

The Laurel

Fall/Spring 2014



Page 3 - *Wall* - Brett Keegan

Page 20 - *Richard Kauffmann* - Brett Keegan

Page 4 - *Drunk at Olean Mall* - Philip Nichols
Artwork by - Killeen McGovern

Page 21 - *Coffin Child* - Jacob Fished
Poem 33 - Philip Nichols

Page 5 - *Her Secret Ingredient*

Page 22 - *Shaking* - Carl Beacker
TMSF - Chloe Farmer

Page 6 - *Her Secret Ingredient(cont.)* - Mary Best
Evils of our World - Nicholas Coyne

Page 23 - *Melting* - Jessica Thompson

Page 7 - *Scott Raynor* - Philip Nichols
Hookah and Sea Glass - Angela Kim

Page 24 - *RIP* - Chloe Farmer
Artwork by - Killeen McGovern
The Fall - Nathan Cass
Dawn - Carl Beacker

Page 8 - *When Tragedy Permeates the Bubble (The
Draft After the News)* - Emily Jo Manchester
Dreaming - Amy Jarrell

Page 25 - *Living in Isolation* - Philip Nichols

Page 9 - *Words that Can't be Shown* - Brianna Wilson
Allegany - Nicholas Coyne

Page 26 - *I Was Simpler, Not Life* - Kevin Cooley

Page 10 - *Press Play to Pause* - Jessica Thompson

Page 27 - *I Was Simpler, Not Life(cont.)* - Kevin
Cooley
Uncorked - Amy Jarrell

Page 13 - *Bird Nests* - Brett Keegan
Oliver - Angela Kim

Page 28 - *Emily Dickenson* - Emily Jo Manchester

Page 14 - *I Am, And I do It Frequently* - Kevin Cooley

Page 29 - Editor's Goodbye

Page 15 - *Imagine Byron* - Angela Kim
Wonder - Carl Beacker

Page 16 - *A letter from One of Twenty-Six Great
Grandchildren* - Brianna Wilson
Shipwrecks - Jacob Fishcer

Page 17 - *To the Bard of Foxes and Bears* - Kevin
Cooley

Page 18 - *Untitled* - Nicholas Coyne
Paperword-Nightmare-Rolldowns - Philip
Nichols

Page 19 - *Youth* - Jacob Fischer
Untitled - Nicholas Coyne

Cover Art:
The Newbie
Nathan Cass

Wall

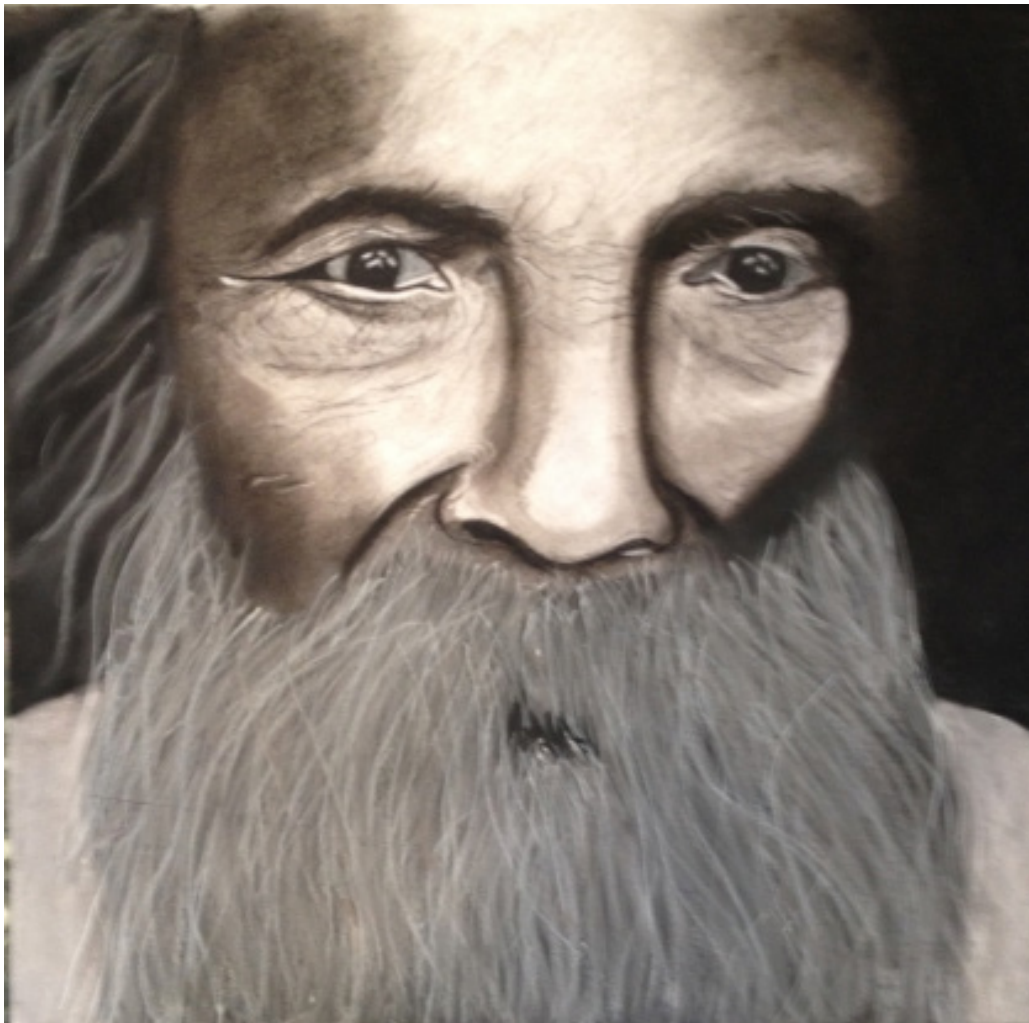
A young couple at a table,
a wall between them
of air and unfinished phone calls.

Brett Keegan

Drunk at the Olean Mall

I need an open beer
When I'm under the gun
Starring at the blurred poster at Rue 21
The Cuddle girl has not a care in the world
Beautiful smile on a New York street
The world belongs to her

Philip Nichols



Killeen McGovern

Her Secret Ingredient

DING!

Grace skillfully avoided the oven rack as she clamped her pink polka dot oven mitts on the sides of her pie pan. Afraid her hand might slip, she stole a glance at the living room.

None of her guests had arrived yet.

She set the pie pan on the cooling rack, letting its glass bottom gingerly graze the cold metal that separated the piercing heat from the newly installed teal countertops.

As the ticking of the clock seemed to slow and increase in volume, Grace suddenly dreaded what would begin at 6 p.m. She knew who was coming, and the pressure to exceed her own expectations, despite all of her detailed planning, was so overwhelming she began to sweat uncontrollably.

DING-DONG!

She jumped at the sound of the doorbell. Trying to calm herself down, she imagined who would arrive first and what they would be wearing. But her subconscious got the best of her. She knew who would be coming. It was the one person anyone with an ear for gossip would be appalled to know was in attendance at Grace Potter's dinner party.

Sure enough, there she was. Just like her worst nightmare.

Annie Davis was as innocent as one could look in the new Christian Dior.

But Grace knew what she'd done.

Annie was followed by other prominent housewives in the community, and Grace threw yet another marvelous dinner party. But her nerves inflamed again once the second last guest had left. It was just her and Annie in the house now.

Annie bravely asked where Mr. Potter was that evening, even though Grace had already told everyone he was away on business.

Annie began to sweat.

Grace turned her attention to the pie, still sitting on the cooling rack.

"Oh, goodness," she laughed. "I forgot to serve our other pie."

Annie politely asked for a slice.

Everything was going according to plan.

Grace watched Annie devour her slice, and exactly as she predicted, Annie smiled and tiptoed over to Grace.

“What’s your secret ingredient?”

“Bastard.” Grace whispered.

Annie looked confused.

“But you liked it didn’t you?”

Annie nodded slowly. She knew she shouldn’t have stayed too long.

Grace’s voice stiffened. “Of course you did. You liked him too much while he was still alive.”

As Annie understood what Grace had actually meant, she regretted every second she even looked at Mr. Potter. Her back suddenly found a wall, and her heart met a silver steakknife.

Mary Best

Evils of Our World

A man

Between 100th and 103rd

Sold me a Buddhist book

That read

“This book is not to be sold”

“FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION”

and he smiled.

Nicholas Coyne

Scott Raynor

Walking to FYE to Buy DUDERANCH
to the girls that never gave me A chance
or the Spanish classes I never passed
to that type of Failure
I Dedicate Success!

SCOTT
RAYNOR
Banging
away

Philip Nichols

Hookah and Sea Glass

Do you remember the green hookah we smoked out of on the roof

of the house we rented in Montauk,

the one by the beach?

We talked between a thick veil of smoke,

waiting in silence for shooting stars,

making private wishes.

We broke that glass hookah because we had

reached for the liquor bottle too many times

and we threw the pieces off the ledge onto to sand below.

They looked just like soft sea glass in my hands but their

edges were raw and cut my skin.

Angela Kim

When Tragedy Permeates the Bubble (The draft after the news)

How much do you have to know about a person before you can call them friend? How many conversations do you have to have had before you're allowed to mourn them?

When you hear these things in the news, you never think about them too long. It's a fleeting headline, a momentary pain in your stomach if you put yourself in the shoes of the family, or friends, or even the one lost.

But you, you were just like me. We lived on the same floor last year; you lived three below my best friend this year. You walked the same sidewalks to class, ate the same food, complained about it in the same ways. You probably drank the same beer. We were connected. You were a student here. Just like me. You were someone's child, you were 19. Just like me.

Nothing bad was supposed to happen to you. Not here, not in this place. The headlines are just supposed to scare me; they're supposed to be reminders to use the buddy system and tell people where I'm going. They are not supposed to bring us bad news about the people we knew; they're not supposed to cripple us...

I had seen your face in the Hickey, in La Verna, at basketball games, freshman year I used to run into you on my way to the trash room or a floor meeting, and now, now I've seen it on the news, in the notice board email that told me and all our peers that no one had seen it since Saturday morning.

...Did you get that same email? Is it going to sit in your inbox like a ghost forever, a reminder to no one that you were not safe? A phantom of the hope that maybe you were.

You weren't okay.

Emily Jo Manchester

"Dreaming"
Amy Jarrell



Words That Can't Be Shown

Poems
Lyrics
Words made phrases
Phrases combine
I have verses for days
And though I have all these written
Nothing can be shown
The public eye can't see
That which my heart makes known

If I published all my words
If I published each composition
I'd put my feelings on the line
I'd put him in a difficult position

I don't want anyone hurt
No one needs to be thrown under the bus
But I only write words that are honest.
Truth in my writing is a must

It just bothers me to the core
I write all of these words, but what for?
Worded expression is a good way to vent
But I want to share my words, with him.

Brianna Wilson

Allegany

Oh
and it was cold
cold
no matter where one hid

in a cloudy car
smoke
trying
to escape

I'm accustomed
to
late nights spent
getting high

Cutting corners
like we carved them
ourselves

we get
so
lost
when we don't speak

but you never need
a lot
to say it all

Nicholas Coyne

Press Play to Pause

My girlfriend says that I watch too many movies.
I'm not sure what that exactly means.
Either she is insinuating that I am lazy or...
that I watch a shit-ton of movies.
I'll trust the latter to be true
And let me present my case as such as I inform you that
each day I walk a malleable line between anxiety and insanity -
that lends itself sometimes to the discovery that
I am not always walking as smoothly as I should
but probably more like Johnny Cash - often veering off course
with these toes that are never quite pointed enough
and cause this frail body
to sway far too much
but, I try and I try
to put on these rip-tattered jeans -
slide on these beaten-in, sole-torn shoes (the ones that I should probably throw out but don't
have the heart to).
I want to play my part in this hipster world.
I want to be a poetry junkie with marks up my arms and a mind like a San Fran - Beat - Ker-
ouac
underground genius - throwing down lines with elements of surprise.
I want to be the weird; the unusual; the blatant; the crude.
I want to be the nonconformist; the boundary tester; the generator toward new.
"They say you've got freedom of speech -- as long as you don't say anything," -
And, Baraka, I hear you,
and I, too, want a riot
and I, too, want to say something
and have it be heard
So, please, as I lay down these words,
just listen, just try to understand
that these lines that come forth toward your earbuds
are crafted creations that have emerged from the networking of my brain
a system of interlocking connections
that spit-fires at a rate much too fast to contemplate
and react, and, hence, I am always fashionably late
as I sit here in front of this screen insinuating stimulation that slows all wavelengths down,
backs time into a corner and forces it to be still - if only for a moment.

It shouldn't work this way; an injection of electrifying propagation should not be the cause of this stagnation that causes everything to just STOP! relax a little while.

But, this is how it works. A double-barreled shotgun - a parallel system where each assist the other - fire spews from the mouth of the one - vomits forth wild imagination - a chaotic eruption that brings the other forward - battalion boots laced to the knee - pulls it back by the hair - makes it simmer into ashes of intermission and pause...

sit still; just be.

I hate stillness.

Cringing from the inside-out as projections of invisible needle-tips prick their way through my skin, I twitch with the stillness.

Comfortability turns into a scene of uncomfortable proportion - and my body begins to resemble the twists of a contortionist amidst their act of superior performance rapport.

And, let's just say

that I don't particularly fair well

with finagling my body into such elastic positions

unless I am on a dance floor induced by a disinhibition

aroused by a healthy dosage of intoxication and very little resistance

or hesitation to draw attention.

I don't enjoy stillness.

And to further my position -

I don't adhere to silence particularly well either.

I will never be found in a position of self-induced silence that forces me to spend alone time with myself in the expansive room

of my deep-seated thoughts that lead

me toward self-discrimination

resulting in a critical analysis that falls much too far on the side of severity -

diminishes and evaporates all semblance of clarity

that existed before the evacuation of sound took off with my sanity

attached on its back,

sneering and poking fun as it glanced behind -

only holes once occupied by notes of soothing voices remain -

overcome by vapors of harsh tonal qualities that have erupted to fill the voids with some essence of noise.

It's not silence, I suppose, that I struggle with, per se
but, more so, the fact that silence refuses to exist silently,
which, in my opinion, would be popularly agreed upon
by the majority of the poetic society that sits here in front of me tonight.
c'mon, folks, look at us!

we are a mixed up concoction of drunks and insomniacs;
blazers and obsessive compulsives - each to their own extent.
so much so that we cannot cope with lapses in sound
so we compensate by obsessing over its proper insertion
into everything we write, because we know, all too well,
that

when sound disappears, we, too, cease to be alive.

I don't want to die out with the commonality and the norm.

I don't want to be just another person too afraid to speak up and act against the majority of this
society which creates what is acceptable - the appropriate structure and form that is only desir-
able to those who want to be structured in monotony.

I refuse to be silent and chained down - kept still against my will.

So, hear me - you don't have to understand me.

Just let me be me - entangled with all of my quirks and insanities.

My girlfriend says I watch too many movies...

and that may be true.

And, perhaps, some of you are just like me

and need to enact some excitation within your minds

just to be able to survive amongst all the complexities of your inherent wirings.

And, therefore, I will continue to extend this extremity horizontally,

press play and let the noise embody me - carry me away into a virtual reality

to a place where I can escape amongst the sound waves - if only for a little while - and breathe.

Jessica Thompson

Bird Nests

The riddles of a man are all he'll ever own,
questions collected over time,
like the bits of a bird's nest.

Some time,
 some summer
ago
A robin built a nest on the lamp
outside
my parent's back door.

It's gone now.

An empty nest.
The twigs curled like kindling in a fire,
blackened
by
 frost and rain.

And old
 (so old/so weary.)

The robin—no robin—came home.
No young fledglings gulping worms,
priming wings,
Only bits of bird nest,
 gathered over time
 by simple industry.

Brett Keegan

Oliver

I watch your clock ticking, my cig
burning,
the candle wax pooling with a still
flame.
This is how I measure the time pass-
ing.
You kiss my smoke filled lips like a
last name.

I am the Lady of Shallot, today
I break my curse. Today I will be free.
Looking through your frosted win-
dow I pray
with no God but the love you give to
me.

Quiet bedroom, your skin pale like
moonlight,
Painted flowers, painted by me, retro
Playboys baring Monroe in black and
white.
Yesterday seems one sad lifetime ago.

Ask me to stay and I will never leave.
No more Lilith, please let me be your
Eve.

Angela Kim

I Am, And I Do It Frequently

“I am” is a statement of outright arrogance. It is my hands caught crumb-crust and fingering the porcelain insides of a cookie jar filled with freshly, wordpressed grammatical redundancy. Given a choice between the two of them, however, I’d burst through the bubble cage of hypothetic-cold captivity and lather the question in honey mustard-barbecue sauce; watch it devour itself and its self and warm these pink hands I call mine, and consequentially “I”, in the fires given off by its “am’ing”, a furnace of non-obsolete caloric and unadulterated I-ness;

You still with me folks? You can feel free to nod your head either way, presumably (this way [sideways]); assuming though, there is a you to choose a way or a way for you to choose, or that ways can even be am enough to be, or a you to be an I as far as you are concerned; I implies am and am implies I, and the pair of them holding hands says the grass-blade fingers of planetary groundtruths only exist in the cradle of my eye, enframed in eyelashes, black-corded ropes that are formed forth from what Grandpa God, Mom and Dad told me was this thing called me; sweat, fertilized into existency in avoidance of a rhymeforced world; I’d only quickdraw my “I am” on the truth that I can never be, a fire-burnt kite-flying Heraclitic dancing partner of a sexless beauty named perpetuality; I grow like the grass and am picked when the deities of ground leaves, jury duty and fire hydrants decide that I should be:

though I can’t begin to be until I establish that I have already “amèd”, and am unable to am until am can be, and be has amèd and I’d, consequently proven itself I-and-amworthy, being only what it knows it can be and I’ing the one thing it cannot eye until it has been and is no longer I’ing, I-able, I-worthy or I.

so...I. Will just grow.

And they’ll blow

the dandelion cloud me into the summeresque breeze and he’ll float away before I can even see what the I-him was, stolen, wafted away on warm, invisible shoulders and the light of the sun.

Kevin Cooley

Imagine Byron

Imagine Byron tasting gin on his tongue as he wrote,
Feeling the gentle curves of love and sex,
Of purity and tortured desperation.

Weeks like tight bedroom walls painted white,
Sketching memories with poems
That anchor the fast nights to something with substance.
Words can bring into focus a bleeding life, I hear.

With libertine tastes, bodies lay tentatively on his bed;
Only whetting his appetite without satisfaction.
We both love too dearly people we should not.

A pool of hot wax, wicks burnt to ash,
Finger tips touching the opposite extremities of life.
Byron, Byron, how did you do it
Because I cannot and it is painful.

Angela Kim

Wonder

I sit on a bench on a walk between shadows,
A blank sheet of paper alit in my palm;
Pondering, dreaming, scheming what wonders,
Will be wrought from this sole sheet's soliloquy.

I smile, engulfed in this moment's enormity,
Then tossing these wonders aside,
I coerce them now in the shape of a plane,
As only once crushed can we fly.

Carl Beacker

A Letter from One of Twenty-Six Great Grandchildren

Dear Pa,

It's hard letting go.
It's hard saying goodbye.
I smile at the memories,
Though can't help but cry.

Life doesn't last forever.
Your life was well lived.
You gave love to your wife,
Kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids.

Ninety-Three Years:
That's a great deal of time.
You served your country,
Served your family,
Served God with all your might

As I sat by your side
As I held your hand
With our grasp holding tight
I could understand

What it means to live
What it means to have purpose
You gave your all in this life
Lived for God, fought for justice

We said what we needed to that day
And our smiles said even more
I love you, Pa. I love you, Pa.
Give my best to the Lord.
I know you're with him.

Brianna Marie Wilson

Shipwrecks

I've laid down my sword,
we are lions without teeth lost along the harbor.
Our light leads us home,
we could be on fire again, you and I,
hand inside of hand,
laying brick by broken brick over again.
Fix my prefix, I don't want what I had.
I know what I want and I want the place you want.
The dirt turns beneath my feet, letting me know I'm alive.
Brick by brick, board by board,
Our teeth hold in the truth we die to speak.
Home is where your light is.

Jacob Fischer

To the Bard of Foxes and Bears:

You, Mr. Weiss, the bard of beetles and coconut estates, of Aesop's foxes with more than one character trait, of boxcar entourages through snowstrewn woods, harmonicas played by animal vagabonds inaudible against the hump hump humping of grimy, coal-coated train gears on bronzed metal—you, Aaron (and I cower

before you in saying this because it's like presenting Emeril LaGasse with dinosaur chicken nuggets when he showed up to your place hungry) you are a white crayon. Suitcoated Crayola fat cats saw no use for you and now you paint my pages with blankness because I have everything to say to you and no clue how to say it.

I saw you once. We—you and I, I the unintelligible lie and you the nonexistent arbitrary dude and felt my grandchildren's tiny, discerning fingers tickling my spine as they thumbed through the Houghton Mifflin pages of their literature textbooks and skipped past the part where your name should be even if you want to be forgotten; I wouldn't give you everything you wanted because I'll never let you be forgotten.

I was the man with the big red button; I was burping the last healthy baby on the planet, her skin talc smooth and cotton soft, after the famine hit.

A thunder bolt longing to descend like a meteor and fuck a lightning rod; I could have tickled history; I could have held the hands that midwived God in microscopic ink puddles on parchment. You'd shy away my blasphemy like a buddhist bothered by a fly at a picnic, but I know the man who proclaimed that God, "holds without hands and speaks without sound" has been cradled himself before in those same non-hands and heard the shells of words of the world's spirit beneath him in the breathing hours of the night that bleed sunshine, that time where the world is a photograph.

You are an actual orgasm; you are the tongue-tickled salt at the bottom of the pretzel bag, you are a starscape of reflected streetlight if fresh fallen snow were the night sky and the accompanying sharp breaths and mittened handholding that will follow—and if you don't agree I know you would say that I am—take them, it isn't much, take all of these disjointed images just to say, hey, please just eat me, I wish you were a t-rex so you could just eat me and chew my body into a fine pulp, leaving my mouth and central nervous system intact long enough to let me smile, appreciate that I'm being eaten by a fucking dinosaur, and mitochondria morph me into energy to fuel your tiny t-rex hands, burnt like coal, to give them the strength to benchpress your heavy-hearted pen.

Letting all attachments go, it's the only prayer we know, we're the only we we know.

Aaron, you sun champion, you day man; teach me the words.

Kevin Cooley

Untitled

It's a cold
cold night
the kind of cold
that only feels right
within the confines of this city

Extremities
are numb
but a fire
has been ignited
from the friction of differences

I'm absolutely burnt out
but the passion is still burning
from the candle that warms my bedside
as I write letters that will never get mailed
they will remain a manifesto of love
proof we both existed
even for a bit

we can dilly-dally all willy-nilly
or we can not say a word and let each other
fall asleep on the riverbed
hand
in
hand

Nicholas Coyne

Paperword-Nightmare-Rolldowns

Hearing me out

Blowing my lungs

Airing them out

Passing away

Carry me out

Power

Powder

Snorting dust off the counter

Ghosts blow me kisses from the rooftops

Smashing windows

Standing in the corner

Walking slowly stalking me from the corridor

Prisoners

Behind prison bars, prison walls

Trapped in penitentiaries

Talking with prison guards

On the inside of the outskirts

An outsider who found his way in

No one's around

Many surround him

The artifice of love

The carcass of an industry

Money's king

Pushing everything

Eroding and rotting creativity's house

Untitled

focus
focus
ramble
ramble
write words
love them
hate them
show them off
hide them
live with them
shoot a pilot about the CARAZY relationship between you and your art
maybe CBS will pick it up
and you'll see yourself how you've always wanted to
snuggle with those words when no one will
inspire people
revolt them
write everything until you are empty
smoke
eat

Youth

You can't stop the rats from moving back and forth,
back and forth, back and forth in place.
Oh, busy, busy bees, why can't you answer?
I hope you all rest in peace,
I hope you find what you're looking for.
A sea of faces, but all one disguise.
We're all skeletons for the masses,
dressed to the nines in our own skin.
We fight against prosthetics,
yet we keep our secrets under our mattress.
What good is our skin if we haven't got words?

Jacob Fischer

empty yourself again
fight the battle between consumption
and expression
and lose
because its not dominant culture
to be weak
and that minorial thinking
fuels love and desire
never doubt it
expand upon it
let it break you down
because those broken bones
with a little resilience and Elmer's glue
will provide quite the foundation.

Nicholas Coyne

Richard Kaufmann

He felt like someone had jammed a crowbar in his gut, and he could almost imagine all his organs and thoughts growling and clicking as they strained to turn. Something. Anything. His brain—normally prim, organized, and direct—caught itself, froze, and somethinged and anythinged in the silence. Draped like a torn rag, his lips stayed mute. His eyes blinked.

Get the police, someone—or no one—said. He couldn't tell.

"Get me the phone," he said.

"But, hon," his wife said, "there isn't any phone."

"I thought..."

He sat on a stool beside the wall, shifting his sight to the floorboards. A few thoughts started to flow. Is this how people on crashed airplanes feel? Just before it all goes up. Those precious minutes before they die. When they're sitting there, staring at the exits.

Richard Kaufmann once saw a documentary about "normalcy bias," the idea that people persist in the illusion that things are normal, even during a crisis. It differs from "fear bycardia," the instinctual freezing up animals get when a predator surprises them—why rabbits turn stone still at the call of a hawk. Richard Kaufmann imagined the rabbit, stuck by its muscles own inability to move. He imagined what the filaments of nerves down its spine must be doing—like one of the visualized science movies his old biology teacher, Ms. Garukas used to show them. There'd be men in red jump suits and helmets running down a hallway with flashing lights. But the door—would it be to the legs or the brain, Richard Kaufmann wasn't sure—the door would be locked. The rabbit wouldn't move. The hawk got its meal. Game over.

"Well?" his wife asked.

"I don't know. I need to eat."

"What?"

Richard Kaufmann stood up from the stool and walked to the counter where his lunch was, two slices of buttered toast cut in half, some cheese, four carrot "stix," and a Macintosh apple. Beside, was a cup of tea. It was all cold, but in the dim light of the house, that didn't matter to Richard Kaufmann—nor did the dim light. What mattered was the gaping hole that was swallowing most of the room, his son, and their now-charged telephones. His wife continued to yell, pinned on the floor by debris. Richard continued to eat. Meanwhile the rest of the tidy two-story house slid and swayed, like a suspension bridge on a windy day, creaking and ripping, as the stiff two-by-fours bolted together in the frame buckled and pried each other lose.

Richard Kaufmann was having a good day thinking about fear bycardia over carrot stix. But that didn't matter much longer.

Brett Keegan

Coffin Child

Something tells me I'm far from dead,
with a breath in my lungs
and a beat in my feet, I tap the
cadence of one thousand men
battle-scarred and scorned by the ones
they called love.

We do not deserve all we have,
some men sell their souls to feel
anything at all. I'll harness the
burial shroud and be lamented
for burying all my fears into a bottle
of your finest sin. All my doubt got me nowhere.

We have created another vacancy,
a bullet hole in a china shop.

I am all I am, and all I am is alive.

That's good enough for me,

I'll figure the rest out on my own.

Clutching bibles to our hearts so we can
feel the pulse of religion.

He who is closest to God is closest to sin,
And the trumpets sound for the arrival
of the prodigal son who plots against the saved.

Come back to the light, convince yourself you
aren't running from anything.

Tonight, we are joined intravenously
by the way we move our hips,
what comes out of our lips.

I am scared to death of life.

This is my skin you've been crawling in.

Jacob Fischer

Poem 33

Obtaining fame
After laboring
To spread your
Word
Throughout the land
Privacy is for the obscure
Never to be yours again

Phillip Nichols

Shaking

"Where am I going?"

I pause, mid-step and turn on my heel. I do not recognize this place. Everything seems dark and wounded, lifeless, forgotten. I try to steady myself on the counter, the wall; anything. Surrounding me I find only blankness, only darkness. My feet begin to patter on the soft ground below me - the hard ground below me. Each falling footstep clatters suddenly, startlingly on the stone that lies beneath, then, echoing softly off the environment that encompasses me, fades slowly, unwillingly into the gloom that surrounds.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley..." I trail off; I want to remember the words, need to remember them, but my brain will not recall. It is as though the words themselves have vanished, consumed by the bickering, ravenous void that enfolds my wandering thoughts.

The world has been engulfed by a seamless, hungry abyss: what is this feeling that looms above me; without me? I continue walking, my legs picking their way gingerly through the scarred and dilapidated landscape, as though knowing where they were taking me. My eyes are closed, I realize, but I am afraid to open them. I do not know what horrors await me in the dank pit in which I find myself.

The ground begins to slope steadily upward, and I climb with it. I feel myself, am aware of myself through the all-knowing darkness. My limbs tremble with strain and passion - I cannot remember my name, cannot remember if I am even a man. All that I know is darkness, and all that I feel, all that I am, lies amongst it.

I feel rage, sadness, despair, and then nothing. The void is all consuming. All of my doubts and fears, my hopes and aspirations, all mean nothing before its relentless onslaught. The darkness calls to me and I embrace it.

The air is cold, but not unpleasant. It lies thickly about me with a cloying scent, but is not quite overpowering. I push my way through it as though it were a dense fog: it moves with me, forming around me, encircling me. What senses I had are now gone. I am alone. I am lost. I am one with the darkness.

My legs stop moving. This dull, lifeless world, receding around me, has come to an end. The dull contentment that I had felt in that sordid fog has all passed, replaced by hate, discomfort, fear.

My eyes are shaking. I have come to the edge where reality meets the unreal, the edge of all that is known and unknown; amongst countless horrors and wretched abominations I stand and tremble.

TMSF

Carl Beacker

But you stand alone, five feet high
and always growing.
I look up and
 have to shield my eyes from the sun.

The pillar of strength.
So we march on,
to the beat of your drum.

Chloe Farmer

Melting

A woman steps up to the counter
orders herself a latte - double shot, drip, no foam, extra hot -
thinks of the impending holiday season
and remembers the man cowered over the heating vent
that she had passed by on her way.
"Make that 2," she says to the cashier "and a banana nut muffin, to-go."
Finding her way back through the snow-capped streets, she returns to that same spot and
finds that same man - droplets of snow turned to ice upon his scraggly beard - eyes watering -
not sure if they are there to lubricate the delicate organ
or if they are, in fact, tears that had been shed.
She had always considered herself a woman of strength,
but today...
today she felt weak.
Today she wished there were more that she could do.
To that man, though,
she had done exceedingly more than she may have thought -
far surpassing any expectation that he had envisioned when he awoke with his head resting
upon that same scrap of cardboard that had played the part of his pillow for far too long.
Today she erected a smile across a face that had only known sorrow -
that had only known the sensation of the cold as it slowly, and excruciatingly, numbed him
entirely - a feeling that had started to become his home
because it is better to feel numb, perhaps, than to feel anything at all.
Today he felt something different -
he felt the doors, that he had closed off to the world, begin to push open -
chains and locks, that had been placed with intention upon his heart, rusted and began to
disintegrate -
the ice that had frozen and numbed every ounce of compassion -
melted away.
And, for the first time in a long time,
he did not feel the cold.

Jessica Thompson



Killeen McGovern

Dawn

Sighing,
Dawn again. Looking
Over the edge of the
Railing; teeming
Sea of shattered humanity,
Held together with rivets and bits
of string. "You'll be sorry, you
know." said a voice
from behind
I jump. There can be
No regret in
Oblivion.

Carl Beacker

RIP

Wind chimes
and a flower bed full of
color.
The smell of freshly cut wood
every time I take a breath
and you,
taking in every moment
leaning back
in the chair I steal when you move,
but you don't mind.

Chloe Farmer



Nathan Cass

Living in Isolation

Solitude has its way of exposing humanity showing the best of mankind, but it's a search for oneself the person who is really inside. Alone on an island turns a man into an island discovering the highland of intellect, understanding, inner peace, and peace of mind, nerves relaxed, mind cleared of stress. A sense of confidence, no a sense of competence keeps a person mentally blessed. Is society meant to be remembered in the decision making of one's choice? Who expresses a voice of reason in a chaotic universe with changing seasons in which hate is heavy on the shoulder blades of one? Feeling dislocated from the core brings resolution of the soul or destruction of moral codes. The foundation of economics, poems, words, and sonnets, an alpha male with an alphabet feeling star struck when glaring at the heavens, he staggers and stumbles away from obscurity like a town that has closed down and has been abandoned for years pushing to the generations, becoming a ghost town. A place that's super natural, ghosts eating supper and drinking the blood of the dead from an eternal fountain of understanding as they overstand every concept that's ever been presented to a mind on the verge of insanity, a mind that's been altered by the endless, impossible, search for perfection as if it were a destination a person hung his hat on after working a double shift at a gas station on the dangerous side of the city. Nothing's pretty when one's alone. What to say when one has to keep moving on and away is that life is ambiguous and never long enough, seemingly endless but still never enough to do all one wants. Crumbs from cookies nourish the screaming stomachs of orphans on Christmas day, but millionaires buy the stuff at the store, let it spoil, and throw it away. Paying for vacations or paying for tuition when people make homes in alleys without a real home to live in, makes someone question capitalism, question religion or the idea of freedom, the mind turns in circles with words in a journal spoken through the microphone becoming verbal giving communication new life. Living in a city scatters the personality and creates the fatality of one who is living in isolation.

Philip Nichols

I Was Simpler, Not Life.

For J.G.

I'll begin with this: I have an even amount of freckles on the left side of my face and an odd amount on the right side—oh, and also, I have disgustingly small pinky toe nails—if you don't believe me, come find me after the show...it's kinda messed up. This might sound like completely irrelevant information and that could be best explained by the fact that is completely irrelevant information but I knew you wouldn't listen with more than your ugly, fleshy little ears if I started the way I really wanted to: "When I was a kid."

Because when I was a kid, or more appropriately, the seedling of a man who would one day pretend he wasn't a kid, the sun was a ripe, fat orange and the grass was broccoli, or so my crayon-waxy drawings would tell ya. And as for coloring outside the lines, I wouldn't use coloring books just because they had lines and so the backsides of old permission slips and failed print jobs became my canvases; black and white worlds erupting forth from flat parchment in ant-sized glaciers of scratched-off graphite.

And you can call me a communist but I'm not sure I believe in private property; unless you built Niagara Falls you can't charge admission to it and DC might think it owns Batman they'll have to sue my 6 year-old self for copyright infringement; because my Batman was best friends with Obi-Wan Kenobi and they would defend the fortress of my parent's sofa from the oncoming hordes of beanie babies and toy soldiers, the sound of Nerf gun artillery spelling bloodless foam dart death across glow in the dark stars for all to see.

If life wasn't simpler back then I was, because laundry baskets were big enough to hide in and my parents big enough to believe in—I could rest comfortably on the grass knowing my pants would clean themselves in the magic self-emptying laundry bin. I'd sit through Sunday school but dream of Sunday walks down by the lake, tv-tranced by Canada's oh-so foreign silhouette and watching the orange-baked sun tin-foiling the twilight sea—oh, it would occur to me that there was a God and he was bigger than a book and stronger than regurgitated inkstains masquerading as words that wished they were more than nametags.

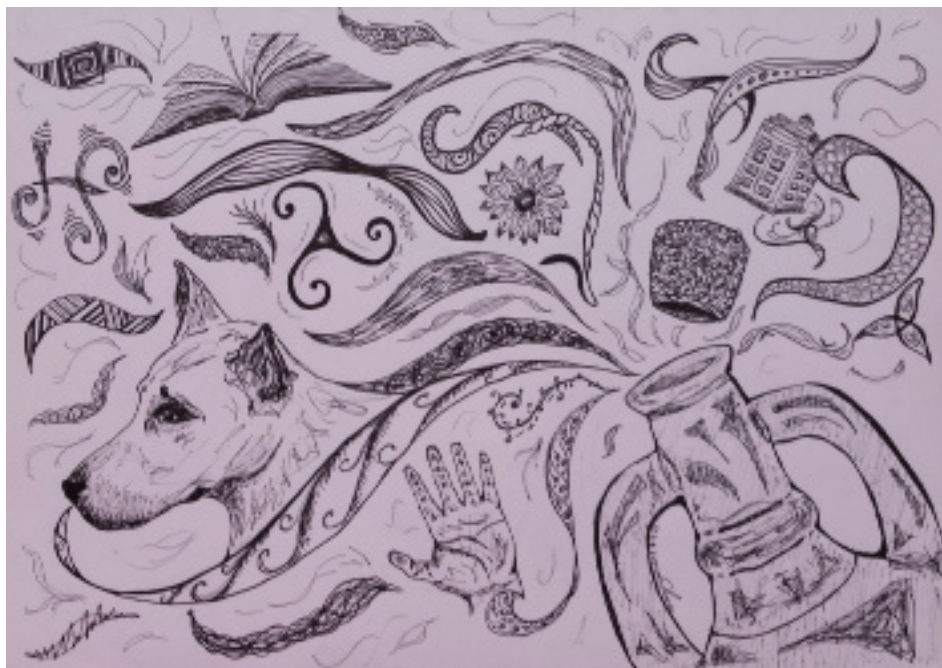
And now, now I am a poor man with only a bag half-full of semi-colons and comparisons as well as the lingering philosophy that life is a metaphor for life and so long as I get to kiss JUST one Asian girl before I die and backstroke in a river of red wine, incubating like a baby chick under a heat lamp, then, well...I'll be just fine because, folks, yesterday was the time, but fret not cuz it's not too late and climb down from the mast cuz there's no land but we are the place, cuz we carry the place in our guts and in our minds , we carry it with every trot of our earthmagnet boots like joyfully lost children picking up trails of breadcrumbs, like airplane contrails stretch-marking across the sherbert sky.

No. No. I guess I'm just that small heap of snow that retains the shape of its window long after it's been hand-cranked down. Just a reminder of what was—an empty packet of artificial sweetener. And speaking of artificial sweeteners, it just so happens the government passed a law that all movies have to end in airports.

So pretend we're in an airport, bodies surrounding you like a McDonald's ball pit but they're hostile and angry and in transit but going nowhere, and you're scared and alone to become one of them to get where you have to go, but you have to go and it's not a choice any more so you let Batman the Father down and plug in your headphones for the price of a boarding pass.

Hey, hey—take solace. The gasoline is going but there's an infinite supply of solace. We've got nothing to stress over and that's the only thing we ever stress over.

Kevin Cooley



*“Uncorked”
Amy Jarrell*

Emily Dickinson

Emily, people may not assume we have much in common; I've lasted nearly 2 years here, ill and away from the love that grew me; you couldn't do that.

You learned from a library your father planted and tended in your childhood home. Stephen King's were the only novels my dad owned.

You hid your masterpieces of spilled ink in desk drawers, you wrote by candle light; I scream my typed words in rooms of people under florescent electricity and weekly force others to inspire me.

Emily, their misunderstanding of who we both are makes them think we're more than just a century apart.

You're called a recluse, and the images painted of you are always a girl in white contemplating the unlikeliness around her, harsh shadows cast by candles, an old wooden desk holding your world together.

That's who I am, Emily, though I prefer swear pants, and I write in bed, hooked together by pen caps and a sticky space bar.

I do have friends when I venture away from my nest in a cave, high above the constructions of experience.

You fought against society to make your own rules – you liked punctuation and sound, but you loved them best your way, after you had broken them into pieces to rebuild into servants of your craft. I have not mastered it yet, Emily, but I'm on my way.

I can feel the breath of your ghost on my face whenever I open my heart to write.

My home is far away from home too, Emily.

Emily Jo Manchester



April 19th, 2014

Dear readers,

Writing is never easy. It is a process involving opening the heart and the mind to allow thoughts, feelings, ideas, hardships, and triumphs to flow onto a page. When you write, you are leaving a part of yourself on a page. That legacy will be remembered both because of what you say and how you say it. We are honored to provide a medium for writers and artists alike to express themselves into something tangible.

When we took over The Laurel two years ago, we honestly had no idea what we were getting into. And now, today, we know that all the hard work and long nights were worth it. We look upon this issue, and all other issues we have been involved with, as a milestone for the success of this publication. What you are seeing in this issue is the work of students telling personal stories through poetry, prose, photography, and artwork. This devotion goes beyond classroom studies, and into forms of personal expression that cannot be duplicated.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Simpson, Chris Hill, and anyone else who helped us for our tenure as editors of The Laurel. As we both begin new chapters in our lives, we will always look forward to picking up the latest issue of this publication, now in its 115th consecutive year of publication. We would also like to congratulate and welcome Carl Beacker as the newest editor of The Laurel. As we move on, so does The Laurel. Thank you once again for continuing to read, write, and create. Never lose that fire.

Thank you, and always keep writing,



Jacob Fischer & Chloe Farmer



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