimming
& drinking
& sinking

Karen Mize

India

(an excerpt)

Delhi—Day 1-3

Wild, crazy, chaotic Delhi. Where do I begin? I have been an observer, but I admit I have yet to reflect on the meaning of all the layers.

The city is an endless stream of humanity and its machines. Cars, buses, auto rickshaws, bicycle rickshaws, motorbikes and the occasional cow form one continuous parade. There is constant horn honking and the drone of the traffic lasts well into the night. There are hoards of decaying buildings that have been abandoned before completion. Between the hardness of the concrete is a teeming humanity struggling to live.

Delhi is unique, yet simultaneously familiar. It is reminiscent of many other places I have seen: Cairo, Jakarta and Rio, for instance. On the surface, there is a lot of energy, but in reality, there is a huge depletion of energy. It is all quite exhausting. One cannot help thinking about the randomness, the sheer accident of where one's birth occurs.

Two days ago, I arrived at my "well-chosen" hotel after midnight. It appears to be located in the middle of the city's auto chop shop district. I awaken to people burning garbage on the street. I am one of the few women at the hotel and, most certainly, the only Westerner. On my second day here, I admit to having a "freak out" at the sight of 40 men checking into the hotel.

The thoughts and fears that are provoked when you suddenly find yourself in the minority are amazing. Now, I have come to accept my singularity and the stares and curiosity that accompany it.

That being said, I was quite delighted to meet a Thai woman this morning at breakfast. Ironically, her name is USA (pronounced u-sah). As you might suspect, we became fast friends and shared a couple of laughs over our common situation.

I must say that I have seen some remarkable things here. On day one, I visited the Hare Krishna Museum, an awe-inspiring, lotus-shaped Baha'i Temple, and made offerings at a Hindu Temple dedicated to the Goddess of Wealth. (Yes, I did spend the afternoon running around with a bindi, a red dot, on my forehead.)

I love the juxtaposition of the many religions here and this spirituality that is the under-tow of the physical hubbub. I was also quite moved to visit a museum dedicated to Indira Gandhi and her son, and I saw the spot where she was gunned down by two of her own guards. One of my Hindi tour mates and I reflected upon some of the parallels between the Gandhi

and Kennedy families—family members gunned down, favorite sons tragically lost in plane crashes. Also very heart-rending was the single black slab of marble upon which Mahatma Gandhi was cremated.

On my second day, I spent most of my time wandering through bazaars and treated myself to lunch at the Imperial Hotel. This hotel is palace-like and one of the most breathtaking I have seen in all of my travels. It was a wonderful escape from all of the hustle-bustle.

I also spent a great deal of time in both bicycle and auto rickshaws. I have learned to hold on tight and at times, to close my eyes. These rides are both scary, but at the same time quite exhilarating. I suspect that India, as she reveals herself, will evoke the same feeling.

Delhi—Day 4

I have re-invented myself. I am Canadian, married, with three children. My husband is back at the hotel and he is a VERY strong man. How else do you handle the rickshaw drivers who want to take you everywhere but the place that you want to go?

Delhi—Day 5

A public bus is boarded for my return visit to old Delhi. I am sure that we are quite the spectacle—a parade of twelve white women with a chocolate-colored bandleader. The bus is bursting with Indian men; there is a solitary, Indian woman who is nearly invisible, despite her vibrant sari plumage. Flesh is pressed against flesh; limbs are entwined with limbs. Everyone carves out whatever space they can. Looking around me, within the close confines of the bus, I see Indian architecture captured by human forms: dense, intricately carved and punctuated with lots of nooks and crannies.

I post a note to myself: “Do reflect more upon space as culture, culture as space; e.g. how does our notion of space shape our cultural psyche and perspective?”

We file off the bus in a single column. After removing our shoes and paying the “shoe minder,” we step barefoot into the courtyard of Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in India. We are mere, humbled ants in this space that can well accommodate 25,000 worshippers. As this is a conservative mosque, we cannot go beyond its walled exterior. We are not admitted into its enormous dome, the cavity that contains its heart, its essence.

Across the way at the Sikh temple, we don orange head scarfs and are greeted by our host who exemplifies the five kakkars (emblems): the uncut turbaned hair and beard representing holiness, a comb symbolizing cleanliness, loose underwear (so he tells us) representing modesty, a small sword symbolizing a commitment to justice, and a steel bangle, signifying fearlessness and determination.

The scent of incense and the stringed music of the sitar float out to greet us. After briefly sitting cross-legged among the worshippers, we join the massive pots, four feet in diameter, that crowd a nearby kitchen. The Sikhs feed all who show up at their door and this meal “factory” is testimony to this fact, as is the lump of sweet dough that is pressed into each of our hands as we depart.

The English Baptist Church, which is nestled up to and hugs McDonald’s, is bypassed.

Later, we board a train to begin a dreaded 1,000 km journey that spans Northern India—from Delhi in the east to Jaisalmer in the west. This is no simple “Go from point A to point B endeavor”; we travel 300 km south and then head 150 km north. This pattern is repeated as we literally zig-zag our way across Northern India.

For the next 20 hours, two unenclosed, second class, six-person compartments and a shared squat hole are our homes.

The soulful Sarah McLachlan and the sensual Brazilian Ivo Mendes are my musical companions; Kiran Desai (*The Inheritance of Loss*) and Arundhati Roy (*The God of Small Things*), my literary ones. And then, there is Sleep, which is a very welcomed, fourteen hour companion.

Jaisalmer—Day 6-7

Jaisalmer rises from the Tahr desert like a golden, gleaming sandcastle. It owes its existence to the camel trade routes between India and Central Asia. Within its walled confines are palaces, intricate haveli (wealthy merchants’ homes), and statue-laden Jain temples built by maharajahs with big dreams and fueled, in part, by the opium trade.

Our home for two nights is a family-run guest house that is within the walls of the fort. Our host family sleeps together, huddled on the floor in a room off the entry. All of the rooms have ancient padlocked doors that seem to shield even more ancient stories.

Weaving my way through narrow, bending passageways confined within the fort, I do my best to avoid meandering, long-horned cows with their ever-present, worshipping entourage of flies. Merchants taunt and tease from the sidelines: “Just look, no buy,” “Sweet angel, special price for you,” and my personal favorite, “Buy one shoe, get one free.”

I have a confession to make: I love to haggle. I love the game of the slow courtship: the casual perusal of admired objects, the show of seeming indifference, the offer/counter offer, the turning of the back on the object of desire, the walkaway, the hoped-for call back, and then, finally, the consummation.

Later, I join my travel mates for an exploration of Indian beauty treatments. Some of the women have facials or massages. Others daringly opt to have elaborate, fanciful patterns painted in henna up their forearms or lower legs. I choose to have my eyebrows “threaded,” a process which I find fascinating. The “threader” clasps one end of a piece of dental floss-like thread between her teeth; the other end is threaded between her two hands. Somehow, she manipulates the thread in such a way that stray brow hairs are cleared and a perfectly shaped arc emerges quickly and painlessly. I feel like my eyebrows have just been harvested.

In the evening, we laze about our rooftop while a sitar player serenades the sunset. We are lulled to sleep by competing doggie choruses, whose performances last well into the early morning. (“It is the season of love,” our guide explains.)

The next day, under the scorching sun, we begin our journey into the desert. After a one-hour journey and one breakdown, our jeep arrives at the point that we are to meet our camel caravan. After being told that we will be riding for a few hours, my eleven travel mates and I trek into the desert, each with wadded toilet paper, and relieve ourselves in unison. I am sure that we were quite the sight!

Papu is my camel and I am the only one who is allowed to ride solo; the others are each led by young boys, eight- or nine-year-olds, and the occasional adult. As we plod along past scrub bushes, a sheep herd or two, and the occasional round clay hut with a thatched roof, I find myself suddenly grateful for the natural padding that I have in my butt and thighs.

During the three-hour ride, Papu keeps me entertained with the gurgling, bubble-up, water cooler noises that he makes with his throat. This guttural demonstration is followed by a Bazooka gum-like bubble eight inches in diameter that puffs out from his mouth. This is his tongue and it serves as his canteen.

At the point where the scrub bush ends and the dunes begin, we set up camp. Thirteen cots are set up in a semi-circle that mirrors the crescent moon that will later appear. A deep darkness descends after our dal dinner has been consumed, the local dancers have whirled away, and the camp fire has put itself to sleep. Later, the sky becomes a brilliant, glittering, sequined sari. All is silent. No breeze lifts the sand, not a single person stirs in her cot, no guttural sounds are emitted from the nearby camels’ throats or stomachs.

This is the deepest, thickest, most expansive silence that I have ever experienced. It keeps me awake all night.

Jodhpur—Day 8-9

This is the first place in India that I have been awakened by the call to prayer. It holds a certain romance for me, perhaps because I associate it with so many of my journeys: Cairo, Khartoum, Kuwait City, Casablanca, Dubai, Istanbul. All are exotic, all united by the weary, lingering, and haunting voice that first greets the day with its longing, pleading call to Allah.

We arrived here after a five-hour journey on a public bus. We boarded first, others followed and it was soon filled beyond capacity. There are veiled women in brilliant jewel-toned pink, red and marigold saris with bangle-laden arms clutching young children, and weary men, who are returning home after a long week at work in some distant place. Endless people clamber up ladders to tree house-like compartments above our heads; others sit, squat, stand and otherwise jam the aisles. At every stop, children climb halfway through the windows with offers of water, crackers, and ice cream.

Our guide has instructed us not to let anyone sit on our armrests. Despite his warning, a man suddenly leans across me, crosses my body with his and proceeds to retch out the window next to me. My eyes lock solid with his wide-eyed, child companion. We mirror each other with our frozen “I do not know what to do” expressions. The man then collapses to the aisle floor and folds himself, knees to chest, a position that he retains for the rest of the journey.

Hustle-bustling Jodhpur seems more hard-edged, gritty and raw than Delhi. Its only charms are the stacked Cezanne-like, iolite-hued, sugar-cubed houses which gave rise to its reputation as the “Blue City.” (Originally, only the house of the Brahmins were painted blue; now, the color is widely used as it is believed to deter mosquitoes.)

Meherangarh, a golden fort/palace, floats above this ragged sea of blue, like a giant, luxurious ocean liner.

Some of the auto rickshaws here resemble elaborately painted, chrome bejeweled exotic dancers. Their elaborate outfits are made complete with the two, eighteen-inch, gold-glittery tassels that dangle from the front. With Bollywood-like music blaring and twirling tassels, we bob and weave our way across the city, short-time guests of one of these painted ladies.

At a red light that halts our progress, we are surrounded by broken beings: men with stumps for limbs that they use to drag themselves to our side, women clutching filthy, scantily clothed, limp babies, and others with gaping wounds so deep that they expose layers of human geology.

All of this occurs against a rising crescendo of “gori, gori” (white woman, white woman).

As we pull away from the intersection, we are left haunted by the image of the gory served up for the benefit of the goris.



Jason Pontillo
Wooden Victory
ink on paper



John Frost

Transcendence

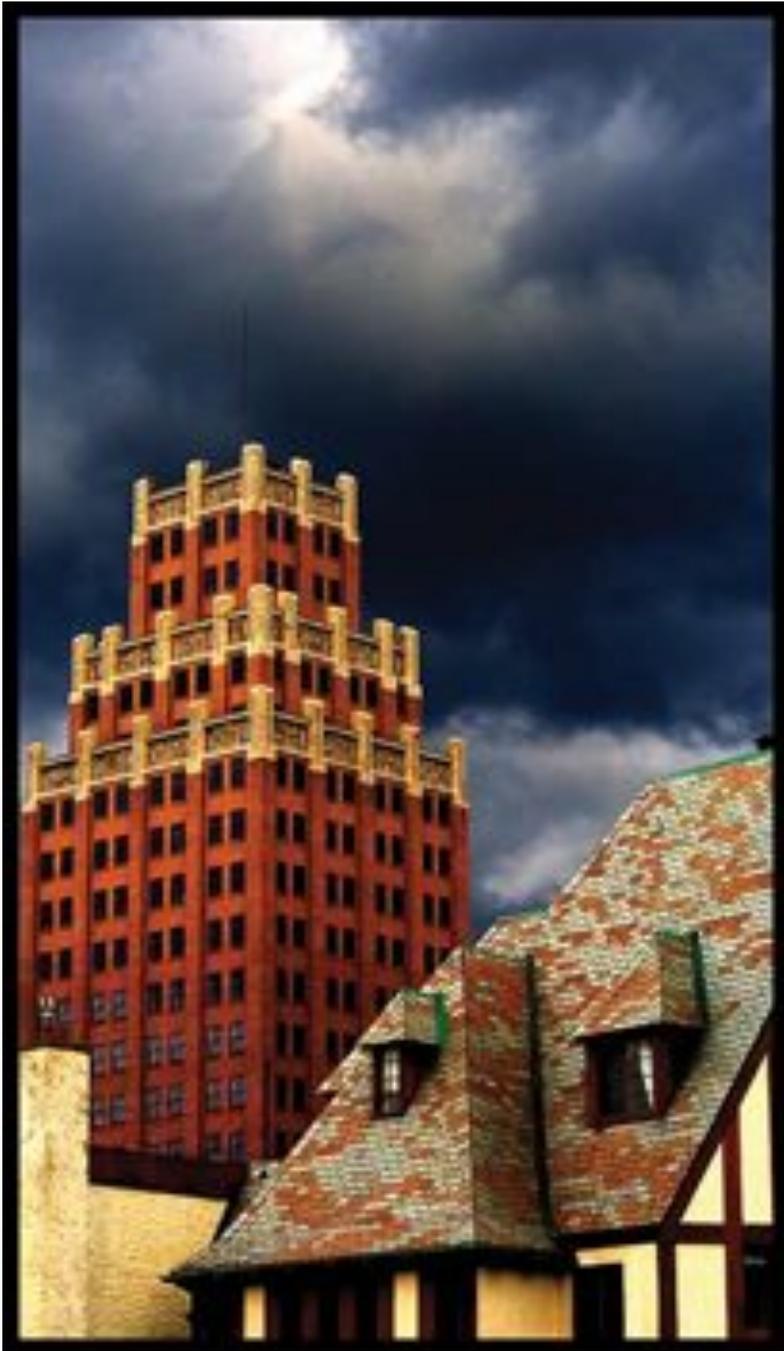
digital photography & Photoshop



Jason Pontillo
Untitled
ink on paper



John Frost
Divine Wrath
digital photography & Photoshop



John Frost
Gotham
digital photography & Photoshop



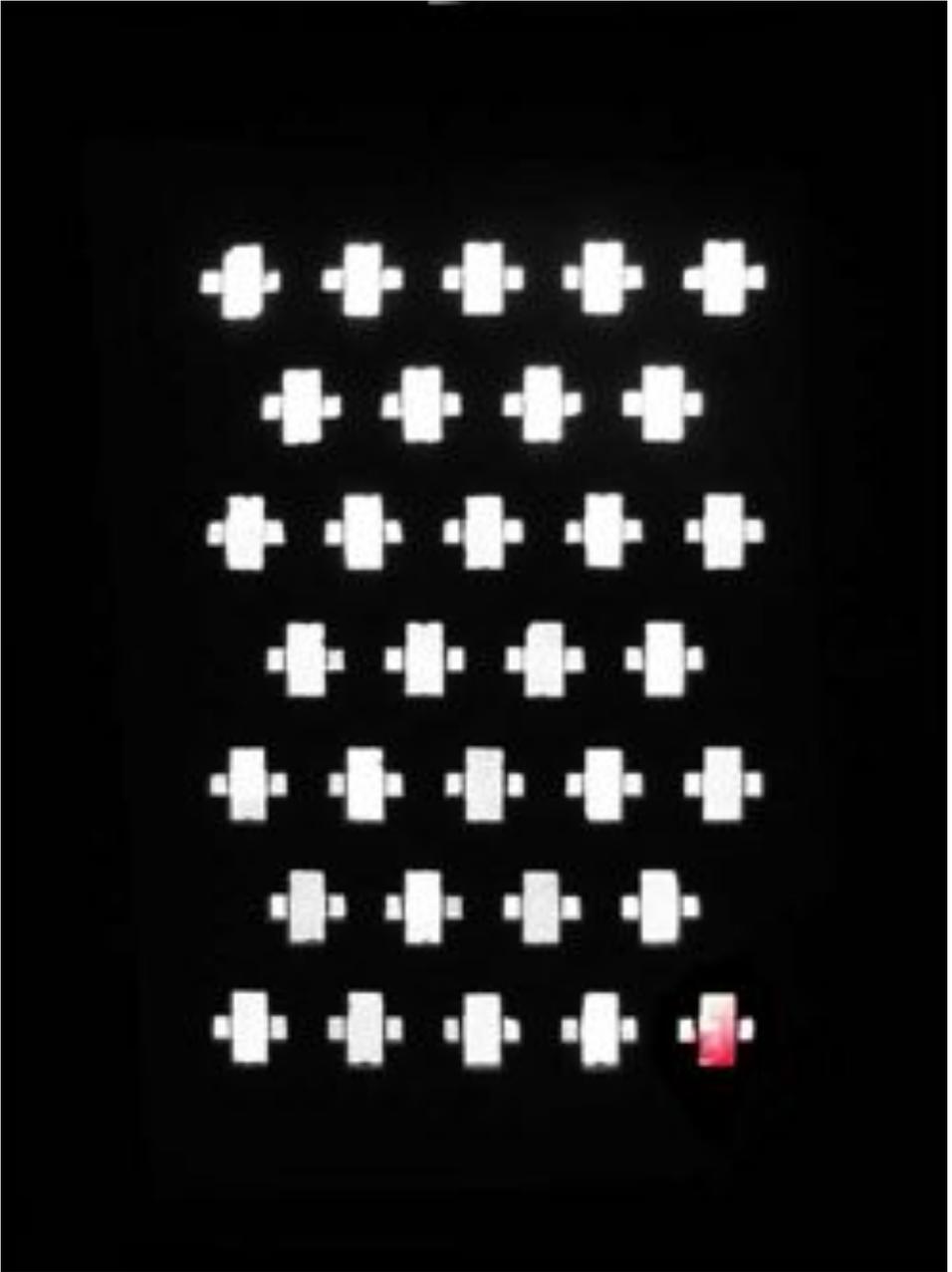
Joshua Vito
Work Mech
prismacolor marker on paper



Nicole Evanisko
Auschwitz
digital photography



Keyla Zintek
Truly Ireland
digital photography



Zachary Schweitzer
The Old Club Windows
digital photography



Alixandra V. Krzemien
Glen Etive, Scotland
digital photography



Huimei Zheng
Nature
digital photography



Michael Iacobelli
No Smoking
digital photography



Allison Hogan
Untitled
digital photography



Matt Durante
Waterfall
digital photography



Caitlin Hagar
Fall in Allegany
digital photography



Michael Jacobelli
Reflections
digital photography

Duyen Nguyen

Chinatown Memorabilia

A well of memories bolsters
my mother—
she remembers
ditches,
the cool lapping of riverweed,
scratchy leaves. A smeared
handprint—the color of nutmeg, the texture
of scabs—doesn't frighten her.

She bravely barges
past shelves of mackerel
swimming in brine,
packages of wormy
noodles, bruised bok choy,
dares to touch lusterless doorknobs—
with fingers
that will later smooth my hair—
disappears in a stink
so palpable I imagine,
for a moment, that a yellow
cloud has enveloped her.

The civilized world
has chlorinated me, disinfected me
of grit;
I shrink back, ready to sacrifice
an organ for
white tiles,
porcelain bowls—

instant sanitation.

Bygones

Had I memorized you in portions,
devoted hours, say, to the gentle
curve of your ear, the narrow gaps
between your slender fingers,
the dimpled crooks of your elbows,
I would not now be thinking of you
in generalizations, in flashes—
was that your pockmarked chin, or
some other boy's?—in language
that I have molded to suit the ones
who came after you. His shoulder
was freckled, like a quail's egg,
but was yours? And that one,
the one whose calloused palms
rubbed, on frosted evenings,
the goose bumps on my arms,
he laughed in wheezes, choking on
jokes that he could never understand;
but you—weren't you clever, weren't
you quick? I should've traced
the creases of your throat, the rise
of your Adam's apple, while you slept,
dreaming (never of me) of droughts,
famines, hunger, of the foreign
and the distant; I should've absorbed
your wit, the disarming smiles you
offered to egos you'd bruised; I should've
sketched your likeness, in vivid imagery,
in descriptive appositions—you, the
smart-aleck, you, the altruist; I
should've immortalized you
in poetry innovative, stark, beautiful.

Duyen Nguyen

Reading Tea Leaves

The menu confused Ben: Caffè Mocha, Espresso Machiatta, Cinnamon Dolce Latte? He wondered for a moment if he'd pulled a Rip Van Winkle—fallen asleep by a tree and woken up, not twenty years later, but somewhere in Italy. What he needed was something pronounceable, something sobering, something English. Earl Grey, he thought as he approached the barista, a twenty-something with a pointy chin and spiky hair.

“Short, grande, or tall?” she asked.

Ben looked at her for a moment. He'd taken French in high school. “Grande” meant large, but you weren't supposed to pronounce the “e.” He was a tall. The barista was a short. They could've been negotiating flesh. He remembered watching a documentary on the Wild West on the History Channel: saloons doubled as warehouses back then. Give me a flask of whiskey and a short redhead. I want a tall skinny mocha. It sounded wrong. “Put it in a cup,” he said, “a teacup.”

“Sure thing,” she said, her sharp incisors pushing against her lower lip as she flashed him a smile. “That'll be \$4.58.” Ben opened his wallet. He had the cash—he even had the correct change in his back pocket—but small charges on his bill made him feel busy and frivolous. Got a meeting in five; can't wait for change. \$1.99 for a pack of gum? That's nothing; I've got a \$5,000 limit. He handed her his credit card.

Her nose was pierced. When she gave him his receipt, lowering her head and reaching under the counter for a pen, the lights overhead bounced off the silver stud in her left nostril. She didn't look anything like Clara—Clara's teeth were square, like rows of Chiclets; only freckles dotted her nose—but something about the barista reminded him of her.

“Careful, it's hot,” she said as she pushed a ceramic cup and saucer toward him. He glanced into the cup. A translucent bag swam around in a tan pool of water; the tea wasn't done steeping yet.

Clara only drank green tea, which she bought from a Vietnamese grocery store across the street from their apartment. It didn't come in protective bags. A tin canister, with a dragon and a fat, apple-cheeked Buddha on it, held the thistly, dried leaves. Throwing a pinch into a highball glass—it was strong stuff, the store owner had told her—she'd add steaming water from a blackened kettle, then watch the leaves unfurl like flags. In a past life she might've been a fortune-teller; when she stirred the glass with a toothpick and told him that the woman of his dreams was right under his nose, he believed her.

She didn't like coffee. Caffeine, she thought, was as bad for you as cigarettes. A cheap,

momentary pick-me-up, kind of like sex with her boyfriend, she'd told him, laughing and hiding half of her face behind her hand, as though embarrassed, as though she couldn't believe she'd said what she'd said. He knew better than to tell her that tea, even green tea, contained caffeine. Clara was smart enough to know that herself. But she was an optimist. She believed in the power of antioxidants. Japanese people, she'd read in a health magazine, were the most likely to live over a hundred years. She was pretty sure all the tea they drank had something to do with it. Ben didn't think that was a politically correct thing to say. The English drank a lot of tea, too, he'd pointed out. Their teeth were really bad. Did she think there was a correlation there?

The coffee shop sat on the corner of their street, next to the only record store in the city where you could still buy vinyls. A black curtain separated the two places, like a fourth wall. Ben took a seat by the window and lifted the tea bag from his cup. He watched it drip yellow tears, then pressed it against the side of the cup with a spoon. At the next table over a man in a gray fedora worried a cup of foam, fashioning the fluffy stuff into a pyramid with his breath. Ben wondered if anyone had ever tried to read coffee grounds. You'd have to be lightning quick, a psychic and a sprinter, he thought. You will marry—sorry, your future's dissolved. Your future's the black slush at the bottom of this mug. That wouldn't exactly rake in the money.

Outside the window a plastic bag rolled along the sidewalk, carrying the wind in its swollen belly. An urban bale of hay, Ben thought and touched the sides of his cup. He would've liked to wear a holster on his hip. The Second Amendment didn't make much sense to him, but he didn't think people should be trusted with guns. He'd carry a pen, or maybe a really large Sharpie. "Draw 'em" would take on new meaning. If what Edward Bulwer-Lytton had said about pens and swords was true, in a duel between him and Clara's boyfriend, he'd be a sure bet. Idiot, Ben would write across his face. Undeserving.

"Lucky," he said, pouring a packet of artificial sweetener into his cup. He watched the white granules sink to the bottom of the cup, like rocks in a pond, then stirred them into a whirlpool. When they resettled, he stared at them, trying to read them. Fake, they said. Too sweet, they said.

He looked at the counter, where the barista was talking to another girl in a green apron, a grande with a cloud of yellow hair. Would she flinch, he wondered, if he tried to kiss her? Would she put her hands on his chest, to steady herself, to push him away? Could that be something about her that reminded him of Clara? Ben didn't know; he had trouble reading people. On the subway, he'd peek at the other passengers from behind his newspaper and try to imagine them elsewhere: in the park with their dogs, sitting in their living rooms in their underwear, shuffling piles of papers behind closed doors. In his head the looks on their faces never changed: tired, faraway, uninviting, they looked at him as if he wasn't there. He'd check

his own expression, touching his forehead, his cheekbones, the corners of his mouth. Sometimes he frowned without realizing it.

Around one o'clock in the morning an infomercial came on one of the cable channels, advertising a mask that was supposed to help you exercise the muscles in your face. Ben had watched it last Sunday, parked in front of the TV in their living room, waiting for the caffeine to wear off. Clara brought him a thermos of hot water. Sitting at the other end of the sofa with her legs tucked under her, she pulled a small bottle of peppermint schnapps from her jacket pocket and dumped it into the thermos. Drink it, she'd said, pushing it toward him. He'd read somewhere—one of those women's magazines in his doctor's office, maybe—that to make a good hot toddy you needed sugar and spices. When Clara smiled, the look on her face took on a bit of sweetness, a bit of gall, like a cup of tea with a lump of sugar floating in it. Ben took a sip of the toddy. The peppermint in the schnapps was spice enough. Clara's shampoo smelled of honey. He tried to suck it into his lungs, to taste it on his lips, but the rim of the thermos burned his tongue and the peppermint schnapps filled his mouth. His eyelids drooped as the woman in the infomercial put on the mask, a white, gauzy thing like surgical dressing. She turned on a switch and her face began to twitch. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Clara watching him, her head resting against her hand. She wasn't wearing anything on her face, not even makeup, but her lips opened and closed like the woman's. "I'm moving in with Greg," she said.

Ben must've frowned.

He ripped open the tea bag now sitting on his napkin and, pinching the cold, wet tea leaves between his fingers, dropped them into his cup. A bell over the café's entrance announced a new customer, a tall woman in a red trench coat. The tea leaves stuck to the sides of the cup. Ben scraped at them with his spoon and they tore; the tiny, green flecks floated to the surface, unreadable. Ben brought the cup to his lips. The tea was cold. He glanced at his wristwatch. Clara was a methodical packer: in a suitcase her socks and underwear weren't supposed to touch her shirts; in a moving van her bed couldn't be next to her bookcase. He didn't think she would be done for another two or three hours. The barista handed the woman in the trench coat her change, shutting the register with a prod of her elbow. Ben looked at the menu hanging above her head. He would call home at eight. If Clara picked up, he'd hang up and wait around in the coffee shop another half-hour. Pushing away the ceramic cup and saucer, he got up and headed for the counter.

"What'll it be?" the barista asked him, smiling and leaning on her forearm.

Ben felt the corners of his mouth lift. "I'll have a skinny mocha," he said and dug a ten-dollar bill out of his wallet, "a short one."

Alixandra V. Krzemien

Old Stars

One day we will be old.
We will wake up one day
and realize we are so.
We will look at our hands
and try in vain to remember
what they once were like—
not as wrinkled, not so cold.
And when we're having trouble
getting in and out of cars,
we'll remember a time
when we sat for hours,
looking at the stars, marveling,
and saying, "They must be old."

I Sit, Remembering the Song

Writing while the music
takes the breath of our souls,
while we listen to the evening,
feet bare along the grass,
light streaming from the window
that the moths fly against.
Writing to be part of the blanket
folding over me and its
faded floral pattern matching
the shadows of flowers in the yard.

Writing to get past
the feel of the ground—
to not have to watch the stars
but know them in our eyelids
and carry the scent of the air
in inhale, exhale. To be living
the words on the page before
and after they are written.

Writing the very taste of the wine
and the warmth as it trails down
my throat—writing all through
the banjo line and the
harmonies and the story
you tell that I don't understand
but is more enchanting than
the songs I know are empty.

Writing while this song of
recognition takes me past the shadows,
while this same song brings
remembrance of patterns I
longed to sew and skirts I wanted to
make and gardens I meant to tend.

Writing in the warm light coming
from the window until the music
fades, and the night—
too dark for penning—
goes free and silent.

French Vanilla Cappuccino

On a Wednesday night during my freshman year of college, the jazz ensemble took a five-minute break from playing Count Basie and Duke Ellington. CJ and I went to the coffee machine down the hall to get French Vanilla Cappuccinos. These were not the Starbucks \$5.00 cappuccinos made from espresso, steamed milk, and vanilla syrup imported from a small village in Italy. Our French Vanilla Cappuccinos were a blend of instant coffee, non-dairy creamer, sugar substitute, artificial vanilla flavoring, and boiling hot water.

I put in my 35 cents and pressed C3. The machine grumbled. French Vanilla Cappuccino shot out of the spout and into the drain. The grumbling stopped. “What just happened?” CJ asked. He peered into the window of the machine where the spout was. Where there was normally a stack of cups waiting to be dropped, there was nothing but an empty cup dispenser. The delicious 35-cent French Vanilla Cappuccino was gone forever.

My friend Matt once told me that he never trusted coffee drinks that came from a machine that also made chicken soup. “The machines at school only make cappuccinos and hot chocolate—they don’t make chicken soup,” I told him.

“I still wouldn’t trust them,” Matt said.

The only time I ever saw a coffee machine that also made chicken soup was when I was driving through Canada on my way to Montreal to attend Matt’s wedding. I was at a truck stop somewhere in Ontario at midnight and needed a cup of coffee. Before putting in my dollar and pressing the button for French Vanilla Cappuccino, I noticed that this machine also made chicken soup. I remembered Matt’s advice and decided that driving through the night feeling tired was better than drinking a French Vanilla Cappuccino that tasted like chicken soup.

When I was a first-year medical student, I bought French Vanilla Cappuccinos from the coffee machine in the basement of the medical school. The caffeine worked like an anti-depressant. After sitting through a biochemistry lecture in which the professor told us, “You will all be terrible physicians if you do not know your glucose metabolism pathways,” I grabbed a French Vanilla Cappuccino. The cappuccino gave me a jolt of energy that helped me focus on

glucose metabolism instead of what I would do with my life if I failed out of medical school.

During those coffee breaks between lectures, I would silently cheer whenever I heard the paper cup land below the spout of the coffee machine. The sound that the cup made when it landed reminded me of a simple drum fill that CJ would play whenever our jazz ensemble did a swing number like “April In Paris” or “Perdido.”

Today, I am studying at the Canisius College library for my Pediatrics final exam. This is the first time I have been back on campus in over a year. Despite a few close calls (passing exams by five points, two points, and the minimum passing score), I have not failed out of medical school.

I take a break from learning about antibiotics that treat common infections in newborns and walk down to the basement with 35 cents in my hand. I put my change into the machine and press the button for French Vanilla Cappuccino. The machine grumbles. I do not hear the cup drop. French Vanilla Cappuccino shoots out of the spout and into the drain.

I remember what CJ told me as we walked back to rehearsal empty-handed: “Next time, we should bring our own cups.”

Mending Prose

“Now, what is it saying—literally?” said the young man. His pen steadily tapped the table under their palms, yet he kept the drumming quiet enough to match the hushed undertone of the room.

“Ummmmmm...it’s about a wall.”

“Yes, I mean, that’s what I would think, a wall. Now, what about it?”

“It’s fallen. They got to fix it.”

“Does the speaker *think* they have to fix it?”

“The one guy does. He says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’”

“And quite an awful statement it is, isn’t it?” he said, smiling to the younger student, who shifted apprehensively in his blue plastic chair, nodding slightly and longing to complete the work his professor sent him to fix. “This is a complete sentence; you need a comma before this ‘and.’” He pointed with his pen, and the student marked his mistake—back and forth, back and forth. A rhythm built, they started having fun discussing, chopping, and moving heavy words. “Go ahead and put a comma right there.”

“Here?”

“Yep, right th—oooops! Look at that, I got you. I’m fooling, you don’t need a comma there, come on now.” He sat up straight and threw his arms back, juxtaposed to his friend who leaned over the paper squinting. People sat up, suddenly conflicted, and shot looks to defend their silent space.

“Ummmmmm...right, right.”

“Okay, what kind of attitude does the speaker have about building up the wall again? You know? What’s he think about the whole situation?”

“He thinks they really don’t *need* to build it.”

“Right, he thinks the actual wall is *pointless*; they don’t *need* it. When the wall *itself* is pointless, what can you take from the whole thing? The *experience* and *process* of building it? Perhaps, the *relationship* and *interaction* with his neighbor, regardless of the fact that *now* might be the *only* time they see each other?”

“Yeah.”

“They discuss, well, *try* and discuss the point of the wall. The speaker says, ‘Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.’ What do *you* think it is?”

“Him?” said the student. His brow scrunched with neanderthal concentration, or anxiousness.

“Well, go back to the start of the poem.”

“Ummmmmm...it says frozen ground and hunters,” he said, monotone, making notes to fill his page.

“Right, *nature* vs. *man*. Notice the gaps in the wall that *nature* makes and the gaps that *man* makes, how they’re *different*. You know? How they come about, what their *purpose* is.”

“Uh huh.”

“What do you think it says about the speaker if he can notice things like that?”

“Uhhh...he can see stuff the other guy can’t,” said the student. This time, he was completely distracted, looking far off at another table, maybe doing it subconsciously.

“Well, go ahead and make these changes and come back. Remember, *you* hold the pen. The voice is *yours*.”

“Yeah, thank you for your help. I’ll see you next time my paper falls apart,” the student said, standing and gathering up his books for the door.

“Next time, of course, for you know: Something there is that doesn’t love proper grammar,” he said, also standing and walking to the door.

The student grinned a little and nodded before he swayed down the hall, bumping into the wall as he turned the corner and muttered under his breath, “I’ll tell *you*, ‘Something there is that doesn’t love a’...”

The Caprice of Dishwasher B

Humble, almost bowing with each step, evincing a charming uncouthness, the wet, food-stained apron hung heavy, swaying in effortless rhythm, metered by long slow strides kicked out from behind the soiled linen draping dishwasher “B.” It so happens dishwasher B has no predecessor “A,” only fellow associates C, Z, and J, whose names seem insignificant past the first letter—the nicknames represent a close bond shared by men who assimilate during war under roofs of restaurant chains, or from a realist point of view, a display of pressed-for-time utility. The day was hot, humid; damp heat rose from the parking lot, affluent in blacktop, pinning whoever crossed this man-made desert between it and relentless sun. The restaurant stood neighbor to a greater strip mall sitting high above busy intersections, running with cars below. In the lens of B’s imaginative eye, it looked as if buildings had been constructed atop massive landfills, garbage on garbage.

Seemingly without motion, marking an hour past noon, the narrow black hand perpetually working for the white-faced clock hovered perpendicular to the floor—its tiles once proud with white cracks, now black from grime to complete its destined nature. Synchronized with conditioned routine, as dependable as reluctant minutes that refuse to move quick with brisk, cheerful eagerness, an inveterate desire to escape inspired restlessness in B. His gloved hands moved with emphasis too meaningful for dish-washing, sorting through stacks, spraying sauce-smear plates with marksmanship accuracy. Skillfully navigating crowded aisles and dodging massive prep tables, B popped open the gray metal security door, undetected, and stepped out into a cluttered alleyway lined with large, white plastic bins full of garbage rotting and cooking in the sun. He was now away from the needy, work-calling corner stationed to increasing piles of everything dirty, slopped inconsiderately on the shiny counter, waiting to dance with a handsome, steam-drenched stainless steel dish-tank that hummed and swished soft secrets as a hidden choir of seraphim sang deep within its belly.

Behind the restaurant, fresh air was corrupted by stench, and stench corrupted by mentholated smoke burning from the tip of a Newport Kings cigarette held sagaciously between B’s pensive lips. With one brow raised higher than the other and sopping socks squishing in his shoes, he walked trailing at arm’s length an over-piled squeaking garbage bin, pushing stubborn wheels across the parking lot toward the rusted green dumpster. Once there, he heaved dripping trash bags into the depository window to meet with rancid, dark, trusting, crawling white maggots that would work assiduously to care for the mounds of waste. At the bottom of the bin, breaking his mechanical grab-and-toss movement, B carefully lifted out a black trash bag, setting it down lightly behind the dumpster.

Balancing along the stone curb with eyes down, making his way back to the door, casually

cutting and swimming through humid air, B came upon J, who sat strong, smoking a Marb Red, flicking ash compulsively. After exchanging cigarettes, J, with his distant gaze unbroken, mumbled, “I hate this fucken’ place...here for twelve hours...fuck that shit, I’ll kill that moth-erfucker.” This blurb of disturbing slurs, an alarming cause for concern in any other situation, passed as natural as the scripted greetings given out by the smiling teen hostess.

“Yeah? Well, I got something for you after close,” said B as he rang the bell to be let back in. “Meet me at the edge of the parking lot, past the dumpster.”

“Okay...and this is different from every other night how?” J responded to an already closing door.

The night was dank and cool. Street lamps illuminated the open road to freedom; red Dodge Neons and tinted Pontiacs wasted no time following the lighted path, racing away. Time was no burden now. On his way to join in fellowship with his loyal worker and friend, B scooped up the trash bag stretched with weight, carrying its bulky mass with one hand on the bottom. Approaching the spot at the parking lot’s end that overlooked abandoned lots and streets below, B noticed J already lit a finger-long joint.

“So what...you finally decided to match weed with me, or something?” said J, only smiling with the lower half of his face, after each hit, sucking in smoke through his teeth as if reacting to pain.

“Nope,” said B, producing the black plastic bag.

“Humph...I see you snatched up that little oven you’ve been eyeing, huh?” J asked, half serious, half with humor.

“Not exactly,” B said in his interest-attaining tone of passive self-reliance, optimistic in hopelessness. Reaching into the bag, he brought out two clean stacks of ten white salad plates, about the size of personal pizzas. He stretched, admiring the view of deserted concrete fields with blinking traffic lights, and palmed a familiar round dish, still taking in the openness—dark interrupted by light interrupted by dark. Comfortable with the grooves that fit his hand, he curled his fingers around the rim.

“The sea is calm tonight,” B said almost to himself, the side of his mouth indicating a faint smirk. With no further words, B spun slow, in the form of an Olympian; gravel scraped the pavement under his pivot foot as he whipped around to let go of the plate, setting it free to fly out against the black and blue midnight sky. From B’s perspective, the saucer moved through the ether in complete tranquil-abiding silence, then without a care, immediately smashed itself into pieces on the lot below.

J stood up. “Sometimes...I really have to wonder what’s wrong with you, B...” he said. While snubbing out his smoke on the curb, J snatched up a plate and tossed it high into the air. The sound of crashing ceramics and scattering white fragments chimed and rang through the quiet night atmosphere.



Lauren Jaroszewski
Juvenile Jousting
digital photography



Jesse Deganis Librera

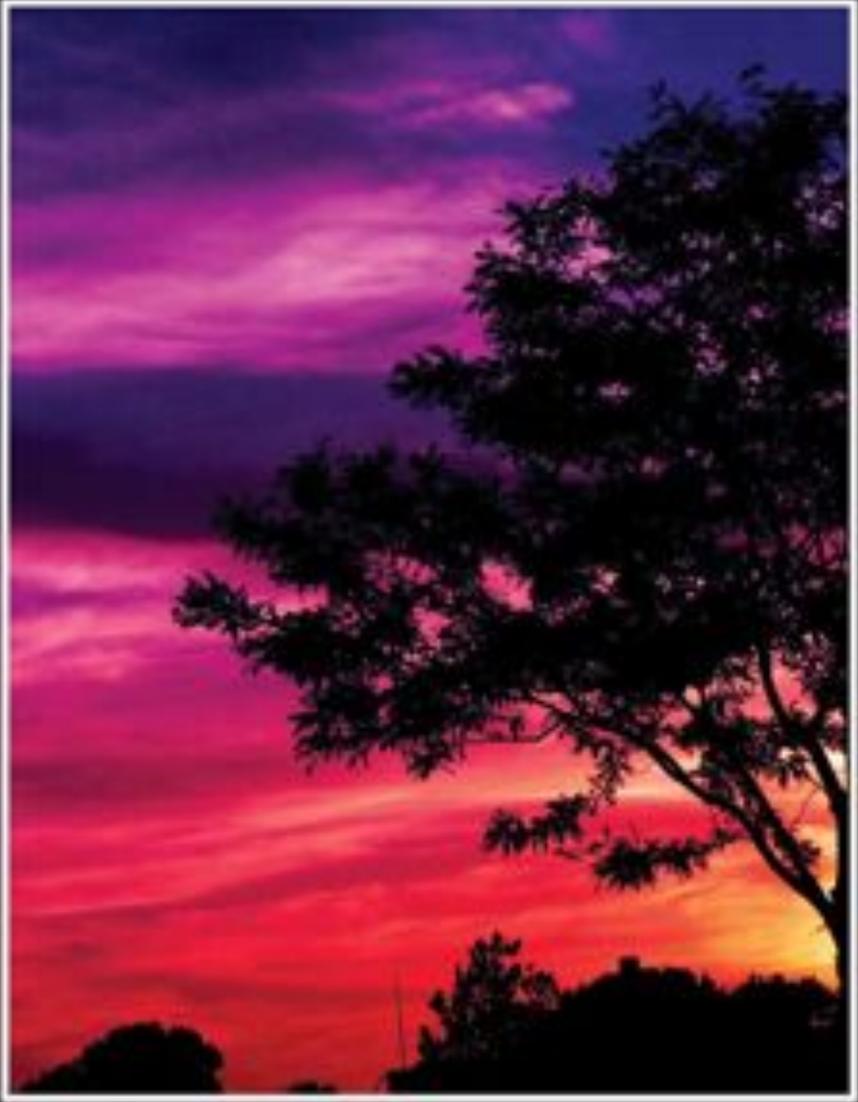
Jump
digital photography



Matt Durante
Inaudibly Free
digital photography



Ashley Velazquez
Set in Stone
digital photography



John Frost
A Short Break from Mise en Place
digital photography & Photoshop



Lauren Jaroszewski
The Truth About Cages
digital photography



John Frost
Restrictions
digital photography



Kate Voss
The Timeless Beauty of My Grandmother
acrylic paints on canvas

Cara Cotter

From the Blue

In those days I hid from the lightning, and you, beside me, from thunder
(even then I knew the direction of dangers better than you)
I never thought I would outgrow it—have you, I (sometimes) wonder?

On sleepless moonlit mornings, worrying that week's stumble (last night's blunder)
I think what you—the you I knew—would have (like always) told me to do,
As in the days I hid from lightning, and you, with me, from thunder.

Together, in selling mud pies and in trouble, we never dreamed time could sunder
Us—(though you gave me up, when the banned berries left my—never your—hands blue)
I never thought I would outgrow trouble—have you, I (sometimes) wonder?

We hurled off swings and to the wet woods, so bravely steeled to plunder
My brother's fort (the boys were small then), perhaps our greatest coup—
But we forgot brave when we hid alongside—I from lightning and you from thunder.

(You passed me.) Then there were three—you could have picked me, shunned her,
But she had lip gloss and sparkles (glow-in-the-dark; I softball, *Star Wars*, untied shoes).
I never thought I would outgrow them—have you (really)? I wonder.

Forever is a phrase, I learned, and I see a stranger only—are you buried under
Her somewhere, pondering below colored hair how I've changed, too?
I remember we hid together once—I from lightning, you from thunder.
I never thought I would outgrow you. Have I? (sometimes I wonder).

Impossible Anonymous

The first rule is “No aliases.” She thinks it strange for a group with the word “anonymous” in its name, but tells the truth anyway.

“Brenna Benson,” she says, waggling her palm in hello.

Around the circle they hum a little after the second B, nodding sagely. With her, they are twelve.

“Hello, Brenna,” they chorus, all except a narrow-chinned man three to her left who dryly echoes her full name, emphasizing the alliteration.

“Do you want to tell us a little about why you joined us?” asks Cindy kindly. She is sitting on Cindy’s sofa and one of Cindy’s Rice Krispie treats is still stuck in the back of her throat, mallow residue and crunchy bits that scrape. If this were the Book Club meeting it feels like, Brenna wouldn’t doubt Cindy would be kindly selecting the bestseller of the month.

They can undoubtedly guess why she’s here. She tries to picture Cindy in the sort of passionate, forever-and-always love with someone so unforgettable, so impossible that she’d land in this group. But she’s too buttoned up for Brenna to imagine it, while the blonde across is too unbuttoned for her to buy as heartbroken. The only one who looks like he’s been in true love is the long-haired guy with the brooding eyes and a common name—Joe? Pete? Paul?

Brenna can’t imagine ever keeping these people straight—there’s even a set of twins, for Christ’s sake. She doesn’t want to tell these strangers anything.

But she’s here to talk. Leslie thinks it will be good for her. And even Leslie, who’s as good as a sister, was a stranger once.

Brenna picks at her cuticles and forces herself to look up from the pink curves of her nails. Her tongue is dryer than fresh Kleenex but she blurts out the words that don’t half do him justice. “There was—this guy.”

The dent in his chin looked like a cleft, but he said it was an old cut. “Bike accident,” Ray told Leslie, his eyelashes battering his bangs with each rapid blink. The lying cleft didn’t take away from the honest squareness of his jaw. Brenna knew him for a bad liar, but if he wanted to make his rescue of that kid on the tricycle the SUV hadn’t seen sound like a clumsy spill, she’d happily watch his blue eyes go wide trying.

She loved knowing his secrets.

Secrets are like shorthand in this group; she doesn’t already know them and is left feeling

like she's listening to jargon.

Finn's new, too, but he's been there a month longer and confuses her as much, if not more, with every word out of the mouth above his almost triangular chin. Brenna thinks of him as "weasel guy" in her mind until the third month.

The saving grace is that he confuses everyone else just as much.

He steeple his fingers and leans forward into the circle. "I'm not obsessive really," he says intently. "We...saved the world together." Brown eyes move searchingly from face to face, and he continues, annoyance seeping in. "I suppose I thought that meant something."

Brenna's lip escapes her mouth with a faint pop. Cindy insisted "be nosy" was the unwritten rule. Brenna's learned they take it seriously. "And when you say saved the world—"

"We saved the world." Finn's mobile brows form arched doorways.

Gene adjusts his geek-chic glasses. "Right. We talking, like, Lex Luthor-type voodoo or hug-the-whales shit?"

Finn's fingers drum against each other. Brenna reckons Leslie would find him cute. Her friend once kept a ferret. Gillian, leaning very precisely forward as she reaches for a frosted brownie, certainly seems to.

"She sealed away the Forces of Darkness." His hand twitches. "Until at least 2012."

Gene perks up. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"And you did?" prompts Gene.

Finn is temporarily puzzled, but the realization washes through his eyes and into his straightening shoulders soon enough. "I held her books."

Gillian straightens up and Gene keeps his voice toneless as he echoes, "You held her books."

"Her spellbooks," says Finn defensively. "It was much—"

"I think we'll let Paula have her turn," says Cindy gently, gesturing to a petite girl who wouldn't look out of place anchoring the five o'clock news.

Walking out that night, Brenna's not sure she'll be back. She saw some unusual things dating Ray, but if you stretched science far enough, it was only improbable.

Leslie got her into this. Brenna hopes Les doesn't think she's a wacko, finding her these people stranded just south of impossible, and ends up spending most of her night on Wikipedia trying to decide what kind of nuts Finn is.

After that, she starts thinking of him as sort of squirrely. But she can't make herself be scared of him, or even laugh at him.

Brenna can never forget she used to believe in impossible things. (Not quite six before breakfast, but three impossible things by supertime used to be about right.)

At Ray's shoulder the world seemed smaller and the air so thin that she'd get thirsty. His hand was lightly moist and cold in hers, his lips dewy on her mouth, as if he'd stepped through a vagrant cloud on his way to her.

Naturally she believed him when he said he could fly.

No lies, no exaggerations is the most important rule, but Brenna's not sure how much it's followed, with this group. Does it count as truth as long as they believe it?

A work friend of Leslie's told her about the group, and Brenna's friend tracked them down and assured her for three months that it was an "honest, warm safe place for people getting over—breakups like yours." Brenna caved. Leslie was too gleefully persistent to say no to, which is how they ended up with the walking fur pillow her friend called a cat, despite all their building's regulations. Her friend had signed her up anyway.

She's been talking to Valerie in the seat to her left for a few meetings now, and that Finn as well. The corner of her pride that cares was hoping that Peter guy would be trying to chat with her. He sits with the twins Jacob and Jonah each time, on the circle's fringe, and doesn't speak.

Pete's apparently the best-looking guy of the group, though Brenna wouldn't consider him good-looking beside Ray. Valerie thinks Pete's incredible. He does have an incredibly straight nose, and green eyes that would probably be piercing if he'd look at you, but Brenna can't think past the itch to take scissors to his feathery hair. The back sweep towards his shoulders makes her think too much of mullets.

Valerie has a strong, squat face that is more handsome than pretty, and other than her looks and that she usually ends up seated next to her, Brenna doesn't know much about her yet. Valerie seems good-humored, except when Cindy calls her Val. The sarcasm Valerie reveals every once in a while is a relief here, where everyone seems to believe too earnestly and too much.

Gene is an in-depth exploration of the impact of his isolated childhood on his clinging to his ex-girlfriend, who, Brenna is beginning to suspect, he seems to think is some kind of clone or android meant to love him unconditionally.

"He should just buy a girl for that," mutters Valerie. "They've got 'em in certain stores—in the 'inflatables' aisle."

Peter has dozed off, reminding Brenna of a bobble-head. Jacob or Jonah nudges him.

"Well, my mother was a blonde," continues Gene earnestly, "so Loretta, a bru—"

"Does he have a deal?" Brenna whispers, leaning towards Valerie. "Your Pete?" Peter's not Valerie's anything, but she's got intentions. "Does he ever talk?"

"Oh yeah," says Valerie. "You know some people think they're vampires?"

Brenna tries not to recoil, but jumps enough that Cindy notices they aren't paying atten-

tion and firmly—but kindly—suggests they pay attention.

Brenna nods a little and spends the rest of the meeting staring at and looking away from Pete, remembering how dangerous the people with capped teeth who drink blood and have creepy fetishes seemed on that episode of *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. Her gaze flickers to the open curtain and the puddle of sunlight on Pete's sneakers.

She snags Valerie's arm at the end, as they trail off the front porch and pretend they're not mingling. She normally just hurries away to her car, but watching Pete the vampire stroll out under the pinkening sky spikes an extra burst of questions in her.

"Oh, not that kind," Valerie assures her, pink herself under the early sunset or with the pleasure of sharing inside information. "He says he's like an energy vampire, draining happiness and fluffy feelings out of the people he's around. Not a problem to me," she adds thoughtfully, "so long as he's around. Oh, and Pete says the girl he's in love with is a fey, since she's all bubbly."

"Fey?"

"That's like a fairy," yawns Finn from behind them. Valerie, like Layla with her Twenty Questions from so long ago, wants to know how he knows, but Brenna's perturbed enough for one night. She hustles off after all, feeling followed by Finn's parting wink all the way to the curb and her car.

Not even Leslie's assurances can make her believe everyone in the group is telling the truth after that meeting. She tells her as much, later, when Les is fussing over the interminable Master's thesis on her not-so-trusty laptop and Brenna's sick of flipping through the channels.

"I'm in the wrong group, you know."

"You're not," says Les absently.

"They're all Looney Tunes. Wait till you hear—"

"Everybody seems crazy once in a while," says Leslie pointedly, and Brenna clutches the remote almost spastically in response, the buttons rubbery and real beneath her hand.

She doesn't want to put it down, because then the pressure of the rubber square on her thumb becomes only memory, and memory's too easy to mix up with dream.

She dreamed about Ray a lot, even when she spent her days with him. Brenna'd always had dreams about flying. When she was seven, they were so vivid she was sure she could soar as a toddler and had only forgotten how.

When she woke up from the dream, the morning after Ray and his windswept hair convinced her, Brenna believed she'd had a very good dream the night before. The draft from the window left the top of her head chilly, a pleasant contrast to the rest of her, cocooned in cotton sheets.

It was only when she got up to close it she found the screen had been popped, and while trying

to shove it back into place with tingling fingers, felt the ache in her tendons from her socket through her elbow. As if she'd been wrenched through the air.

In the mirror she found the usual sheen of her hair in knotty elf-locks.

The wind could have knocked the screen. Maybe carrying groceries had left her arms sore. But Ray winked across the hall and she was sure it was memory, not dream, even before he whispered in her ear that afternoon, wondering if she had enough proof to believe in impossible.

She wondered if it was like that with Layla, who had Ray as her hero after Brenna's impossible time was over.

“What was your work friend’s story?” asks Brenna, who’s been hearing lots of stories lately. Paula in the group had told her all about the epic love she’d had in a magical kingdom accessed by the basement window by her grandmother’s vegetable garden. Valerie, who’s casually mentioned going to Waterloo and Woodstock like she’d been to the dates, not the places, thinks Paula’s spent some time in a place with rubber walls. “It was Gina, right, not Crazy Sally?”

“Mm-hmm, Gina.” Les’ words are garbled by the pencil in her mouth. “Dunno. She’s not crazy, though.”

“Would it be okay if I call her? I want to know what she—what?”

Leslie’s eyes have left the screen with such sudden horror Brenna thinks that she’s gone and crashed her laptop for the seventh time.

“Les? What’s the matter?”

Brenna can hear the lip-parting smack of her friend’s hesitation as the teeth-marked pencil tumbles against the laptop. Brenna can feel her own face fall into a frown and reaches for the mute button. The clip of the newscaster’s voice over the silence is giving her a sick feeling in her stomach.

“I lied,” blurts Leslie, eyes kittenish as she bites her lower lip in distress. Only her two front teeth show and she looks like a girl’s doll. “I was afraid you wouldn’t—if I told you who—don’t be mad at me, Bren, I—”

“Spit it out!”

“It was Layla’s group.”

The roof of her mouth is suddenly sour. “Your cousin Layla?” she says, even though they don’t know another Layla.

The group seems suddenly, frighteningly more real because Layla’s not a dreamer, and, unfortunately, no dream.

If she has a secret from the group, it’s Layla. It’s not that her love couldn’t last because of the impossible. It didn’t last real life—it didn’t last Layla—and that is what Brenna’d really rather not talk about.

She tried to hate Layla Lance. It should have been easy. She's a redhead by request and too beautiful by nature, like some successful nightmare amalgamation of models and movie stars, Claudia Schiffer's legs and Vivien Leigh's eyes. Her name has a song.

Layla took ten minutes parallel parking in front of her cousin Leslie's house. Brenna'd never seen anyone do a worse job at something so simple.

Layla Lance worked at the radio station and, at Leslie's request, had pulled strings there to get Ray his job. He liked working with her enough to talk about her, or at least her fixer-up car—a red Camaro that had come out of the seventies worse for the wear that Layla spent her spare hours on.

Brenna couldn't tell a Camaro from a Cadillac, but it was a carefully clean car, if less than shiny.

They were waiting for it to backfire, but it didn't, and Layla bounded out triumphantly, shutting the car door with enthusiasm and sliding through the careful space between her car and Mr. Beamer's. "Sorry I'm late!"

She was older than them and looked it, hair sleek, pantsuit professional. She wore three-inch heels—which caught on the curb and sent her, arms pin-wheeling, back against Mr. Beamer's car with a thump.

The car alarm went off, starting its first range of climbing notes, and Layla dissolved instantly into a full-throated guffaw. Even her snorts were attractive. She could feel his pulse skip notes, even though his hand was warmly in hers.

"Glad you're okay," he said sincerely when she bounded up to them. He was glad, and grinning a little.

Layla had an exaggerated version of her cousin Leslie's mouth, Brenna's best friend's friendly, expansive mouth looking too wide on her otherwise classic face. She smiled with it, showcasing perfect, straight but quite broad teeth, and Brenna couldn't help but smile back.

"So, you're Ray's girl," Layla said conspiratorially when they finally managed introductions. Her voice was surprisingly low and resonated with delight. "You must just want to kill me."

Brenna was taken aback. She did, of course—she was catching the dance in Ray's eyes as Layla approached, heard how fast his measured words were talking to or about this girl.

"Is he still bruised? If my guy nearly got himself killed as much as—" She tilted her head at Brenna's confused face and Ray's warming one. "You stinker—you didn't tell her you saved my life?"

"Saved your life?" repeated Leslie incredulously, and Ray blanched. Brenna, instinctively, opened her mouth to come up with a story like always, then realized Ray wasn't looking helplessly at her, but at Layla.

They couldn't get the story quite straight between them, though they settled on "a-camera-boom-nearly-fell-on-her" eventually. Layla made it sound convincing, and distractingly focused the whole story on her own clumsiness. "You should make use of those bragging rights, hero," she said, and

punched his arm. "Even for just saving a silly girl like me."

Ray mumbled when Brenna tried to get out of him what had really happened. "Just that," he said with a shrug. "It was silly." He started throwing "just" into sentences a lot without realizing it. It rubbed off on Layla.

After that, she had another reason to hate her—curious, interesting, persistent Layla slowly but surely knew more about Ray than she did.

Layla had a fiancé. She was older. She was nice. She was safe.

Brenna knew long before they did that Ray was going to be in love with Layla once he realized he was no longer in love with her. But for a while, habit had him convinced he still loved her. And she loved him too much to let him go until he left by himself.

She knew she'd just been written out of what she'd thought was her own love story.

She finds out from Cindy that the rules were Layla's rules first. Cindy was the only one of the current group there when Layla was running the group, a couple years back now.

Brenna doesn't know where Layla is now. Leslie would tell her, if she asks. Last time she did it was Chicago. She'd moved up to the news. She could still be there.

She wants to break the rules after that, and starts thinking about that.

"Don't get entangled with group members," Cindy suggested when she first met with her, about joining.

No one follows that one.

It's the easiest one to break, so she actually feels good about saying yes when Finn, with his dark-not-blue eyes, asks her to coffee.

Her last date was a blind one, with a blue-eyed boy whose name she can't recall. It was after Ray died, but she didn't know that till the next afternoon. She found out Ray was dead three days after it was done. Two years after they were done, after Layla stopped wearing a ring and he said to Brenna he was sorry, so sorry, but he had to take the chance, however Layla felt about him.

Brenna was in the cosmetics aisle at CVS, and Leslie was grabbing cheap chips for their place. Les' phone beeped out a Five for Fighting ringtone and she mouthed it was her Aunt Carol.

Brenna remembers the specks on the tile squares beneath her then, the gum wrappers and hair strands, but she doesn't remember what Leslie said next.

Sometimes she traces her palm where the imprint of the metal rack she gripped stayed for hours.

When she thinks of Ray, the floor still spins.

Sometimes she hopes Layla was with him.

Sometimes she hopes she wasn't.

She goes with Finn after the group session in mid-March. He buys her a grande butter caramel.

She's surprised that he doesn't mention his girl who saved the world—only once, when he mentions the girl's eyes were almost purple. Finn doesn't know anyone in the group any better than she does, so they talk about what they've learned or guessed. She acts like she doesn't believe any of it—breaking another rule. He acts like he believes it all, but his sincerity seems mock when his eyes flash occasionally.

From what Valerie says, she was in love with a time traveler who had a girl in every century and a guy in a few. She thought he only took her to the end of the universe, that it was their moment. It turned out to be a pretty crowded one.

The twins Jacob and Jonah loved the same girl, some kind of miracle healer, but agreed to both give her up. She couldn't decide. They wouldn't compete.

Gillian's psychic fiancé dumped her for the sake of both their futures. Her next boyfriend, a musician, thought the devil owned his soul. Gill's sort of seeing Pete now. Brenna doesn't think it's much of an improvement.

Finn is convinced balding Frank's an alien.

"A legal one?" Brenna asks, and he laughs.

His laugh's nice, even if he is nuts.

Cindy, he tells her, had a daughter who died. That's all he knows.

Ray was the first person she really knew who died. And she'd known him almost best. Their whole high school class went to his funeral, in summer's green grass when practically everyone was home. High school had only seen them together. Former cross-country runners, junior prom queens, yearbook staff and fallen away friends alike all stepped up to console her. They went to shake her hand at the funeral home, and she had to shake her head instead.

"I wasn't, anymore," she choked, again and again, and would point them vaguely towards Ray's adoptive parents, who looked aged twenty years in the eyes, or leave Leslie to explain.

Layla sat like a very shocked ice sculpture and did not cry.

Brenna wondered if Layla Lance could have loved him any more than she did.

If she ever hated her, it was then.

But she hated herself more, for envying Layla, even at that moment, at that place.

When she calls Layla, she has her fingers resting on the fridge door, tapping the photo magnet from senior prom. Ray is glancing out of the frame, to where, she remembers, the plaster castle façade was about to fall on Tim Leary and Rita Corleone.

His arm is already off her waist, in blurred movement.

Ray got there before they got hurt, of course.

The theme was “A Knight to Remember.” Her dress was pink. It still fit when she went to dances at his college, but this was the last dance he loved her for.

She got Layla’s number from Cindy, not Leslie. She couldn’t face Leslie’s inescapable glee at her agreeing to talk to her cousin, like Les had been pushing for years now.

The redhead—if she is still one—picks up on the seventh ring.

“Hello?” Her voice is raspier than Brenna remembers.

“Layla—hi, this is Brenna Benson.”

“Brenna.” There’s a pause. “Do you need something?”

She decides to skip pleasantries too. “I joined this group. I’ve heard you started it.”

“Oh. Yes. For impossible cases.” Her laugh is the same, a gentle ripple too cheery to be mocking. Gratifyingly Brenna finds she can hate her a little—but not much, because Ray loved her. For as long as his forever lasted. “You’re moving on?”

“Did you?” Brenna asks sharply, unable to breathe. She’s not sure what answer she’s hoping for.

“No,” says Layla, like the question was funny. She breathes fast on the other end. “That’s why I had to leave—it was sort of, mm, kind of counterproductive, for me to be running it. But it was working, it was actually working for my friends and well—” She laughs again, self-deprecatingly, the way Brenna remembers her best. Layla has always pulled off the impossible mix of seeming self-assurance and lack of vanity. She always seemed just good enough for Ray. “I don’t want to get over him.”

Brenna’s lungs fill again, and she wants to scream “Me too! I don’t want to!” But somehow that seems like this girl’s right, even if isn’t, because her true love was lasting so far. Brenna had Ray longer, but not last, and according to Leslie, they were just so young. And she’ll get over it.

It isn’t really fair. She presses her back against the freezer door, cold running up her backbone. Her heels dig into the wood floor, to be sure this is real, not the dreaminess of a black dress and dirt on a closed box. “He’s—not coming back?” She sounds like a child.

“It doesn’t actually work like that,” says Layla. “You were there. We buried him.”

“But—” They said it was a fight—a joke one, with a work friend, gone wrong. An unlucky punch to the spleen. Brenna couldn’t bring herself to ask, beg, Layla for the details, then or now. She didn’t know what really happened, but it couldn’t have been that. “It was him. He was always—” Doing impossible things, she thinks, but doesn’t finish the sentence.

“Impossible isn’t always enough,” says Layla, and her rasp is croaked. “Brenna, I watched him die.” Her voice cracks jaggedly. “I’m sorry—look, I have to go. If you need to—I—can call you back.”

“It’s okay,” she says, in a soothing, even tone, even though it isn’t okay yet. She hangs up. After a while she takes the prom magnet off the fridge, like Leslie’s been asking.

She doesn’t cry. She swallows her heartburn and opens the fridge to get the brown sugar,

because it's her turn to bring dessert.

The point of the rules is to set the past free. Not to let it rule you.

She's following most of them.

She tells Finn about Layla when they break the rules again, for lunch. He breaks into song. "You got me on my knees, Laaaay—" She cuts him off there. He's no Eric Clapton and jeez, they're out in public. With Ray, they never tried to draw attention, only divert it.

"I miss the magic more than her," he tells her later, about the girl in his memories. "S why I can't move on. Why I'm here. Her life's the same without me. Mine's dull as grass. No more walking on the moon," he sighs, and she thinks he's being figurative.

She thinks.

When Ray kissed her mouth and promised her the moon, she could taste it, though this once he meant it metaphorically.

Blue cheese, she decided, and told him as much.

Ray laughed, which always made her stomach rollercoaster, and when his hand grazed hers as he reached for another slice of pizza it looped upside down. "Nah," he said, "not good enough. Your moon'll be made of meringue. What, can't you see it? S'all white, with peaks and dips, light as air—"

"Does it have chocolate chips?"

"Of course," he said, gesturing with the folded-up slice. "Meteors," he smiled, and she couldn't imagine flying could be any better than this.

Breaking just the one rule is getting to be a habit.

She gets the butter rum cappuccino next time.

"What happened to Pete?" Brenna wonders as they sit down, straight after the meeting at Cindy's.

"Heard he's dating a chick who thinks she's a werewolf. Doesn't need us anymore." Finn grins. One of his teeth is slightly snagged. His chin's too narrow. His eyes aren't blue.

"My roommate Leslie's started dating Chester James," Brenna throws in, naming the best known man in the city.

"The billionaire?!"

"Only a multimillionaire, actually."

"I've heard interesting things about what he gets up to at night." His eyebrows arch.

She's not flying but somehow she likes him. There are *sparks*.

In a while, she thinks, she'll ask him about magic.

Benjamin Lankes

Los Caminos de España/ The Roads of Spain

El camino del Cid, campeador,
El camino de reconquistar,
Que servía para salvar su honor
Y a su gente inspirar.

The road of the Cid, champion,
The road of reconquering,
That served to save his honor
And inspire his people.

El camino que el Quijote viajó
Contra lo que fue considerado real.
En la mente, esta ruta nació
Que defendía lo ideal.

The road that [Don] Quixote traveled
Against what was considered real.
In the mind, this route was born
That defended the ideal.

El camino calderoniano
Del que no hemos despertado.
La vida es sueño vano,
Y un sueño bien viajado.

The Calderonian road
From which we have not awakened.
Life is a vain dream,
And a dream well-traveled.

El camino jacobeo, siquiera,
Hacia Santiago de Compostela,
Hacia el fin de la tierra
Por la vía de las estrellas.

The Jacobean road, at least,
Towards Santiago de Compostela,
Towards the end of the land
Along the way of the stars.

El camino de Gaudí
Que invocaba el naturalismo,
Y el de Salvador Dalí
En que se hizo el surrealismo.

The road of Gaudí
That invoked naturalism,
And that of Salvador Dalí
In which he became surrealism.

El camino que aún no existe
Según lo que dijo Machado.
La vía que actualmente consiste
En lo ya caminado.

The road that still does not exist
According to what Machado said.
The way that actually consists
In what is already walked.

¿Qué ruta elijo yo?
Pues me pregunto cada día.
La verdad es que aún no
Está definida mi propia vía.

He aprendido de esta vida sagrada
Que siempre seré peregrino.
La senda ha de ser observada.
Yo mismo forjo el camino.

What route do I choose?
Well, I wonder each day.
The truth is that my own way
Is still not definite.

I have learned from this sacred life
That I will always be a pilgrim.
The path must be observed.
I myself forge the road.

Benjamin Lankes

The Moderately Excessive Hypocrite

SCENE I

The play begins with Uncle Albert and his nephew, Adam, talking. Adam's girlfriend, Eva, soon enters the room afterwards.

Albert: Adam, dear boy, do come here and hear what I have to say.

Adam: (*approaching his uncle*) Yes, Uncle Albert?

Albert: Good nephew, I believe that my time will be coming soon. I don't know how much longer I will be able to live on this dear earth.

Adam: But Uncle Albert, you're only forty-two years old, and you've been telling me that you are going to die since I was ten.

Albert: Yes, my dear boy, but now I fear that the time has truly come. My heart is getting older, and it seems to beat weaker as days go by.

Adam: Yeah, *seems* to you. Have you talked with a doctor about this?

Albert: As you know, I have had a cardiac condition since my youth. I'm thankful that it hasn't gone yet.

Adam: And frankly, uncle, I don't think it *will* go any time soon. You're in perfectly healthy condition for someone your age.

Albert: There it is. You said it, *your* age. Death is upon me, even you can see it.

Adam: No, Uncle Albert, that's not what I meant. I simply meant to say that compared to other people your age you are rather fit. You don't eat junk food like most middle-aged Americans your age do. You don't smoke—

Albert: Often.

Adam: And I've never seen you drink—

Albert: Excessively.

Adam: You're in better condition than a lot of people. And for that reason, I don't pity your current state.

Albert: Oh, Adam, the youth nowadays do not pity anybody.

Adam: No, we pity those who are deserving of pity. We pity the impoverished and the hungry. I don't pity a man who has a gigantic mansion to himself, can eat whatever he pleases, travels the world, and has numerous publications, yet he feels that he is going to die at any moment. I don't pity hypochondriacs.

Albert: Oh, but Adam, it is I who pity the youth. For they know nothing. You see, dear boy, and take good note, a little case of severe hypochondria is essential in life.

Adam: Oh, Albert, you're talking nonsense again.

Albert: Hear me out, my boy. If somebody has a small case of paranoia and believes that he will die of a terrible disease at any moment, then he will force himself to cherish every moment of life until his death comes. These people are the ones who will get the most out of life; not like these youths nowadays who believe that they will live forever. They put everything off until tomorrow, and then when they are fifty and look back on their lives, they realize that they have accomplished nothing. And this is because they do not fear death.

Adam: Albert, it's really not healthy to live in a state of fear.

Albert: But when I say fear, I mean it with the utmost respect. One should respect the work of death, and know that it can come at any moment. And it tends to seek out those who are idle and restless more so than those who are active.

Adam: And what about those who die in pursuit of adventure?

Albert: Well, they are just foolish. Death, and life for that matter, has no time for tomfoolery. There is a word called 'balance,' my nephew. Learn it well. It guides the lives of the

wisest and happiest men.

Adam: Yes, well you should learn to balance your hypochondria before it drives me insane.

Albert: But Adam, you have not let me finish my philosophy. You see, it is good to have a little case of severe hypochondria, but to have a severe case of little hypochondria will ruin a man.

Adam: Uncle, I have no clue what you're talking about and Eva is going to be in the room at any moment.

Albert: Well, tell her too! That's the problem with people nowadays. Everyone wants to learn, but no one wants to share what they've learned with others. Everyone's entirely selfish. But back to the hypochondria. If one believes every now and then that one will die of something grave, then one will live life more attentively. But if someone constantly thinks that he will catch a common cold, then he will simply board himself up in a house all day and not experience life.

Adam: Which is good for the rest of us because then we don't have to deal with him.

Albert: Now don't be so misanthropic, Adam. No doubt it's a result of your selfish upbringing in today's immoral society.

Adam: Uncle Albert, I'm sure that society has always been this way, and it's safe to assume that it always will be.

Albert: Of course it always will be if people like you and your selfish non-hypochondriac generation go around harboring knowledge and treating life like something that should be procrastinated and not embraced—

Eva Enters

SCENE 2

Eva: Hello, darling! Hello, Uncle Albert!

Albert: Hello there Eva, dear. Nice to see you again. Now, excuse me while I pour us all

some fine wine.

Eva: Oh, I'm fine, Uncle Albert. Wine is a vice and should be avoided.

Albert: A vice? Did you hear that Adam? What did I tell you? No one in your generation has any sense of balance. It's either all or nothing, black or white. No one can simply have one drink anymore. It's either get entirely drunk off one's ass or live a dry and sober life. (*Turns to bar in the room*)

Adam: Albert's going off on one of his tirades again.

Eva: What is it this time?

Adam: Something about youth and how they have no sense of moderation, and how everyone should be a hypochondriac.

Albert: (*shouting from the other side of the room*) Just because I have a heart condition doesn't mean I have a hearing deficit.

Adam: Perhaps you have a sense of privacy deficit, uncle. Maybe the problem with your generation is that you eavesdrop too much.

Albert: (*coming over to Adam and Eva*) Well that's the problem with your generation: you don't eavesdrop nearly enough, much less listen to what's ever being said. How can you solve a problem if you don't know what it is?

Adam: Listen to a person when he tells you the problem himself.

Albert: Hah, that's rich. The problem with your generation is that everyone wants to keep everything to themselves. They believe that anyone can solve anything on one's own. Selfish, I tell you, pure egocentrism. In the future, no one will even talk to each other. Everyone will just sit in little cubicles and communicate by means of your beloved text messages and Internet and e-mails and whatever things you have nowadays.

Eva: Now, Uncle Albert, technology is a great thing that can be used to build communication.

Albert: Yes, but there's a fine line my dear. It's about moderation.

Adam: Here we go again.

Albert: You see, it's fine to facilitate conversation by means of technology, but when it gets to the point of taking the place of other daily activities, then it becomes an obsession. And obsessions bring an unexpected end to men more often than not.

Adam: Well, perhaps if we embrace the fact that technology will destroy us, then maybe we will appreciate the moment that much more.

Albert: Don't get smart with me, boy. Why, just the other day when I was teaching at the university, I noticed four students text-messaging during my lecture. How absurd is that?

Adam: Well, if Eva weren't here I'd be texting her right now. Do you teach your classes like you talk in normal life?

Eva: Now, Adam, don't provoke him. I happen to agree with your uncle. After all, why should students, or their parents, pay good money for education if they're just going to waste away time by texting and daydreaming?

Albert: Well put, my girl. I say, you should marry Adam right away and start helping him think intellectually like you do sometimes. Or, just leave him altogether and find someone new.

Eva: Oh, I can't leave my Adam. I love him too much.

Albert: Oh, isn't that grand. Love, the thing that moves all people.

Adam: Now, uncle, I would have to say that it's your neuroses that move you.

Albert: See this Eva, pure smartaleckry.

Adam: Is that a word, uncle?

Albert: Well, if it isn't, then I just coined it. That's another problem with the youth today.

No imagination. They want everything to be told to them. That's why people are terrible with interpreting literature, because they can't even think for themselves. I see it in my students. The only things they care about are, 'When's the test, what's on it, and did I pass?' Terrible, I say, absolutely terrible!

Adam: Now, uncle, please do get to the point of bringing us here.

Albert: Point, ah, another grand flaw of your society.

Adam: What, that we seek meaning in things?

Albert: No, it's just that. You put so much emphasis on the results that you ignore the path to get to them. Everyone cares about the end and not the means. A terrible abomination to the ends justifying the means!

Adam: How so, uncle?

Albert: Well, one cannot study the end if one has blatantly ignored the means.

Eva: Oh, I do believe that I'll need a drink after all this!

Albert: That a girl, Eva. You see Adam, *she's* coming around. There's a lot you can learn from a woman. Oscar Wilde once said that 'A woman's flaw is that she becomes her mother and that a man's flaw is that he doesn't.'

Adam: And Oscar Wilde was a pedophile.

Albert: Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't. But does that make the words he said any falser? Just look at the Catholic Church; just because priests are having sex with boys doesn't make the dogma much falser. Not that that could be possible anyways.

Adam: Uncle, I could be doing something else right now, what are we doing here?

Albert: I'll tell you when my guest arrives. Until then, you should learn that patience is a virtue.

Eva: Guest? Oh, but I'm not dressed for company.

Adam: Who is it, Albert? I'm just wearing jeans.

Albert: Oh, nonsense! You young ones are all too worried about appearances.

Adam: Well, who is it, uncle?

Albert: Oh, just a friend from the university. (*Doorbell rings*) Well, would you speak of the devil? I bet that's him right now.

Dr. Herring Enters

SCENE 3

Albert: Adam, Eva, this is one of my colleagues at the university, Dr. Herring.

Adam: Pleased to meet you sir. (*They shake hands*)

Dr. Herring: You as well.

Eva: Hello!

Dr. Herring: Hello, Miss. So, has your uncle told you what I am here for this afternoon?

Adam: No, he doesn't ever seem to tell us anything.

Albert: On the contrary, my boy, advice is always spoken around us. I've told you many things today. The real question is, have you listened?

Eva: So, what brings you here, Dr. Herring?

Dr. Herring: Well, I'm here to present your uncle with an honorary doctorate in Philosophy from the university.

Albert: Isn't that just splendid, children?

Adam: (*ironically*) Oh, why, yes uncle, that's just great!

Eva: Well congratulations, Albert!

Albert: Thank you, my dear. Now, Dr. Herring, I invite you to stay and have some drinks with us.

Dr. Herring: Oh, that's all right, Albert. My tee time's in twenty minutes. Here's your plaque. Congratulations, Albert! (*They shake hands*)

Dr. Herring Exits

SCENE 4

Adam: Uncle Albert, you already have two PhDs!

Albert: Yes, I know what you're thinking: why didn't they give me a better party? Well, the truth is, I'm more modest than that. I told them to just drop it off at the house.

Adam: No, uncle, I mean why do you need a third PhD? Far from humble, isn't it?

Eva: Now, Adam, be nice. Your uncle has just been awarded a high honor.

Albert: No Eva, let him go, it's about time somebody in your generation spoke his mind.

Adam: Seriously, Albert, you already have a degree in English and one in French. Do you really need one in Philosophy too?

Albert: I know. I've often believed that a doctorate in Philosophy is a useless title. All doctorates are for doctors of philosophy. The title itself, 'PhD in Philosophy,' is redundant. The love of knowledge should be a part of every learning experience.

Adam: No, uncle, must you be so dense? You don't need three PhDs, no matter what the subject is. It's excessive, not moderate. It's an obsession of yours. You're a hypocrite!

Eva: Adam!

Albert: Well, fine, if that's the way you feel. Then I won't invite you next time.

Adam: Fine then! I don't know why you invited us in the first place!

Albert: You're my only living relative, that's why. Ever since your parents died, I have had no one but you to share my achievements with.

Eva: Well, we're very glad that you invited us.

Adam: Glad? Glad? He just wanted someone to boast to. He's not modest at all. He's entirely infatuated with this knowledge hoo-hah that all his ivory tower companions believe in. You want to talk about obsession, Uncle Albert? Look in the mirror. You're just an egocentric braggart. Sure you share your knowledge, but what's the price? A PhD? A mansion? An hour of having to be subjected to you speaking? If you're going to be a hypochondriac about something, then maybe you should fear dying of arrogance!

Albert: Well, I...I don't have anything to say.

Adam: Well, that's a first!

Eva: Albert, I think it's great that—

Albert: Oh, Eva, your boyfriend's right. I'm ridiculous. You two should just go. I'm sorry that I bothered you.

Eva: But—

Adam: Eva, let's go. I think we all just need some space.

Albert: Yes, let's just leave this at that. Feel free to call if you ever want to do something.

Adam: All right, bye Uncle Albert!

Eve: Um, goodbye!

Albert: So long, children.

Exit Adam and Eva

SCENE 5

Albert: (*looking in a mirror*) Oh, Albert, what have you done? You are a hypocrite. All this time you preached moderate ideas, yet lived a life of excess. (*Now walking around the room*) My philosophy on life pushed me to be too self-indulging. Perhaps I should not have strived for excellence. It only led to my egoism. But then, are all excellent people cocky? Wait, am *I* even cocky or is my nephew just stubborn? I tell you, life is very confusing. Not all of the degrees in the world would help me fully understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions of man. Will I learn from this? Shall I be a dynamic character in the pages of life? Maybe I did all my research because I was just searching for comfort. Now what do I have? A bunch of certificates and publications, and no one to call my loving family. There is some hope in that Eva, though. Surely she will lead Adam away from the temptations of society. I do hope they get married. Maybe that's what I missed out on in life. I spent so much time dedicating myself to my studies that I never had time for a woman. Perhaps I am just a lonely, confused soul. It was my excessive studying that caused a lack of romance. That's not very balanced at all! But do the two extremes balance each other out? No, no, not at all, that's just absurd. Oh, I do believe that I will now need a strong drink. (*Opening up a new bottle of wine*) Well, here's to everything in moderation! (*Takes a draught*) Including moderation!

SCENE 6

Eva: Oh, Adam, I really do wish that you weren't so cruel to your uncle.

Adam: Eva, you haven't grown up knowing my uncle like I have. My entire life, I've heard his ridiculous ideas about how society is terrible and how people don't want to learn anymore and all his other absurdities. I'm sick of it!

Eva: Maybe you're just too stubborn to listen to him.

Adam: Oh great, now you're taking his side.

Eva: Adam, I'm not taking sides. Listen, just because I agree with somebody's idea doesn't mean that I like the person any more than before. I know that your uncle can be kind of rambunctious and that he carries himself in a particular manner. But some of the crazy things he says make sense. He has a lot of good ideas.

Adam: Yeah, but he doesn't even practice what he preaches. He's a hypocrite. How can anyone believe what he says if he doesn't even act it out in his daily life?

Eva: Well, that's when it becomes our responsibility as viewers to select what we are going to believe in. But we have to choose wisely. Like your uncle was saying earlier about Oscar Wilde: just because the man may be immoral or of bad character—

Adam: Or a hypocrite!

Eva: Well, just because he is what he is, does that really change the effectiveness of his advice? Are his words tainted just because they come from his mouth?

Adam: Of course they are!

Eva: No, Adam, I think you need to think about things sometimes. I mean, this life has a lot of interesting ways of operating. And I believe to a certain extent that the ends do justify the means. So what if your hypocritical, immoderate uncle teaches people about balance? That doesn't mean that balance isn't possible.

Adam: Well, I dunno. I guess not. But seriously, why does he need so many degrees?

Eva: I don't know, Adam. It's what makes him happy. Now, are you upset that he has so many degrees because he's obsessive about education, or are you just jealous?

Adam: Why would I be jealous?

Eva: Because a lot of times in life people wish that they had the earnings of others, neglecting the fact that everyone has his or her own special awards in life that are equally desired by others.

Adam: Well, I don't know.

Eva: Look, Adam, your uncle likes his degrees. He doesn't have family. He may give you a hard time whenever you come over to his house, but he invites you over because he loves you. He treats you like the son he never had. He wasn't trying to say, 'Hey, Adam, look what I have and you don't.' Your uncle just wanted you to be there and celebrate

with him, just like he was there for your graduations and everything that you've ever celebrated in life. Look, he could have had a fancy dinner with all of the other stuck-up professors at the university, but he didn't. He wanted to be with you.

Adam: Well, yeah, I guess you're right. Now I feel bad.

Eva: Well, maybe next time you'll think about these things before you go yelling at people.

Adam: Maybe I should call him when we get home.

Eva: No, you have to turn around and go see him.

Adam: Eva, I don't think that's what we should do. It's still really soon. Let's give both of us time to cool off.

Eva: No, you have to turn around. I forgot my purse.

Adam: Oh, jeez, Eva.

SCENE 7

Adam: All right, let's make this quick. That's weird; Uncle Albert left his door unlocked. He never does that.

Eva: Maybe he knew that I forgot my purse and left it here because he doesn't want to talk to you.

Adam: Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised. Stubborn Uncle Albert.

Eva: Okay, here's my purse, I'm all set, sweetie. Oh my god!

Adam: (*alarmed*) Eva, what is it?

Eva: There's...there's a pool of red liquid coming out of your uncle's study.

Adam: Oh my god, Uncle Albert!

(The two rush into the study)

Albert: *(inebriated)* Oh, hey you two.

Adam: Uncle Albert, what the hell are you doing in here?

Albert: Wha does it look life you silly, silly boy? I'm botting the hittle!

Eva: Oh, what a terrible, terrible mess.

Albert: You said it, that's some of Italy's best wine flooring all over my flow.

Adam: Albert, how can you be drunk already, we've only been gone for ten minutes?

Albert: The human mind is capable of many things when you put your mind to it. Wait a minute. Does that make any sense to you?

Adam: Uncle Albert, let's get you cleaned up.

Albert: No, I don't want to be clean. I like my alcohol!

Eva: Okay, Uncle Albert, well you can have some later, but for now you should stop.

Albert: But, Adam, Adam, you were right! I'm a hypocrite. I preach moderation, but look at me. I'm whining in a pool of lies.

Adam: Yeah, and you're acting like a child.

Eva: Honey, I think he meant to say lying in a pool of wine.

Adam: Oh.

Albert: Yeah, that's it. I tell you Adam, that Eva, she's a smart one. She's got a good head breasting on her shoulders.

(Eva blushes)

Adam: Uncle Albert, I came back to apologize.

Albert: Did you now? I would have thought you forgot something.

Adam: Well, Eva did forget her purse.

Albert: There, see!

Eva: But that was only circumstantial. Adam did really want to say he was sorry.

Albert: Well, he shouldn't be.

Adam: No, uncle, I should. You have given me nothing but respect and love my entire life. You have kindly brought me up since my parents died when I was ten, and ever since that day you were always there to teach me a few of the things that you have learned in life. But I was too ignorant to learn from any of them.

Albert: No, Adam, you weren't ignorant. You were just always stubborn.

Adam: Well, stupid nonetheless.

Albert: Don't say that, stubbornness is a good quality in moderation. But I don't think that moderation really exists anymore.

Adam: Now, Uncle Albert. Just because *once* you got drunk and fell asleep in the kitchen doesn't mean that moderation doesn't exist.

Albert: But it's not the first time.

Adam: Well, people need to indulge every now and then I guess. The bottom line is we can't just let one thing knock us down from what we believe in.

Eva: Adam's right, Albert. What you say is very wise and honest. Sometimes your way of carrying yourself intimidates people and that's what causes them to detest what you say. They fail to separate what you say from you as a person.

Albert: So what I say is good?

Adam: Of course it is, Uncle Albert.

Albert: So, is she saying that people don't like me; they just like what I say to them?

Eva: No, Albert. I'm just saying that some people are stubborn and don't listen to advice until it goes to the extremes. Look, Adam didn't realize your noble advice until after he yelled at you and made you feel so bad that you started to hit the bottle. And Adam's stubbornness can be a good quality, just like you said earlier. Had you been more stubborn in your ways, then you wouldn't have fallen into this stupor and doubted your philosophies.

Albert: So, I am a wise man?

Adam: Yes, Albert, and I'm your stubborn nephew who loves you very much.

Eva: And above all, you're both just men. We're all humans. Every now and then we will slip and fall.

Adam: But what's important is that we have someone to pick us up.

Albert: Yeah, you know, I give such a hard time to your generation, but really, we elders can learn a lot from you guys. Sometimes we forget what it was like to be young and see the horizon laid out before us.

Adam: But I thought you always lived in the moment. Isn't that what seeing the horizon is all about?

Albert: Yes, but when one gets older his vision starts to fade. Can't you tell that I wear reading glasses?

Eva: Oh Albert, see, you're laughing.

Albert: Of course I'm laughing! Comedy is the spice of life that helps us get through the drama of everyday. Too often people say that comedies don't teach us anything, but that's not true. Comedy is the best way to teach a lesson, and when a lesson is not understood by the audience, then that's when the comedy becomes a tragedy.

Adam: Uncle Albert, it seems to me that your drunkenness has all but cured itself.

Albert: Oh, well I'm sure that I was exaggerating my inebriation. After all, I did just have half a bottle. I tell you, in my older age I can't hold my wine like I used to. Look at this; I spilled it all over the floor.

Eva: Well, we'll help you clean up.

Albert: Oh, you don't have to do that. But say, if you aren't busy, would you want to stay for dinner? I have a lovely eggplant parmigiana recipe.

Adam: We'd love to. After all, we have your degree to celebrate.

Albert: Oh, that old thing. That's not what's important in life. I've learned something this afternoon. It's who we love in life that's important. And love exists in many ways. I loved knowledge, and I took that and channeled it into raising you. However well I did that, I do not know. And I look at you two and see that you love each other. In the end, I probably won't look back on the bottles of wine, the titles, the degrees, and the scholarships. I'll look back on those I loved.

Eva: Oh, well we love you too, Uncle Albert!

Adam: Yeah, Uncle Albert, you mean a lot to me. Hey, will you be the best man at my wedding?

Albert: Well, of course. But maybe you should ask the lady if she'll marry you first.

Eva: Yeah, when's that going to happen, Adam?

Adam: Hey, wait a minute. Uncle Albert, should you really be drinking an entire bottle of wine with such a serious heart condition?

Albert: Well, Adam, if I'm going to die, I'd rather it happen while I'm living. One should never avoid things out of fear.

Adam: I don't know about you sometimes, Uncle Albert.

THE END

Be Prepared

(an excerpt)

One evening, the scouts were talking about the uniform—what made it complete—the shirt and the trousers, the web belt with official buckle, the neckerchief with official clasp, the proper shoes. The scoutmaster, Joe Brennan, seemed uninterested in the subject. Andrew thought that was because Joe knew that the boys could not afford the cost of full uniforms. He told them of a special feature of his Marine uniform. Because his unit had fought in two very important battles in France, the men were awarded a French medal. When Joe named it, Andrew thought it sounded like the “Crow dee Gurr.” Joe described the medal and the special colored cord that went with it, and was worn around the shoulder. He said that other Marine units were jealous of the honor, and so claimed that when men wore that cord it meant that they had a venereal disease. The scoutmaster promised to bring this military decoration to the next meeting so the boys could actually see it. Andrew bought himself a copy of the “Boy Scout Handbook.” He hoped that this would help him put off buying a uniform. He did not want to spend that much money, nor did he like the idea that he might turn out to be the only boy in the troop who owned and wore a complete uniform. Aunt Elizabeth took to wanting him to not only report on his scout meetings, but to prove how ambitiously he was studying that handbook. So Andrew scanned parts of the book and found it easy to impress his aunt with more wisdom about tying and using knots. He pleased her when he showed off his learning about first aid, but she was not that interested in how a boy scout could make a fire with just one match and no tinder except a “fuzz stick,” which you made by carving a thin tree branch so that the sides caught fire readily.

One afternoon, Andrew’s talk about the handbook proved troublesome. He had read something he did not quite understand—about how a boy should take cold hip baths. He could not quite understand what or why. His aunt wondered what he could be talking about, and she demanded to see the book. As she read, her frown grew. She shut the book and declared, “We do not talk about such things.” Her disapproval discouraged Andrew, as he also did not understand what the book was trying to say about some dreams a boy would have as he got older.

At the meetings, the boys did do scout things. They planned camping trips. They practiced first aid. They sometimes did actually tie knots. And they never lacked for stories from Joe. Andrew thought of a new way to deal with his aunt. He would never tell her of Joe’s stories; but when nothing especially new happened at a meeting, he would read in his handbook and pretend that those things were done at the meeting. And he no longer had his handbook

with him when he was to meet with his aunt.

Joe Brennan had been a United States Marine during the First World War. His description of his bayonet fight with a German soldier was intriguing and exciting to the boys: how he plunged his bayonet into the German's stomach, and how it stuck there. So Joe had to try to kick the enemy free, and while he was doing so, the dying German managed to break Joe's elbow with his rifle butt. One night, Joe explained a "box barrage"—aiming artillery so that the shells fell in a box pattern. And then the following patterns were smaller and smaller boxes. "It wiped out just about everybody," said Joe, who had himself survived such an attack, but had gotten his neck pierced with lots of shrapnel. Some of that metal was still in his neck, and he invited the boys to feel for a piece just beneath the skin near his Adam's apple.

Once, Joe held forth about his hospital experiences. "Hospital tents smelled bad. But there was a smell even worse somewhere. And a nurse found it. A wounded Ghurka soldier—under his mattress some ears he'd cut off Germans he'd killed. They were on a string." The boys listened intently as Joe finished that story. That when the nurse tried to take the string of ears away, the soldier brought out a knife and slashed her throat. She bled to death right then and there. Andrew did some serious study of the scout handbook that week.

The troop got busy planning for a weekend camping trip. They were to stay in barracks-type buildings located on several hundred acres—a Boy Scout reservation which, during the summer, was used by hundreds of scouts who stayed for weeks at a time. There was a lake, and hiking trails, and forest clearings for evening campfire gatherings. In the summer there was swimming and canoes and sailboats. Andrew's troop was going there in cold weather, however. This meant they would have the luxury of sleeping indoors. The planning gave Andrew a lot to tell his aunt. His patrol was responsible for a menu and buying the food, and they were to do the cooking: a lot to explain to his aunt, so Andrew felt more relaxed in her presence than he had in a long time.

The actual camping trip, as opposed to the planning, returned Andrew to his earlier problem—what to tell his aunt, when there was so much he dare not tell. Andrew's patrol leader was the large boy who had another scout pinned to the floor at that first meeting. His name was Wayne and he was a bully. He bragged a lot, and liked to punch boys hard on the upper arm. The first evening of the camping trip, Joe gathered the scouts in front of the fireplace. Wayne had made a strong fire. He was teasing the very scout he had pinned to the floor—because, he said, he was much better at building that fire than the smaller boy was at cooking the supper. The smaller boy jumped at Wayne, and they rolled around on the floor, sweating and swearing. Joe Brennan separated them, and decided they should settle their quarrel by boxing. He brought out gloves, and they went at it. It turned out that the smaller boy was a very competent boxer, and he quickly had blood pouring from Wayne's nose. The Scoutmaster stopped the fight, declaring the smaller boy the winner. The fighters were made to shake hands.



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ITS

Facilities Management

The Quadrangle office computer for crashing at only mildly inopportune moments

Great Wall Chinese Restaurant for offering cheap, but oh-so-delicious, lo mein

Our talented staff

All of the contributors who have made this edition possible

Contributors' Notes

Jesse Baier has a weak immune system and likes caramel.

Laura Basil is a graduate student working toward an MBA in Marketing. The works that appear in the magazine were part of her undergraduate thesis at Ohio University. She has a BFA in Painting.

Dena Bowman has been an Administrative Associate in the History Department for the past 19 years and took two photography classes with Prof. Tom Wolf here at Canisius. She loves doing nature photos and is now working on photos of people.

Cara Cotter works on *Quadrangle* in between critiquing famous paintings, writing epics in various languages (most of which are no longer spoken by mortals), and cooking dinner for her surprisingly hungry, irascible pet wallaby.

Mike DiGiacomo graduated from Canisius with a B.A. in English in 2004. He is currently a medical student at the University at Buffalo and plans to become a psychiatrist after he graduates. He is very happy to have his work included in this year's *Quadrangle*. He wishes to thank Ann Carapellotti, Mick Cochrane, Eric Gansworth, and Fr. Pat Keleher for their encouragement and inspiration.

A freshman English major and Creative Writing minor, **Emily Doscher** knows how to wield a pen. She can wield computer keyboards, too, but that can get dangerous.

Matt Durante is a sophomore from Orchard Park. He loves playing guitar, longboarding, skiing, mountain biking, and photography.

Nicole Evanisko, a senior, has been on the art staff for two years. We dig her photosnapping ways.

John Frost is supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

Jean Gier's degrees from Canisius College are in Education and English. She loves poetry. A retired teacher, she encouraged her students to read it and write it. She remembers how Dr. Lovering's lectures were truly inspiring.

A budding local artist and entrepreneur, **Caitlin Hagar** creates jewelry inspired by beautiful scenes in nature. The photograph in the magazine is one of many that will continue to inspire unique and original hand-made pieces.

Lauren Hackford is a junior at Canisius and a *Griffin* Life and Arts regular columnist. She also works at HSBC and pretends to be a cake decorator. She is stressed way too much.

Allison Hogan is a junior Political Science major with a minor in International Relations. She is a Team Leader for Campus Ministry's International Immersion trips to India. Her photograph was taken on her trip to India over Christmas Break.

Michael Iacobelli's two photographs were taken in Firenze, Italy and Sorrento, Italy.

Lauren Jaroszewski is a sophomore English major with a minor in Studio Art. She is involved with *Quadrangle*, Dr. Noonan's Marineland Team and has also participated as a volunteer for the SPCA. Her favorite pastimes are photography, her pets, reading authors she's never read before and watching movies she's never seen. She hopes to become a photojournalist after she goes to graduate school. She also wants to thank everyone on the *Quadrangle* for a job well done, and her friends and family for helping through another school year.

After graduating from Canisius last year, **Kevin Koch** translated the complete works of Tolkien into his own language while at the same time designing a line of gladiator gear. This, as you might expect, took almost

a year to complete, but he still managed to send us some poems (in English).

Alixandra V. Krzemien, also known as Alix, sincerely believes that tea can fix almost anything. She once shared a spot of tea with Robin Hood. Most people don't know this, but it was Alix's mean tea-brewing skills that inspired him to attain his heroic status.

Benjamin Lankes is a senior at Canisius, majoring in Spanish and European Studies with minors in History and Classics. An avid reader, Ben enjoys a wide array of literature, including numerous genres, languages, and periods. Likewise, as a writer, Ben composes using varying genres and languages.

Jessica Lee should have won the Tour de Glasgow last summer, but was cheated out of her victory by a sheep on testosterone, who biked an average eighty miles per hour. Despite this disappointment, Jessica did manage to take some pictures of bikes.

Jesse Deganis Librera is a freshman Digital Media Arts major.

Captivated and entranced, still, through sorting, **Zachery Martinen** seeks this illusoriness; his quest to understand imagination and reality honed his interest in reading. He delights in alluding to literature in conversation, to see whose eyes catch a spark. He tutors English at ECC South, so he can save money, for he plans on getting lost in Asia this summer (or teaching English there as work-work-work to satisfy mother money-money-money).

Karen Mize graduated from Canisius College in 1978 with a dual major in History and Communications. Since graduating, she has worked in professional sports, entertainment, and the performing arts. Travel is her great passion and she has ventured to all seven continents. "India" was inspired by a trip she took in 2007.

Duyen Nguyen is a senior English major with a Creative Writing minor.

She hopes to look her age soon.

Elizabeth Padgett has memorized *The Lorax*. Now she has moved on to Dante's *Inferno*. Next year, you'll likely find her reciting *Canterbury Tales*, in Olde English, as she rides her bicycle through Spain.

Jason Pontillo is a junior English major, iconoclast, among other things. He is honored and pleased to thank his wife, Angela, for her continued and unending support.

Mel Schroeder has a magical outhouse that transports him back in time whenever he closes the door. Consequently, he has little privacy. On the bright side, he has dined with Joseph Conrad, played tennis with Virginia Woolf, and swam in the ocean with D.H. Lawrence.

Zachary Schweitzer is a graphic designer living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Canisius in 2007 with a degree in Digital Media Arts and has since learned to view the entire world in CMYK percentages.

Rachele Simon is a senior Marketing major. Her photograph "Mary Alyce" is dedicated to her Grandma: "From one shore to another."

Ed Taylor teaches in the English Department, and doesn't like pain.

Ashley Velazquez is a freshman at Canisius who is out to prove that stepping on cracks does not, as the old saying may have us believe, break your mother's back.

Currently, **Joshua Vito** is an aspiring technical artist still in attendance at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. He hopes to find a place at a creative video game company where he will have the opportunity to learn and grow. His long-term goal is to obtain a position troubleshooting and building custom skeletal rig systems for video games. His website is www.joshvito.com.

Kate Voss is a Childhood/Special Education major with a concentration in Honors English. The following poem accompanies her painting:

The Timeless Beauty of My Grandmother

Elegance and poise
Of a regal queen.
Inner radiance,
Captivating nature,
Nurturing sunny love,
My soul wrapped in an afghan.

Fiery redheaded spunk,
Quick witted intelligence,
Quieting a room
With a single look
Mirrored in Popo's gentle amusement.

Laughter echoing in
Distant chimes,
Lush Irish scenery,
Bedside novels,
Rich sinful deserts,
And giggles over green tea.

Tuition sucks a little life out of **Jonathan Wheelock** each year, though he is able to maintain sanity by getting way too excited over hockey, the trombone, imported beer and chicken finger subs. He also loves being asked, "What are you going to do with an English degree?" Really. Ask him.

Huimei Zheng is a senior Biochemistry major with a Studio Art minor, and is also an international student from Jamaica. Her photo, entitled "Nature," was taken randomly from the roadside on her way to Niagara Falls. She feels that, as city dwellers, we are constantly subjected to busy

lifestyles, and very seldom pay attention to what nature has to offer. There is beauty and tranquility everywhere; sometimes we just need to stop in order to realize that.

Keyla Zinteck is a junior. Her photograph “He Caught My Eye” was taken in Kinigi, Rwanda, in the Northern Province of Masanze, while “Truly Ireland” was taken in Spiddal, Ireland at the base of Connemara.



Jesse Baier • Laura Basil • Dena Bowman • Cara Cotter
• Mike DiGiacomo • Emily Doscher • Matt Durante •
Nicole Evanisko • John Frost • Jean Gier
• Lauren Hackford • Caitlin Hagar • Allison Hogan •
Michael Iacobelli • Lauren Jaroszewski •
Kevin Koch • Alixandra V. Krzemien • Jessica Lee •
Benjamin Lankes • Jesse Deganis Librera • Zachery
Martinen • Karen Mize • Duyen Nguyen • Elizabeth
Padgett • Jason Pontillo • Mel Schroeder • Zachary
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Wheelock • Huimei Zheng • Keyla Zinteck