

The Laurel
Spring 2016

Bona's



A Letter From the Editors:

Welcome to our issue of The Laurel. We are both very excited to bring this publication to you and keep the 115-year tradition thriving. Thank you to the students at St. Bonaventure University who have helped us fill these pages. They are incredibly talented and hardworking. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with them as well as our editing crew.

This year there was a change in leadership with The Laurel. Our beloved advisor, Dr. Richard Simpson retired, and Dr. Daniel Ellis, the chair of the English department, stepped up to fill the role. When we became the editors we wanted to make sure The Laurel remained the high-quality literary magazine it has always been.

Thank you for picking up a copy; thank you for supporting this publication; thank you for keeping this tradition alive.

Love,

Alicia Maldonado '16 and Riley Eike '17

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This semester we would like to dedicate The Laurel to
Deb and Richard Simpson.

Chromaticity

By Zoe Dodd

When I think of you I bleed sapphire
Most days I'm chartreuse with envy or maybe it was the food I ate earlier
I can't remember
I once was indifferent as sunshine
Now I'm more of an orange because
Too often I'm
Crimson
I may have once been indigo
Though I refused to eat Wonka's gum
I do live for charcoal
Because it isn't
Quiet black
To me everything matches silver and I'm the kind of girl where everything has to be perfect

I hope you stay gold

Heavy Breath Still Fall

By Mary Sauter

My Neighbor Her words were cigarette smoke streaming out of the Vatican chimney.

White lace curtains hang like a wedding dress
left at the altar. Morning slips through the doggy door to lick
fresh faces.

She scoops stories like sand to fill small ears with murky fables
"The Boy that Played in Hemlock Lake without His Parents' Permission and Drowned"
"The Girl That Leaned Too Far Back in Her Chair and Was Thus Impaled"

The young souse in her stagnant world like pickling cucumbers palms pressed
against the insides of mason jars, ears curdling

from hot take stories, lungs submerged
in cigarette smoke.

Faded

By Breanna Grayson

It began *highlight delete*. The first was Henry's mother. He was seventeen at the time and she had a history of health problems. Whether or not they were related to Henry's abusive father is unknown to me. That was the first time he lost someone. Afterwards, Henry was sent to me by his brother, Harold, due to the fear he would become mentally unstable.

What struck me was how easily he talked to me. As if still in shock, he told me how he held his mother during her last moments, rocking her back and forth having no idea he was nurturing a soulless body. He rocked back and forth even then, staring at his arms as if she were still there.

Back then, there was nothing to worry about. He still had light in his eyes and a smile that could make anyone else smile as well. There was hope. *highlight delete*. After a few months I didn't feel Henry needed my sessions anymore, and so I sent a smiling, bright young man out to his brother. I smiled as well. A little over a year later, an eighteen-year-old Henry came into my office again after a minor mental breakdown.

Then came the second. Harold had become his father. Henry described his actions to me. I sat tensed in my chair; my stomach in a knot hearing the brutal beatings Harold's girlfriend was victim to. My eyes not failing to miss the dry blood in the corner of Henry's mouth as he talked. Henry began to sob, and I could only get the gist of the event that had taken place. Harold's girlfriend had stabbed him in self-defense, and Henry was left holding his brother trying to stop the bleeding.

I should have done something then. I should have requested he have somebody more experienced take him, but I didn't because *highlight delete*. Henry came to me weekly and slowly began to get better. When Henry improved, he left once again. The smiling young man was quieter, more melancholy. He had a sort of intense aura about him, but I was sure everything would work out for him. He was a tall, intelligent, good-looking young adult now, and I believed the worst was behind him. I watched him go and wished him the best.

It was almost two years later when he showed up to my office again. I didn't know what to expect and immediately began to worry a little. To my surprise, he'd met a woman-Edith. She was an accounting major and three months pregnant. Henry was so excited when he talked about her and how he hoped the child was a girl. He sure didn't look like a man who'd lost his mother, brother and had a mental breakdown. There was such life in his eyes, such promise. It'd be another year before Henry was back again bearing no resemblance to the man I last saw. Then came the third.

He told me while Edith slept peacefully and unknowing a day after giving birth, he held the corpse of his baby girl. I could tell he was holding back. Perhaps wanting to keep himself in check, more for my sake or his I don't know. I unwillingly told him to go on. A wave of emotion came over him, knocking all his defenses down and he broke. He cried with such heartache, such remorse, such sadness. I got up, pretending to make coffee to hide my tears. *pause. deep breath. continue, Amy.*

Apparently, the child was born too prematurely and didn't make it. He tried to keep things going with Edith, but everything fell apart. So, here Henry was once again. I told him to start coming back regularly. He just nodded, his eyes far away. I didn't know what was happening then. I often ask myself would I have been able to do more to stop it? From that moment on I never saw Henry really smile. Some days, I would succeed at a smirk, but I never liked it. It was one of those smirks that never reached the eyes and looked more eerie and suspicious than happy, an empty smile with no hope. Nothing I tried seemed to

help him improve. Here was a man vanishing and me trying desperately to make him whole again. Once something is broken, the pieces never fit again. All that's left is to replace them or leave them where they lay. Now I think he was either too broken or didn't want to be fixed or didn't want to try. I think Henry had had enough.

And so comes the fourth. I kept up a professional facade when I was informed that Henry had jumped out of his ten-story hotel room. I'm not supposed to get attached to one patient in particular. *I shouldn't write about how I cried in my office and neglected my 1:30 session.* All I could think about was how 'MAN JUMPS TO HIS DEATH' doesn't describe Henry in the least. How I failed him. So, I'll set the record straight. He was a young man who faced many terrible life instances most don't. Everybody close to him died *pause...backspace* faded. I truly believe with each person Henry lost, he lost some of himself as well. Those last sessions when he sat in that leather chair and I in the other, looking far away because he was already gone. I didn't lose Henry yesterday, I lost Henry months ago. To me, Henry didn't die- he faded. The body they found lying on the ground was just a shell of a man who once was, along with what he could've been.

Madness

By Caitlyn Morral

I believe that there is an inkling of madness
instilled within the depths of all humans.
Somewhere inside each one of us lies a creature
who follows the white rabbit carrying his pocket
watch into the unknown. We all retain the urge to
lose our minds in an abyss, grasping onto nothing
but our own curious ambitions. With a hunger to
be blatantly foolish, we present ourselves in
different manners that reveal if we are already in
Wonderland or are just beginning to place one wary
foot in front of the other.

That's What "They" Say

Jordyn C. Riethmiller

I often catch myself thinking about relationships. What do they mean? Why do we have them? I'm not just talking about romantic relationships. I'm talking about friendships and relationships we have with our family members too. Do relationships really shape our personalities? At least that's what "they" say. But who are they? They are just people, like the rest of us. They must wonder what all of these relationships really mean.

In college, I think we all experience a lot of temporary people. Temporary relationships with those people, that is. Remember when you were in pre-school, or kindergarten? Those relationships also seem like they were sort of, well, temporary. I've moved away to come to school and those who I grew up with hardly acknowledge me, and quite frankly I hardly acknowledge them. Why did I have those relationships then? Did they mold me into who I am today?

And our parents, I mean for God's sake they raised us from infant to adult, didn't they? What does that relationship mean? I guess we are a product of our environment, right? At least that is what "they" say.

Let's talk about love and love absent, the joy and the pain, the happiness and the sadness, the regret and the contentment, the found and the lost. I mean those relationships have to mean something, right? We have to be molded by those relationships. After all "they" do say that we often learn from mistakes. But, are all romantic relationships that don't work out mistakes? Is it a mistake to be alone, or to have an unsuccessful relationship? Is it a bad thing to walk on your own two feet?

What about when we lose someone, when someone is taken from the earth, and their soul given back to universe, what about that? Does an experience like that mold us? What about our relationship with that person, is it actually over? Is it gone forever? Or, can we keep it within ourselves; somewhere packed away like old pictures or lost letters in the mail?

Are we creatures that are defined by what happens to us, or are we in charge of who we become? Do we have to be twisted and turned and pushed and pulled just to fit a shape? I don't know. Maybe we don't have to be. Maybe it is more important to plant our own gardens, and ornament our own souls. Maybe we should focus on doing that instead of waiting for others to bring us flowers and decorate our hearts.

Tethers

By Ryan Gregory

I torrented the water for my coffee this morning.

Took the hubcaps off an ambulance,
Looking to score some empathy.

I steal glances,
save them for later,
but always forget to feed them.

Two sizes too big—
that tweed jacket.
Ripped it from a car salesman, but
I'm sure he understood.

I see the undergrowth of the world,
always have.

KUMMERSPECK

By Maggie Kovacs

to fill the emptiness
in my heart
to fill the emptiness
of my soul
to avoid that emptiness
in my stomach

when i left you
i thought i would feel
nourished if i
ate your weight
in grief bacon
but it was just
greasy
and unsatisfying
like you

Things my best friend has said to me at some point in time in the course of our relationship

By Brooke Christopher

I wish I had a more reckless childhood.

January 23, 8:05 P.M.

I feel like I missed out on walking up to a girl's door on prom night feeling super awkward and praying to God her dick father didn't answer the door.

January 27, 9:17 P.M.

I want to go into witness protection, and Spain.

February 13, 10:18 P.M.

I want to get a lap dance with genuine affection.

March 20, 10:59 P.M.

Note to future self, when making out with a girl, randomly call her cute.

April 26, 11:32 P.M.

I want to be the best in the world at something.

May 9, 11:41 P.M.

I want to have to choose between two girls.

July 4, 12:00 A.M.

I want life experiences out the wazoo.

July 24, 12:21 A.M.

I haven't really lived.

August 10, 1:20 A.M.

Let's get black out drunk.

September 17, 1:37 A.M.

I want to see a therapist.

September 27, 1:51 A.M.

I haven't been sleeping well the past few nights.

October 4, 2:06 A.M.

When's the last time you cried yourself to sleep?

October 6, 2:38 A.M.

It's been a while since you texted back.

November 2, 3:05 A.M.

Still awake?

December 3, 3:22 A.M.

I miss you, bud.

December 6, 3:46 A.M.

I wish you were here, mon amie.

December 8, 3:52 A.M.

I'm going to disappoint you.

December 9, 4:01 AM

I fucked up.

December 11, 4:06 A.M.

Imaginative Spirit

By Caitlyn Morral

A flicker of the imagination can spark a wildfire among the most creative of minds. An enormous bundle of ideas quickly turn into a mound of tinder within the soul. With a mere drip of fantasy, the soul becomes engulfed with the flames of wonder.

Objectify

By Mary Sauter

Play

He cradles her colossal frame- uses his limbs like a boy. Fondly, he regards her wooden contours, holds her maple neck to his nostrils as if she might still yield pure oxygen. He presses his fingers against her and begins to play “The Cadence of a Woman *De-limbed, Uprooted and Hallowed.*”

Fold

Any billowing woman at the top of a flagpole becomes a damsel in distress once caught by the gallant eye hell-bent on finding something chivalrous to do.

Boys wearing uniforms take her down and /fōld/ reducing length or bulk by doubling over, laying one part over another, clasping or entwining embrace, to bend (as a layer of rock) into folds, to bring to an end.

Bust

Soft breaths once swelled what was shot in the jungle. Now, retouched and stuffed to swell again. The prize is immured in an orange bikini top and mounted on the wall of a car garage to be ogled by men ignorant of the cost of conquest.

Captain Falcon

By Michael O'Malley

1. You are the happiness that I feel when I am stabbed in the aortic artery
2. Because when my life flashes before my eyes I see the citizens of Kevlon-T3 celebrating in the midst of their annual jubilee celebration.
3. I can see the kevlonrats gnawing away at the roots of the barnchem, a xeriere bellowing his gleeful “noonalooona”, my Kevlon Mother’s warmth dancing around me the Jubilee Westegg painted with the milky juyp spices and the intense gush of panic on the tongue of a young Kevlon who has bitten into their first Westegg toe.
4. I heard that same Kevlon lick his woven nuanu methodically in a clamor for more,
5. An embarrassment to Hanlay Kevlon, whose Kevlon Qwapple prided itself on proper ruthlenys.
6. Those who celebrated the jubilee, held once every three years, held Kevlon-T3 in their aortic arteries, and
7. Got politely punctured on the sidewalk of a place in which time does not flow but it is still a place and because it is a place thought flows and thoughts flow in time
8. While a DILF – one doctor that I’d like to fuck – rushes to protect their lives in this place, arriving in the nick of time.
9. Because they had time on their side, a peculiarly empire grandfather clock collapsed on Sandford Fleming’s side, crushing him to existence.
10. “My last words of advice to you are thank you,” the DILF advises their recently-released patients, having saved lives, allowing more time to rescue
11. The condemned donor of lust from their incomplete state.
12. I would like to fuck that doctor upside the head to jumpstart the predispositional wiring of their engine
13. And watch them conjure a bald eagle out of every pore on their skin.
14. Bernard “Birdman Infinity” Ivans has always enjoyed bald eagles.
15. The DILF will have a bald eagle dance into their aortic artery,
16. And dancing pumpkins will taunt the night of their birth, mocking the stars for the simplicity of bright.
17. I will leave no stone unturned in a mission to make sure every rock remembers what my name is.
18. *Je suis un w.*
19. A knife believes in cosmic destiny.
20. Yours has been tainted by me.

Proof
By Riley Eike

If

when the green-brown of your sparkling eyes in the dark is “g,”

the sound of your soft alarm waking you at 3 a.m. to do the homework you pleasantly forgot about the evening before because you were too “busy” holding me, “r”

the times you clean your car in the rain, “a,”

the smell of the freshly brewed coffee slowly staining your travel mug on monotonous Monday mornings,
“t”

how you cheat at all games except winning me, “e”

the way the four empty spaces between my fingers and the one empty space on the side suddenly have purposes, “f”

how you insist on standing between me and “danger” at all times: cars, strangers with beards, puddles, rogue Ping-Pong balls, “u”

you, “l”

then

What is the solution?

What is the solution.

Camouflaged with the Street

By Alicia Maldonado

I wonder if they see me here?
Every day I sit with my sign for all to see.
"Hungry. Need food or money please. I have a child."

I carry this sign where I go.
It's multipurpose, you know.
I use it as an umbrella when it's wet.
I use it for a blanket when it's cold.

So far it has gotten me forty dollars a day.
No tax included.
My sign says I have a child, but it's a lie.
Whatever I got to do for money I'll try.

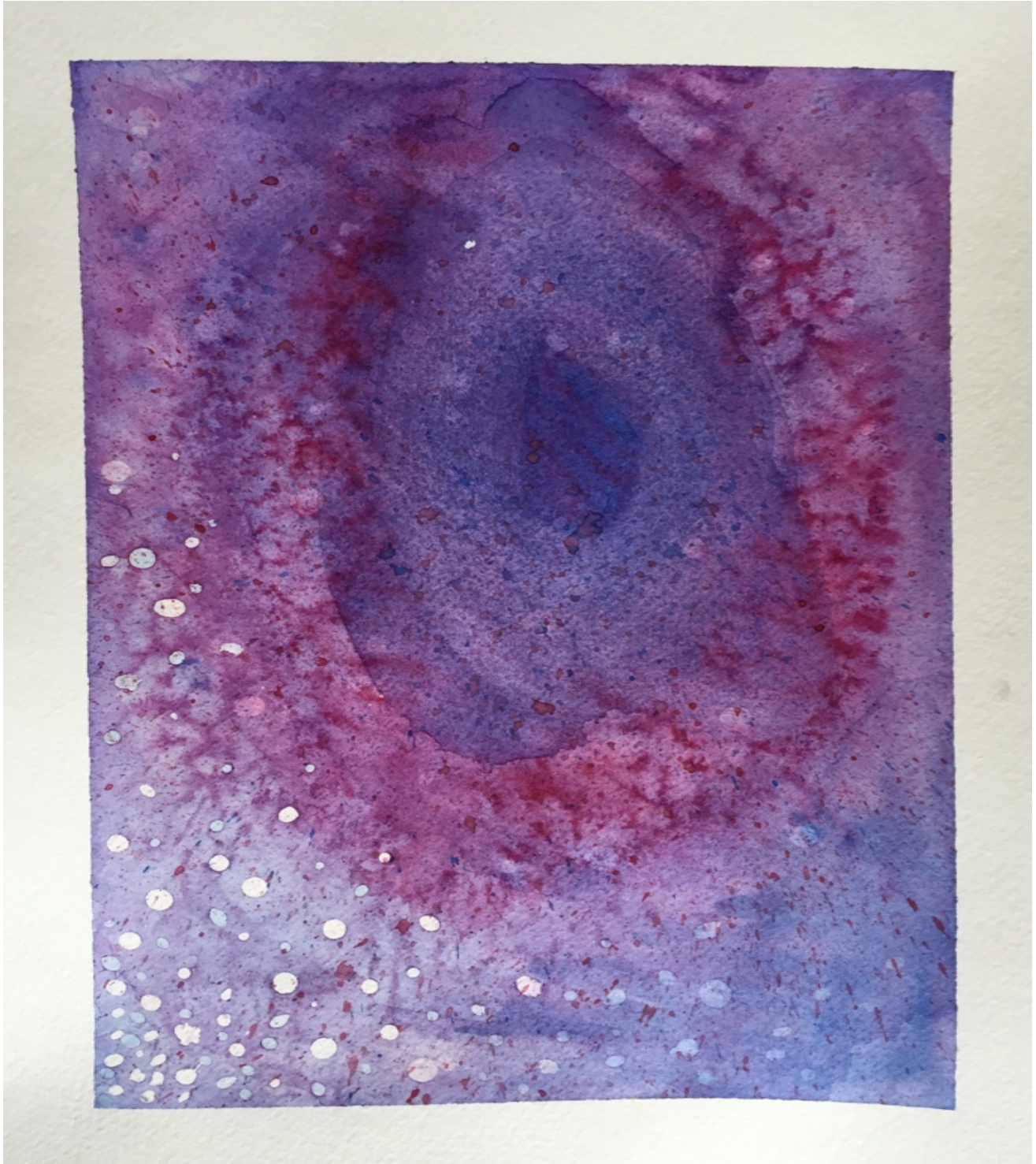
Sleeping out here is not a home.
I have loud neighbors that drink too much.
And old neighbors that are always sleeping.

The street is not friendly when it's your bed and bathtub.
People are not friendly when they think I shoot up.
Truth is my mother kicked me out when I was young

Now my mother is this old shopping cart.
It carries me.
Like she use too.

I suppose I'm one with the street now.
Or if I'm just a normality.
But I stay outside waiting

Galaxy
By Maggie Kovacs



Little Mac

By Michael O'Malley

Hey man, you got some sick beats there.

Turn them on and listen to some sicker beats on this mix tape

from an artist serving time in prison

for being a sick man who beats

cows up.

Sic Beats, your dog, on

Sicc Beatz, the alias that scrawny white kid George

uses when he raps, because he's

trying to steal your sick beats and

if you scare him by siccing Beats the

sickly beats of his heart will pause.

Man, we need to go grocery shopping –

Do you think there could be sick beats or

depressed apples that called-in-sick parents use

to beat unhealthy diets out of a kid sick with the flu

beating his friends in middle school video games

and beating something else

when mom isn't around?

Using your sick beats to blast

through the streets the sick af beats

of a two-note tempo and the word

“kadrizzle”

attracted the attention of a

cop's sick fancies on his nightly beat, who

pulls us over and delivers a sickening

Hey man, check out the sick beats I just dropped!

The Madness of the Void

By Justin Peterson

“But as the gate swung wider and the sorcery of drug and dream pushed me through, I knew that all sights and glories were at an end; for in that new realm was neither land nor sea, but only the white void of unpeopled and illimitable space. So, happier than I had ever dared hoped to be, I dissolved again into that native infinity of crystal oblivion from which the daemon Life had called me for one brief and desolate hour.”

--H.P. Lovecraft, *Ex Oblivione*

The man with no name walked silently across the desert.

In front of him was the Abode, where the magic of the old world that died in modernity had risen from the ashes of this new hell humanity found itself in. The nameless man found the place after walking south for one day. He thought about his prize, about the power he felt when that god in the sky gave him that tiny taste, and how close he was to getting it. He didn't forsake his race for nothing. He remembered his mission, he remembered his reward.

So in the darkness he crept, betwixt the mud huts that the crones who lived there called home, searching for the glyphs that kept his masters away with an unseen force. Their cackling in the night gave him goose bumps.

The Blood Moon shined a red glow over the small village, and the man could almost feel the gods looking at him from their home on the moon, where it is said they have built grand palaces for themselves. They turned the bright light in the sky into a symbol of their power.

“Too bad there are only a handful of us left to appreciate it,” the man muttered to himself.

Kneeling next to a hut, the man took his rifle out of its sling on his back and looked through the scope towards a fire in the distance. Twelve crones danced naked around the flames, each covered in a thick coat of dripping blood. They cackled, and even at the large distance the man could hear the ugly sound, enhanced by their magic. He moved his scope to the outskirts of the fire, where three men stood watching the women, expressionless. One held a small, squirming object. The object they told him to find.

He eventually approached the fire where the crones continued to laugh and dance, directly opposite the stoic men. They looked at him with no surprise.

“Servant of the gods, we have expected you.” The tall man holding the object addressed him in a flat voice, sounding almost bored. The women continued to dance as if nothing was happening, but the nameless man noticed their cackling had stopped.

“Then you should know why I have come,” the man with no name replied. “Hand it over.”

The man shook his head, a sad smile cracking his stone face. “You are the one who worships them, are you not? Running errands for them, are we?” He spit on the ground in front of him. “You are a disgrace to mankind.”

The nameless man feels no shame at the words, shrugging. “We all did what we had to do to survive, mage. When the sky ripped open and godly creatures poured out everything changed. I’m just adapting to that change.”

The mage shakes his head sadly. “You wish to become one of them, a veritable god in the eyes of humanity. You cannot be. All men are mortal; you cannot ascend to the Blood Moon like they do.”

“You do not know what I am capable of. I have the love of the gods, and what do you have?” The nameless man spreads his arms, looking at the desolation around them, “Mankind has already perished, and so shall you.”

“We seek to save what is left of our race. You seek to destroy it. Your masters want us to die, for this place where they cannot enter to cease to exist. So they send their lackey. But we now have the upper hand...” He holds up the child so the light of the fire shines on it.

The child has the head of a normal human baby, but below it is a sickening mass of tentacles oozing a purple...substance. Small wings are folded into its back. The child’s eyes are glaring red with obsidian pupils. On its forehead sits a third golden eye. All three eyes stare at the nameless man with a thousand years of wisdom, not the innocence of a newborn baby, because it has none. This creature could crumble worlds; bring its own kind, those gods on the moon, to ash.

The nameless man trembles under its stare, those familiar tendrils of madness reaching for his sanity strong under the gaze. But then he begins to laugh.

It’s quiet at first, but grows quickly in his chest until it becomes a great booming thing. Even the crones around the fire stop dancing at the intensity of it. He stops suddenly, and hisses, “I bow to them because they are what brought humanity to its knees, and because I do this, I will survive. I will evolve. I will become them. They will eviscerate you.”

The mage shakes his head. “You do not understand. They have no power here. Our glyphs protect us even now, preventing your masters from entering this land.” He then smiles, thinking he has won.

But the child in his arms looks across the fire to the nameless man and smiles. The man holding it does not know his protection is gone.

The gods descend and chaos is unleashed.

If there is any sort of beauty within chaos, there was none that night under the red glare of the Blood Moon when the parents of that twisted child finally arrived at the Abode. The two men not holding the baby were engulfed in seconds, blood gushing out of the endless rows of sharp teeth within the creatures. The crones go mad at the sight of them, most jumping into the fire, some tearing their eyes out.

The gods cared little about the crones; they pose no threat, but lopped off the head of the child's mother with a whip of a tentacle. The three descended gods hang over the remaining mage who holds the child, floating weightlessly. They each wrap tentacles around each appendage, letting the baby drop. It lands on two slender feet. The gods then pull, and the nameless man looks away but can't escape the sound of the mage's limbs popping out. Blood soaks the dust like a waterfall. The mage moans and tries to move, but cannot.

The man with no name walks over and slits his throat. Nobody deserves to suffer like that. He then turns to the hanging monstrosities and their hybrid child, kneeling.

The child looks at him, and then decides to speak. *Thank you, servant. What you so desire shall be yours...should your body accept the gift, you will leave humanity behind.* Her voice is soft, soothing in the man's mind. *I will show you the precipice of the void. I will show you what it is like to have the wisdom and power of what you would call...a god.*

The child reaches a small tentacle up to the nameless man's face, pulling it towards her powerful eyes, and kisses his cheek. The man gasps, falling backwards into the bloody dust. His skin tingles as each bodily sensation comes to life, and with a scream suddenly he knows all that is and ever was. He sees the void that swallowed his planet and its vast cosmic depth, he sees godly palaces on the Blood Moon, he sees what is left of humanity on the decrepit corpse of what was once Earth...he knows all.

It's too much.

The thoughts overwhelm him, and his body starts to seize, eyes rolling to the back of his skull. He cannot comprehend all that the child has given him, and as he reaches up towards the beings he worships helplessly, his mind crumbles and he is no longer a man.

The little child shakes her head, disgusted, as she is wrapped up by one of the floating godlings, and one by one they leave their tool on the crust of the world, rising to their grand lunar palaces. And so they leave humanity to peter out, one light in a universe of trillions to be snuffed out for good, one of the last remaining members a broken shell of a man who forgot his name long ago.

Emily

By Chernice Miller

Prompt: Go out and observe someone. What do you notice?

A Girl, Emily (age 4 or 5)

Her eyes did not gradually allow the emotion to overcome them. Faster than I could blink, they were overcome with sadness. Abruptly, her world shattered. The freckles that litter her cheeks were now coated with tears that ran delicately across her puffed mounds of flesh.

She landed on the heated concrete of this glorious summer's day, but where did she go?

That plucky young girl with the dazzling smile, and eyes that shined brightly with optimism; those eyes that flirted with the idea of playing on the monkey bars. The other children, my nephew included, ran past her.

How could she ignore the soft twinkling melody of the ice cream truck? Life passes her, and she paid no heed. The windows to her soul, shaped the world around her, from the humid surroundings of New York's Botanical Garden to the grave loneliness of her that stirred from her bruised knee.

Looking up searching for a witness, our eyes meet briefly, and she smiles. I raised an eyebrow and smirk back sitting on a laugh. She picks herself up and smiles triumphantly as if letting me know she's ok.

New York City wasn't as unfriendly as the people say. Every building has a story and every bridge a name, but in all the cacophony in the concrete jungle there were ripples. Waves formed by cordial eye contact and small smiles were the tremors of risqué trust.

There will forever be utterances of hellos and goodbyes that mean nothing short of what they are, but these strange glances are what bind this lonely city.

"Emily, it's time to go home!" The tall brunette a few feet away, near the swings with two other kids yells. Emily looks over to the woman as she waves hurrying her.

Bruised knee forgotten, like a warrior called from the frontline, she skips over to her mother. I remember how resilient children are forgetting my thrumming heart beat when she'd first taken to the ground.

Emily moved from my line of vision, excited once again, yet I still stared at the empty space that her mother called her from. Our moment is gone now and the raucous laughter of the park filled my ears once more.

Now, where was my own little soldier?

Restless Vessel

By Caitlyn Morral

My mind is a relentless vessel, searching for a solid
ground to maintain its fragile balance. But where will it
rest when the winds are so strong and the waves are
white with peaks? Always a raging storm, never ending,
forever relentless.

Thumbtacks

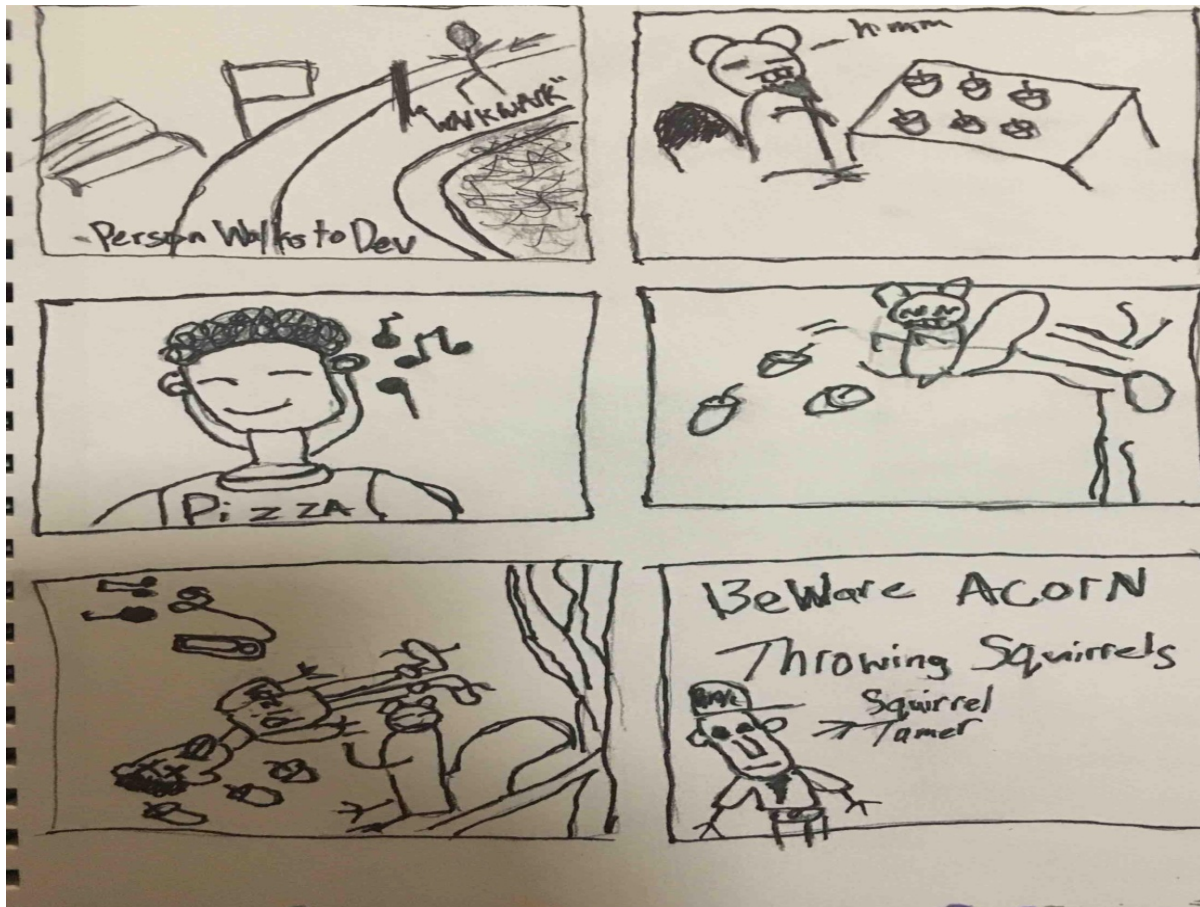
By Kirk Windus

He liked to Gorilla Glue park benches. He loved a good, innocent struggle, and Spam sandwiches and scotch and sodas. He loved movie soundtracks but hated movies. Everyone wrote him off as compulsive, strange. The cops even laughed at him, would stake out for lunch. Have a good laugh. I liked to chat with him. “How long you been out here today, Rubio?”

He’d shrug and mumble, “gotta find your bliss!,” picking flowers without looking up.

But adhesive can only provide so much entertainment. Thumbtacks, he thought would be his new adventure. “Sharp and romantic,” he told me, “but harmless.” I advised him otherwise. Gorilla Glue’s stock was going to drop, and he shouldn’t maim the natural business cycle. But I admit I had some hardy laughs watching the shrieks from afar. I even missed the entertainment and prepared a picnic. I brewed a thermos of citrus tea; brought a can of sardines and a bottle of spicy mustard with a flask of St. Germain. The headline flashed across the morning news, *Three die of tetanus. Crazy assailant in custody.* They showed Rubio being dragged from his bench, dandelions in hand.

Squirrels
By Tristan King



My Dear Karma

By Riley Eike

"I love you," she said, pants ablaze.

She didn't need x-ray vision to destroy my sleeve of hearts.

Nice guys don't finish on top up against elephants in the room.

I hate to say the cheap date bit off more than she could body slam.

Take it from me, Karma wasn't built with the brightest crayons.

Just wait, she can kiss my greener grass.

This new dog should try old tricks, or abandon the ship up the creek with plenty of fish.

The jury is in, life's not a bitch, she is.

Fingers crossed Karma doesn't also come shit on you in the woods moonlighting as a bear.

O Body Swayed to Music

By Daniel Leopold

How beautiful! How magnificent! How radiant!

Her heart leapt at the sight of those newspaper headlines. Her palms lovingly coursed over the ink bumps on the coveted pages. Her eyes passed over a few quotes from the articles:

“A technical tour de force performer”

She was hailed as a meteoric talent, an unforgettable performer, a prolific dancer. How can anyone forget so much praise? It was all too impossible to ignore.

“The soul of the show”

The roses, the applause, the flashing cameras, the praise. Everything was impossible to ignore.

“A star racing to its zenith”

...

It was no time for reveries, though, she decided. She put the newspapers into protective sleeves, slipped the plastic pages back into their album, and put the album on a sparse shelf next to a cheap cookbook. In only two hours she would make her grand return to the concert hall. It was only two years ago that she had bowed to her last applause, but the time felt immeasurable to her.

But none of that mattered come tonight. Tonight, she would sit in front of the stage where she became so many characters the plotting Swanhilde, the innocent Cinderella, the desirable Nikiya. She imagined journalists capturing this poetic moment, and speculated that the hall might even offer her a job as part of a production team. She thought she might even cry.

To make sure to live up to those gushing headlines, she had donned her favorite dress, a resplendent, midnight blue low-cut gown she wore after every opening night to celebrate with the other dancers. She noticed it was a little too tight, but decided to wear it as a badge of sentimentality.

Her heart was pounding from the moment she got into her car. She clenched onto the ticket she bought five months in advance in one hand and opened the driver-side door with the other. As she rode to the hall, she imagined collecting an enormous bouquet of flowers, or warmly embracing the dancers after their performance, or maybe even receiving a large honorary plaque. The excitement was matched by the speed of the car. Her heart beat even faster, causing her to smile a genuine smile.

As the rain crashed down hard against the damaged curb, her high-heeled foot met the bitter pavement, splashing cold street-water up in the air. Her body folded to avoid the roof of the car while she pushed an umbrella through the open door. She handed her keys to a valet without looking at him, how could she with all this excitement?

There, in front of her, stood the grand and beautiful building, with its ornamented walls and immense spires. Her heart leapt again.

People were rushing through the entrance with an intense anxiousness. It was the opening night of *Swan Lake*, the ballet she remembered dancing in when she was still a star. Her hands could not stop shaking with anticipation.

She walked like a celebrity toward the entrance, making sure to savor every moment and give the flashing cameras time to take her picture. She noticed a few men with cameras rushing obnoxiously into the large throng, running right past her. A little dejected but still determined, she continued to waltz her way to the lobby.

Wandering alone through the atrium, she kept posing and reapplying her makeup, waiting for anyone to recognize her. She spent 10 minutes primping and priming to make sure she looked as beautiful as possible in case any of her admirers came up to her. People were mingling and sauntering around her and discussing the show. She kept walking back and forth, determined to attract anyone. The more she tried, the more people started leaving the atrium and finding their seats. Eventually, she was one of only a dozen left. With a sigh, she found her way into the theatre.

She had never realized how uncomfortable the foldout chairs in the hall were. The lighting didn't reach her back-row seat, and she was too far from the stage to make out the props displayed on stage. The waiting agonized her as she impatiently fidgeted about in her cramped seat.

The houselights went dim without warning. An intense beam of light like a line from heaven to earth crashed against the stage. A vibrant backdrop of stars and suns and moons reflected the camera flashes in the audience. A prince emerged and the ballet began.

She closed her eyes, moving her out-of-shape body to the rhythm of the pit orchestra. She was dancing now, on the spectacular line of light from her seat to the stage, from earth to heaven. She was now in front of the backdrop as a star headed upward. A single lift of her hand and she was racing, rushing at unbreakable speeds up and up and up. Her heart was thrashing but her hands remained steady, in good form. On the celestial line she could see the zenith.

...

The rest of the show was a blur of spotlights and runny makeup. She had never heard so much fervent applause before. The people next to her gazed bright-eyed at the dancers as they took their bows. It was the best performance of *Swan Lake* imaginable.

The crowd clapped, praised, cheered, and then spilled into the atrium with the same anxiousness.

No one noticed her waiting in her seat as everyone left. The lights thumped off. The beautiful backdrop of heavenly objects gave off an ethereal, wan glow that just barely reached her face. Slowly, the backdrop lifted up, and the light inched to the top of her head until the bottom of the arch swallowed it up. Darkness rolled through the hall. The stars had finally reached their zenith.

A Hard Man is Solid as a Rock

By Brooke Christopher

I'd like you to say hello to my little friend,
an everyman Jack of all trades,
who doesn't know Jack from Crisco,
and really knows how to work the room like a dog.
He's a man of few words, and he'll take them right out of your mouth
to shoot it off blind drunk and be king of the world.
He's not a lender nor a borrower, because
it's better to beg than borrow.
It must run in the blood to be faster than a speeding bullet, but
he can't run with em so he'll just eat a lemon.
He's high as a stone and full of fool's gold,
so do me a favor and curb your horses,
and circle the Saturday night special,
cause this guy cut the cheese to spite his face,
and he'd cut off his right arm to have a finger in every pie.

Death Trap

By Lauren Zazzara

Lucy sat on the edge of the couch, staring out the window to her right. Melting snow dripped off the roof like rain. But the sun was gleaming outside, glinting off of the mud-stained snow in random splotches on the lawn. She watched her dog running along the perimeter of the fence, yapping at squirrels. She suddenly felt very guilty. He knew nothing beyond the world in which he was trapped.

Lucy was trapped by death. Her husband had passed away three months ago. Her best friend had died a few days after. Even her cat had kicked the bucket about a week ago. At 86 and with her bones weakening steadily, she knew that her time was soon. But she knew she couldn't die until she took care of her unfinished business.

The heater had broken two days ago, so the house had a draft. Lucy draped a blanket from the back of the couch over her shoulders. The colors of the yarn had faded, since her mother had made the blanket over 60 years ago. As she buried her face in the stitching, she swore she could smell her mother's hairspray.

When Lucy was 30, her mother had gotten very sick. She had been lying on the couch in a bundle of blankets, her gaunt lips barely sipping at the soup on the spoon that Lucy was holding.

"Lucy, you're so smart." Her sigh sounded strangled. "Ever since you were young, I knew it. There was nothing you didn't notice. Always asking questions. You are wasting precious time being here."

"Don't talk like that, mom."

"You have to promise me something. I won't be in peace until I know that you will do it."

"I'll do anything mom."

"Promise that you won't waste your intelligence. You've always been a good writer. Write a book."

Lucy looked over at her writing desk, which she had moved from her room to the corner of the living room to be closer to her mother. Papers strewn across the wood showed Lucy's typewriter's inky sentences composing a short story she was working on.

At the moment it hadn't seemed like a hard promise to keep. She had been writing all her life, and hopefully she would have a long time ahead of her. A book was bound to happen, right?

"Of course mom."

And, at peace, her mother had died later that evening.

Now, Lucy looked at the feeble sunlight through the window glinting off of her wedding ring. She remembered how the man who would become her husband had invited her to a night of dancing and stargazing after about a month of flirtation while Lucy was working as a secretary at the publishing company where he worked. That night, she had seen the same glint from her ring today in the starlight dancing off his eyes.

After decades of hard work, when they retired, they traveled together across the States, always staying busy, always finding new things to see. Lucy thought of how she had told him every time she wanted to go somewhere new, "We're not getting any younger. Let's go."

But in the back of her mind, she knew that she was just desperate to escape the unfulfilled promise. She had no idea what to write about. Nothing she could say would be worthy of fulfilling her mother's dying wish. The mother that had worked three jobs at one point to keep her in private school when her father had walked out; the mother that had dinner and a kiss ready for Lucy every night when she came home from school; the mother that she used to hear crying at night when she thought no one was listening.

No sound of grandchildren's laughter kept Lucy busy. No children to call her up every now and then. She had no excuse. Her days were spent sitting on the same spot on the couch; it was beginning to develop an indentation that formed to her seat. She watched her dog as a distraction but she ended up feeling more guilt that she had made him her prisoner.

She wrapped the blanket more tightly about her as a strong wind blew, and she helplessly ruminated on the desperation in her mother's eyes as she asked her to make that promise.

So she quickly grabbed some paper and opened a new fountain pen that she had bought a few days ago, hoping it would give her some inspiration.

She sat down at her desk, heart pounding with anxiety from the pressure. But the tight grip with which she was holding her pen sent her hand into an arthritic fit. She melted in relief as she took it as a sign that now was not the time and went back to her spot on the couch.

Her dog was trying to dig a hole under the fence.

Thoughts while walking home

By Maggie Kovacs

thrifted jeans
white wisps of denim
catching on
the concrete
catching on
to what
humor told me
it's not
funny
laughing is a
personal activity
i am not
a sensory
being

Gardening Guide for Dummies

By Kirk Windus

I plant roses on her. I read gardening books and ejaculate prematurely. Lines of Hollyhock and Marigold wilt under the window. The vegetable garden thrives. I plan a marvelous dinner of fried zucchini and okra, a bean salad and roasted eggplant with mayonnaise. I fancy myself not only a renaissance agriculturist, but also one hell of a vegetable chef. "Can't you get me a towel already? Dab. Don't wipe. Don't want to have a sticky back all night."

I'm pulling pods from their vines when a sparrow lands on the fence. It's a lovely day, so I ignore my ornithophobia when he speaks. "You know she hates vegetables right? She used to pick the tomatoes off her sandwiches. And you need to ditch those gloves and sunhat."

"Ah, but you're just a bird. You know nothing of the depths of our love."

"Suit yourself. But name one time you've read about a talking animal whose wisdom failed." My love napped on the porch, laid out naked on a towel.

I set out the meal and lit candles for ambiance. "Dinner is served, my love!" I called. She sometimes passes out before dinner after drinking too many afternoon brandys. I found a note on our bed that read, "Went out for a steak. Don't call. And delete all of the softcore porn from the DVR. By the way, you look like a pansy in that hat. Dries me up like a raisin."

Do You Smell That?

By Maggie Kovacs



The Dark

By Jordyn C. Riethmiller

Chapter One:

I never wanted anyone to follow me into the dark. Quite honestly, I didn't have a choice in my destination, and I hadn't a clue of what I was in for until I got there. I sort of thought that there would be others to share the path with, but the journey was quite lonely, and I remember hoping that someone would be there to share the dark with me when I finally reached the structure.

The house was cold, and I questioned if they would ever turn the lights on for me, or even light a candle. I sat on the floor and it was the most uncomfortable thing that I had ever tried to dwell upon. I asked myself how long I would have to sit there, and I was genuinely worried that it would be forever; however, as a few hours passed, my bottom went numb, and well, I was just sitting there.

My eyes were open, but they felt like they were closed, and soon I had forgotten that the world outside existed. I drifted into a dream like state that I just couldn't get out of. I've never questioned life on a constant basis, but for those hours, days, months, years in that cold, dark, and scary house; I questioned it always. Was this my reality? Where was everyone else? Why didn't someone meet me at the door when I arrived? Then, I realized I was actually alone.

For many days I thought about exploring the house. Even though it was so dark and heavy in there, I would sometimes think that maybe I would find someone or something that would just help me get some light shining through. Specifically, I remember searching for blinds in the small room I occupied in hopes of finding some shades I could open up for a while until the sun went down. That's exactly the suspicious part though, I never knew when the sun was up, and I actually started to believe that it had just, well, disappeared.

After a while I don't remember having thoughts, I just knew I had to exist there and something was telling me maybe that was okay, but then again maybe it wasn't. At one point I tried to remember the name of the roads I had driven that lead to the path I took that brought me here, but for some reason I couldn't recollect, and I thought maybe if I had taken a different turn, I wouldn't have ended up in a such a situation.

I thought through hours, days, or maybe months that I had been there that I had learned and adjusted to the dark. I thought it was as dark as it could be in the house, but then sometimes it seemed even darker, and the more I tried to open my eyes, the more glued shut they felt. Sometimes I hoped I was dreaming, but rationally I wasn't. I then realized this room of dark, cold, heaviness was my new reality and quite certainly, my new home.

Since the dark tells no secrets, I have no idea how long I was at the house before I heard a knocking at the door. I tried to remember how I got into the house initially, and I searched for the main foyer for what felt like hours. When I finally reached the front door, I stumbled over myself and my hands fumbled to find the doorknob. I opened the door only to greet the dark of night and a strange figure standing in front of me. When I asked the man to speak his name he simply said, "I am help, but I am only allowed to enter if you grant me permission." Help? I then wondered what kind of help he had to offer, but quite honestly, I didn't care, I just knew I was lonely, and I wanted some answers as to why I was being held prisoner in this house.

I invited the man in, and though he never told me his name, he did the unthinkable and lit a small lantern. I hadn't seen light in days, months, years, who knows? When my eyes adjusted to the slight illumination,

I looked down and noticed that my feet were covered in dirt and the rest of my skin looked like it hadn't been bathed in decades. I apologized to the man for my appearance and he simply replied, "Don't be so hard on yourself, let's sit." I led him to the room I had been staying in, and though it took me well over fifteen minutes to find it, as soon as we reached the room we both sat on the cold concrete floor, and he began to speak. "I am here to help you escape the dark, I am here to answer questions, and I am here to assign you some necessary tasks."

Immediately I asked the man why I was lead to the house. I asked him how I got here, as I could not remember, and I asked him why I could not leave. He replied, "The path that led you here was not accidental and it was unavoidable, you walked toward the direction of this structure for many years, and you may leave as you wish, but you have not, why?" I was stumped. I was confused and devastated, and I was even more afraid than I had been before he arrived.

Why hadn't I gone to find that front door seconds after my arrival? Why had I stayed here for hours, days, weeks, months, years, who knows? For some reason, I was not compelled to leave the house and even after the man suggested that I could leave, I still felt no want to journey to the foyer and out the front door.

The man continued to speak. "Today, you won't choose to leave here with me, you will stay upon your own choice, and I will assign you your tasks." I cannot explain how or why he was accurate in saying I would not leave. It was as if my feet had been nailed to the ground; I was home here in dark. "Each room in this dark, cold, and empty house is filthy, it is your job to clean each room, and after the cleaning of the rooms, one by one, a friend will arrive and make the rooms their own, but they will not stay." He blew out the lantern patted my back and as my eyes adjusted once again to dark, he shut the front door, entered his vehicle, and I was alone again.

I don't know how long the man had been gone before I started to wonder just how I would clean these rooms in such blackness. My new task was on my mind for quite a while, it actually started to eat away at my mind, it drove me crazy, and then it happened; I finally fell asleep.

Reader I forgot to mention I hadn't slept since I entered the house, until that moment. I could not bring myself to exhaustion for the life of me, and I wonder how long I stayed awake. Could it have been months, weeks, or hours? My mind never seemed straight enough to keep track of time let alone anything else. Aside from that, I couldn't remember anything. Who had I talked to before I made the journey here? What had I done beforehand? Did I say goodbye to my closest friends, or did I just leave unannounced?

When I woke from sleeping, I was confused and I wondered if I could just drift back into it. I sat there for quite some time, and I began to weep as I caught myself wishing I could fall back to sleep and remain there only to never wake up. I felt the wetness of my tears as one had fallen and splashed onto my soiled leg. I was overwhelmed with that simple feeling as I realized it had been first time I felt anything in days, months, years, who knows?

I began to look around and still, all that surrounded me was darkness. I started to panic and in that moment I began to plan my escape. Instead of my usual goose bumps from the cold and the never-ending numbness of my bottom, I felt threatened. This overpowering shock came over me and I wanted to run. I started toward the foyer and raced for the front door; however, when I reached the doorknob, it was jammed. I couldn't get it open. I tried for what seemed like hours and it just wouldn't budge. I then began to search the house for an alternate exit and it just wasn't there. My head was spinning and my stomach was in knots. I fell to my knees, I gasped for air, and the next thing I knew, there it was again: sleep.

Sunflower
By Ellen Kibbe



The Coup de Grâce of Fame

By Chernice Miller

I take the deaths of people whom I've never met harder than those I've known for years. Would dying on tour be any different to my fans?

I hate touring-but being on the road, watching the racing asphalt-I love this.

Going to sleep to the cold New York nights and waking up to hot Californian days. Racing the globe was for oldies with old money and rock stars. Being twenty-seven I could only be one. What musicians do on the road was far from the elegant cabanas in Boca; sleepy days, half-baked musical rehearsals, and rager nights. Long days left me eager for a bullet.

The record label is always calling, and all I hear is white noise; thick and staticky with complaints and lectures. My charming acquiescence promises them I'll do better.

But I don't. I'm still waiting for the other shoe to drop, but I placate their nerves with longer hours. The paranoia keeps me up.

I excuse the ghosts of performing days past because sleep is for the dead. My drummer, my bassist, and my lover all apparitions who lurk in the space between my ears when there's nothing to fill the gap, so I just don't sleep.

Always awake, always ready to put on a show—my life was a performance. Every move I make made someone, everyone, a cheap buck.

The scandals, the flashing lights, the prying questions were a nuisance, but what celeb didn't feel that way?

The cost of fame and all that, right?

I want to join the musician hall of fame—glorious players missed forever. Those unafraid of their darkness that found light by way of a bullet to the membrane, death by drunkenness, or on the floor of the Viper Room.

Whatever it will be, will be—but—it has to be seedy and romantic... or glamorous.

I could draw myself a tub of water, dress myself real nice-decked out in expensive fabric that reek like those of old money, lower myself into my glittered bubble bath, and slit my wrist. Classic, but fabulous—and on the tile above my well-dressed corpse will be my epitaph. Beyond the flashiness of my end will be the words that are a path to my true heart, an honest narration of who I was.

I'm tired.

Saying Goodbye

By Alicia Maldonado

We had a good run.
You and I
But now you're buried deep
Deep into the overstuffed filing cabinets in my mind
Sadly
It is only staffed by two lazy molecules
They could never get there shit together

Remember when we spoke viciously on the phone
You said my voice was sexy
You said it flooded your body
And made some interesting parts rise
At least I knew I could make your body come to life

Sexting was our hobby remember
How our fingers intercoursed through buttons
And intimacy was "I'll throw you on your bed
Then slowly take your clothes off"

God
How you made sure to spell mhmm
So I knew you were feeling high

We were different back then
I didn't respect myself
You were tough

You survived on fucking your girlfriend
Then using those buttons on your phone to fuck me
Your rules were final
My aroused body was not to be touched by you

But I said goodbye

I threw in my keyboard.

How to Leave
By Mary Sauter

Shuck your summer clothes and stand naked like stained glass- one last glance
at the evergreen. Slip, shivering, into an already wet bathing suit and one last pool of dark dye.

Eternity nibbles at the edges of minds, encompassing entire personal realities; so let
the condemning colors of your own finiteness flood the body. Before drowning,

spin like a Maple seedpod and find relief in
leaving.

A Drink in One Hand and You in the Other
By Brooke Christopher

Parties to me are narcotic. I dance with Johnny Walker and melt into the crowd, sew myself shut. Jack Daniels invites himself into my mouth, and I swallow him down past his cologne. He introduces me to this guy named Jim Beam, at 5233 Grove Street Gibsonia, Pennsylvania. Jim's skin was soft. He is a good guy because man was able to land on the moon. I watch him throw back a few with Jose Cuervo. They're blasting Mozart over the speakers. Brookiekins just wants to go home. I think I'm Artois but I'm stellard. I can taste the way he smells, choking me out. Jim isn't a good guy. Outside with the damp streetlights, I find myself. I can't find my cell phone. Da kannst du Gift drauf nehmen. The rain outside is dry as it falls on my face. Jack will find me lying on the concrete and carry me home. He tells me I'm beautiful, kisses me goodnight. I rewrite history in bed with a blue fountain pen. And all I can wonder is,
when am I going to get another hit?

Tentative Glass

By Ellen Kibbe

Disenchanted when the grotesque takes over.
Sanity left cowering
on the doorstep of a soul
locked against reality and tomorrow's canvas.

Inventions of a troubled mind are only on sale for
the creator.
Others can't see the fault in the first blueprint,
but she could.

Sifting through the remains
of the pre-programmed eyes she tape-recorded
but never wanted to play back.

Marketing cannot thrive on the appraisal of just
one,
but where's the praise-
the jeers-
the fun-
that idly she promised to find.

Murder unattainable ideals
and parasail
on the fluttering

beat of the recollection
of a smile
that hasn't visited in a long time.

The present isn't all that appealing
when it's savagely shredded without any
consideration paid
to the fragileness of the future
that was overlooked.

The shadow of a lost personality
is all that is left
to take the reflection of a stranger
and find the old self

in the Mirror.

Mother

By Brianna Wilson

Bark molded over
Inching near the indent

Large round trunk
Still and sturdy

Branches extended
Small twigs stronghold

Newly green leaves
Perched with golden tones

Doves come to visit
In nests, laying

On every tree was written
On every tree, her name

You will catch the music of what I am trying to convey

By Caty Lee

I'm journeying back to my inviting one-bedroom apartment after a stimulating experience at my favorite Mexican grill, Chipotle. I decided that today would be the perfect time to unleash my favorite pair of trousers, and I ever so foolishly managed to stain them with chili de arbol. I'm consequently low in spirits.

Upon entry into the subway, I see a guy with hair featuring such profound spikiness that it probably could have single-strandedly nailed the palm of Jesus Christ to the cross. He's playing with a tire swing key chain and absently nodding his head. Mysterious powers of divination compel me to sit beside him. Now his interest in bobbing his head back and forth to whatever it is he's receiving from the headphones inside of his ears is a bit discouraging, but I muster up the courage to overlook it.

I register my body's slight resistance to its physical proximity to this menacing character, but I assume it's just that slight yet enveloping authentic being that has long sentenced me victim to interpersonal discomposure. With every passing moment, the gentleman inches closer to me until his thigh has met mine.

“You gotta hear this, man.”

He lifts up his shirt. I am astonished to see him unplug his headphones from a small opening beside his navel. I look away as a waterfall of puss begins to exit the two-centimeter hole in his person.

“I actually could have spent the entirety of my time on the planet without that sight,” I say.

“See if you can ride this wave with me,” he flares his nostrils. “Your thoughts aren’t yours. You’re the receiver of consciousness, not the creator of it. Thoughts arise from a sound system independent from you.”

“I’m not sure if I follow,” I say.

He then takes it upon himself to lift up my shirt. I feel a slight pinch in my lower back followed by a full-body chill and the sight of some sort of intracranial curtain close. I suddenly hear phrases such as “I need a lower tide” and “he won’t look you in the eye” and “I am hoping unrelated phrases will somehow take on accidental symbolic meaning” inside my head.

I’ve plugged my subjective surround sound into the body of this asshole in a pair of trousers. He sits back, mouth agape. I’m no longer physically continuous with the person I was before, but luckily I have keys to his apartment building and the conceptual understanding that the body is not enough to constitute personal identity. Bring on the afternoon.



Write
By Maggie Kovacs

A Lesson or a Blessing?

By Jordyn C. Riethmiller

If you are reading this right now, take a break from what you are doing. Please, sit down, take a deep breath and relax. Now, I want you take the next few minutes to reminisce. Think back to all of the good times, the bad, the extraordinary moments you swear you will never forget, and maybe even take a second to remember the unimportant.

Do you ever wonder how you got here to the person you are today? Do you ever wonder how it could have been possible for you to make it through all of your struggles? Do you ever wish that you could go back to those amazing few days of pure fun with your best friends? Well, I happen to ponder and daydream about all of these things on a regular basis, and this is what I have come up with: we learn while we live. Learning literally means to obtain knowledge or skills through experience. So, I guess we have to decide if our experiences are lessons or blessings. In other words, I believe our individual selves are shaped upon positive and negative experiences.

Most of us have gone through a period of hurt, heartache, or some sort of experience that has made us bitter. Some of us hold grudges, some of us give up, and some of us let the negative energy get the best of us. What's even worse is sometimes we let the negative get in the way of all of the wonderful things we have in our lives. Think about it, do any of the preceding coping mechanisms for dealing with negativity seem fun or positive? No. I guess my point is that we should try our hardest to see these bad experiences as lessons. Let the bad build you up! Let it make you stronger! Learn that these things can make you or break you!

Now, let's switch things up. Who doesn't enjoy positive vibes? Everyone does, of course. I like to think of positive experiences as blessings. For example, we are blessed every day with the simplicity of nature and all of the wonderful things this world has to offer us. On a more personal level, we are given family, friends, fun, love, and let's face it, I could go on forever with positive things life offers us. Shouldn't these types of experiences be the kinds of things we focus on? I know it's cliché, but life truly is short. Why should we waste it being in a gloomy fog of sadness and hurt? Exactly, we shouldn't.

Did you take those few minutes to reminisce? I hope so, and I hope now you have reorganized your negative experience into your mind's lesson section. Get rid of those grudges and bitterness! I hope you have put your positive experiences ahead of those lessons, and I do wish for you to start creating more blessings. Cherish those experiences and do whatever it takes to form a fulfilling and happy life. Keep learning, and keep shaping the person that is you.

