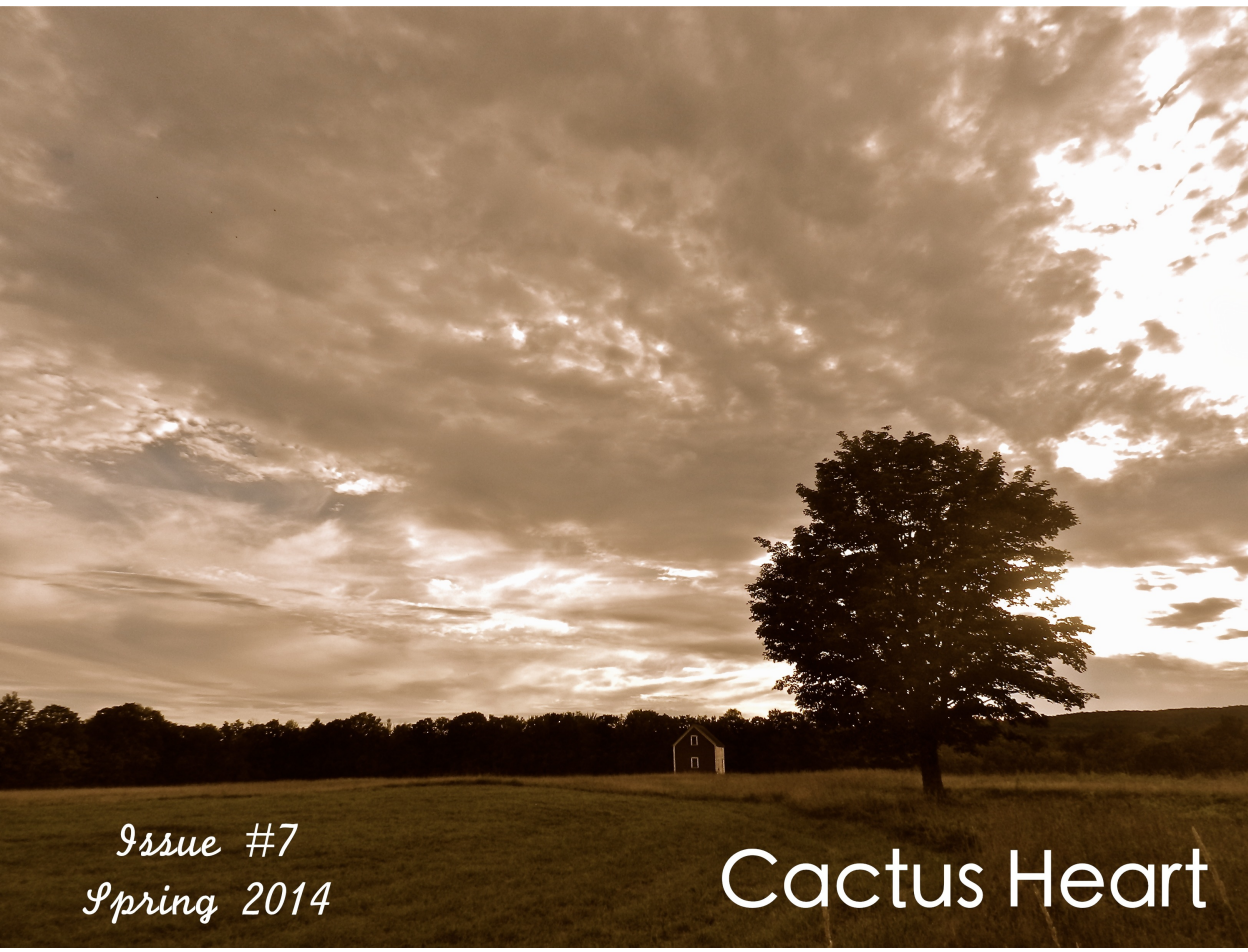

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Spring 2014

Cactus Heart

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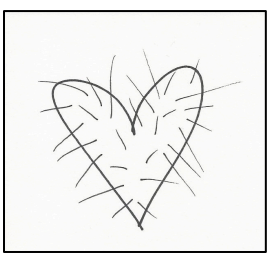

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From the Index of False Memories (Under 'W' for Water)

Eleanor Fogolin

A bay yawns open where the street disappears.

At the end of Lancaster, somewhere between the fire and train stations, I don't know how far. The bay is a clean sheet of blue, like aluminum, and the sky has been scraped clear with a blade. It is pure and cold and it will turn my cheeks red. I will look over my shoulder, and see my own expression—

"There's no water there," says my mother.

—Like Virginia Woolf trying to see the back of her own head.

We go for a ride in the car. I look for the bay: it isn't there. This misperception is my first dose of real anxiety, because the face I know I will make when I stand beside that water (a bereft face, full of wind and roaring and anguish) is no longer a thing I see. It is a thing I feel.

A ghost, who haunts the shores of a bay that exists only in my mind, has got inside of me.

Next there is a lake welling up in a parking lot ringed by tar-black trees. Beyond it, behind it, I don't know what happens—but trucks go to and fro with their loads of sand and slate. Also men, with their lunchboxes, who plunge in and out, impervious to water and to cold.

"There is no lake there."

By the time it takes the form of a river wending through a wood, I know I am only making inferences based on sound; the river is a highway in the literal sense, and a ghost has pooled in the space between my brain and my eardrum.

Now I'm in a frenzy of desperation for real water, like a body lusting for another body. In the same way I know instinctively that ten shoes are enough to outfit five children—but could never be quite sure of my own mind until I have laid out each little pair, and perhaps imagined the little feet standing behind them—I know that I must stand beside the water in order to exorcise the landscape that I see occasionally on my face, in mirrors.

Then, for a while, the memories stop. For years, nothing. But in the interim I get so full of oceans and whirling pools and little whitecaps...

And presently I remember (falsely) how my mother would carry me, swaddled, on crane legs through a rushing river of a city, our clothes smelling of damp. I wait for myself to turn my head, so I can see hidden in the back of one wide, infantile eye, a wind-tossed sea.

Declaration of War

Rebecca Kaplan

The tragic thing was that it sounded
like the beginning of a romantic comedy.

He carried her bags of chestnuts
and engraved her name into his ring,

but she had sex,
so she had to die.

Dragged through the streets,
the chain wrapped around her neck.

A Virginian writes
to Good Housekeeping:

We gotta protect the women. Not all of you
are as stupid as you lead us to believe.

Here I Am

Johanna Grea

I have sunspots and beauty marks down my backbone like my mother,
Small breasts and long legs made for running like my father's sisters,
And a mole on my lip that no one else in the family had,
but that every doctor Mama took me to wanted gone.

You won't feel a thing, honey. Just a pinch.
You don't want *cancer*, do you?
It'll make you prettier, they said, already sanitizing the scalpel.

Never, I spat. Six years old, then.
I already knew that without it at the corner of my lip,
I'd be no different than my mother and my aunts.

A mutt,
with a little bit of everywhere stitched into my skin,
And the smile of someone I've never met.

Having whispered conversations in the kitchen,
About our bodies that don't feel like our bodies anymore,
And how we're better off alone, not sharing our beds
and our kids with men who wander,

throw our heads back laughing and lie:
say we're happy they left,
and for good this time.

I've heard these conversations hundreds of times.

If I couldn't be me,
with that mole on my lip
that no other woman in the family had,

I'd end up like them:
Sad, but too hard to show it,

and stuck here,
with my long legs made for running,
and nowhere in the world to go.

Love and the Hoover Dam

Erica Garza

"Who wants to look at hands like these?" the old woman asked, looking down at her own, blotted with sunspots and creased with age.

"I think you look great," I assured her.

It was my job to lift her spirits as best I could. Two hours every week we sat, she complained, and I tried to make her see the bright side of things. "You've been a hardworking woman all your life. You should be proud."

She scoffed. "Hard work does nothing but help move you along quicker… to the end."

Then she started talking about her memory.

"I'm forgetting words now. I'll try to think of something in English and the goddamn German word will come to me instead. I've been in the States since I was in my twenties. And I don't want to tell you how old I am, but believe me, I've been here a long time."

"You're speaking English just fine," I said.

She sighed. "First your body goes—you get hands like these." She held her hands up close to my face and waved them around. Then she placed her right index finger on her forehead. "Then your brain goes. All your memories, everything."

She was sinking and I could feel it.

"Well, I don't think all your memories are gone yet. Tell me one."

"About what?" She rolled her eyes, but I knew and she knew that diving into the past was her favorite hobby. Especially a past filled with lots of men and faraway places.

"I don't know. Love? Tell me about your husband."

She shook her head. "The first man I married I didn't love. I was into these beautiful Spanish men with dark features. Instead I wound up with this blonde, boring German guy because he walked me home from a dance. That's it. No interest in him at all. But he walked me home from a dance and that was that."

"So you married him?"

"For seven years only," she said, widening her eyes so I understood it was a short, meaningless thing. "Then I moved to Las Vegas and met the Mexican."

"And you loved the Mexican?"

She nodded, looking away for a moment. "He was fat, ugly, had a thick accent I could barely understand, was sloppy..."

"Sounds like a keeper," I laughed.

"But there was something," she said. "It's hard to explain."

I knew she was going to try anyway.

"On our first date, he threw me on the back of his motorcycle and drove me to the Hoover Dam. The only reason I agreed to go out with him is because he said he'd teach me how to drive. I was twenty-eight years old and had never driven a car."

"What happened at the Hoover Dam?"

"What happened at the Hoover Dam I've been trying to figure out the rest of my life." She was smiling now, which brought me relief. "He parked the bike and when we went to get off, our hands touched for a moment. And I felt this surge of electricity run through me right then. I'd never experienced anything like that before. He felt it, too. I saw it in his eyes." She suddenly laughed. "Look at these goosebumps!"

She was amused, turning her arms over so we could both see. Then she folded her sun-blotted, shaky hands on the table and they stilled.

"I don't know if the shock had something to do with the dam," she said. "Maybe that sort of energy is floating in the air. But I remember thinking to myself: *This must be it, then. This must be what love feels like.*"

Three States

Jennifer Genest

Lorna,

Decided to use my vacation time to do my own personal tri-state shuffle—Rhode Island, Connecticut, then up to Maine. Probably won't surprise you to hear that Mike is still a bachelor. He lives in Poe's carriage house in Providence, worked out a reduced rent because he's renovating it. Today I helped scrape one of the stall-style doors for painting. I got a big paint chip splinter under my thumbnail. Tried to pull it out and the chip broke off halfway down. You always took care of these things.

Moe

Lorna,

Mike had me stay another day to help rebuild the loft doors that open up to look out over the city. Every time I see something cool like this and I can't show you, I feel like more of a dick. Tomorrow I head down to Mystic. Remember Mystic?

My thumb is starting to throb. My plan is to let it fill with pus so I can just squeeze the paint chip remnant out. It's in there deep;

it throbs in time with my heart. Yes, men are babies when it comes to pain.

Moe

Lorna,

Mike dragged me to a karaoke bar to cheer me up last night. I sang, "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." No trip to Mystic today; stuck on the couch with Captain Morgan and his sidekicks, Shiver Me Timbers and Quiver Me Bowels. My thumb throbs so much I could cry. Wish I still had my job, wish I had health insurance to go to the doctor for this stupid thumb, I wish Mike hadn't gotten so drunk last night that he told me you had slept with Buzz—that rugby player who almost died for drinking Scope? Guess we're even now, huh, but it doesn't feel like that. Mike is asking me now if I want anything from Dunkin.

Moe

Lorna

I should probably just chop my thumb off at this point; it might feel better.

I'm remembering that guy Buzz now. He might be single-handedly responsible for introducing the outside world to locker room talk. At least my mistake was random. I don't think I'd even remember her face. I bet Buzz doesn't remember yours.

Went down to the Mystic aquarium by myself today. Did you know they've expanded it? The courtyard where I first tried to hold your hand is now a giant dolphin tank. Did you ever notice I shook when I reached for your hand that first time? Shaking now but for different reasons. I'm not sure if I can stand myself right now, I'm not sure if I love you at all, but I'm sure I hate this Goddamn aquarium.

Moe

Lorna

By the time I got to Ogunquit my thumb was on fire and I had the chills. Went to an Urgent Care and just put it on my credit card. They slit the nail, dug out the paint chip out and put me on antibiotics. Crazy that a splinter half the size of a grain of rice could make me so sick.

Took the red trolley down to the water, to that place you told me about called Captain Munchies. My plan was to eat lobster but I wasn't hungry. Did you know that lobsters cry when you put them in the boiling water? The trolley driver told me that when he cooks lobster, he plays Frank Sinatra, loud, so you can't hear them crying. God, I thought, how perfect. Someone, turn up the Sinatra for me.

I do know that I love you. I do know that.

Moe

Autumn Window | E. J. Evans

Library Lion:
Dicko King

His heart was big
as a library lion's.

It held back nothing.
Look

there is inventory:
Boxes of good.

And what I say is:

this heart

meant everything

to his liver

and his lungs

and all his
other parts
especially
his tongues

Which were several,
yet he was

Mum on all matters
of this heart, and, yes,

it *was* difficult for him,
the plain language,

putting a word to love.

Tony and the Red Toyota

Darla Mottram

You used to park your red Toyota
in the church parking lot
on Wednesday evenings.
The Russian immigrants
would file past,
somber, curious.
The organ hummed
its numbing prayer
in the background while we talked.
You popped the hood of your truck
and tinkered with
what lay inside.
You told me life was funny,
and that I should enjoy being small
while it lasted.
One day I would be big,
and I wouldn't be able to hide
in the toy chest or the closet
when I was scared.
People would expect things,
and they wouldn't take no
for an answer.

The trees were undressing
themselves for winter

the last time I saw you.
You held out a peanut butter jar
filled with dirt and stones.
Inside was an earthworm;
its pinkish flesh pressed
against the sides of the jar.
It did not move.
On the side, scrawled in black sharpie,
was the name Arthur.
"I found him," you said,
"and thought of you.
You can keep him."

I hugged the jar to my chest.

If I had known
what every adult knows,
I would have given it back.

The next day
a shiny red Toyota
sat in the church parking lot.
Pressed up against the window:
a sign reading
"For Sale."

It's a Guy Thing

Jude Marr

Women always cry, my dad said. But I never
once saw his mother weep,
not even in anger, not even
when her blue-eyed boy spat on me
(don't know why, guess
I reminded him)—
                not even
when my knuckleheaded brother
traded his class ring for a knife,
chose another life because a swagger
in half-mast pants
called him a name I still can't get
my mouth around—
                (blunt)
instruments leave bruises. Tissue tears.
Bone withers in the aftermath.
I wipe my face on your sleeve
before you go.

Infrastructure

William D'Arezzo

After work I'm next to the track near the campus, stretching up in the bleachers. There's a nice breeze up here, and twilight is descending, my favorite part of the day. When the spring semester ended last month I moved into a boarding house across the field in back of the school with a retired teacher and a couple of other students. I miss the privacy of living alone on the East Side of Providence, but that area's been getting more and more expensive in recent years.

I grew up on the South Side, a poorer section of town, and my parents were uneducated factory workers. Though I wouldn't enroll in art school until middle age, many of my friends and roommates when I was younger were college kids I met in the bars up around Brown and the Rhode Island School of Design on the East Side of the city. Hence, part of my attraction to that neighborhood is simple familiarity. But nowadays, Providence has a lot of Massachusetts commuters, and as the city becomes

more fashionable, rents keep climbing, and it has become more difficult for someone in my income bracket to live up there.

The East Side has good places to run, and for years I frequented the path on Blackstone Boulevard in the evenings and on weekends. The road is a wide thoroughfare that begins in the Wayland Square neighborhood, with its trendy shops and private schools, and continues almost to the Pawtucket border. Blackstone is divided down its middle by a sand and gravel course, the traffic lanes on either side bordered by an array of detached Queen Anne, Tudor, and Colonial and Gothic Revival houses dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the facades display a titled plaque specifying the year the structure was built. By my financial standards each edifice represents an obscene amount of money.

Despite its reflection of the city's long history, the street doesn't have the same feel as other neighborhoods populated with buildings of similar vintage. Blackstone Boulevard, like much of the East Side, seems isolated from the rest of the town, and on the street itself, when you don't see runners, you often don't see anyone at all. The area can seem desolate, as if it were meant only for the old, sick, or for rich retired people. But the path in the middle is a well-maintained running surface that rises and falls occasionally, and doesn't become monotonous. There is

also a lot to look at on either side. The street is both history lesson and refuge from the rest of the city.

When I was working in print shops and living in other parts of town I'd drive up there to run at night, after most of the other runners had gone home and there wasn't much traffic. But whenever possible I'd try to maintain an apartment in the neighborhood so I could trot over on foot when the impulse struck me. I used to run the length of the path both ways twice, which was seven miles. But this was too time-consuming when I started grad school and found myself with so much research and reading to do. My routines had to change, so I cut the length of the run in half. Then money became a problem, so I once again relocated across town, where rents are much lower, most recently in back of the state school I'm now attending.

I moved into the boarding house the day before I started my summer job at the print shop, but quickly learned how cranky the old guy who owns the building can be. He expects us to take our meals with him, and sulks or becomes mean-spirited if we don't. So of course, he's usually mean-spirited because we all have lives of our own and tend to be unavailable. The location of the house, however, will be very convenient for my last year of grad school. If it's my last? If I go any further, into a PhD program, I'll have to apply to schools outside of RI.

The school track and gym are right across the field from the house, so since I started the summer job I've been hitting the track every night, unless I'm exhausted from work. This evening, I walked across the field without stretching, because I like to do it up in the bleachers, in the night breeze.

After I extend my left leg out on one of the metal seats the breeze shifts several times before I switch to my right. Maybe because of the storm we had recently. I was sitting in the campus coffee shop with *The Providence Journal* spread out before me on a wobbly table, staring at the headline. "Tornado rips Providence, Cranston neighborhoods." The front page featured a picture of Stewart Street in Upper South Providence, the street where I grew up. The top floor and the roof of the Fulford building at 107 Stewart, the factory that stood across the road from our tenement, had been torn off and sent spinning into the surrounding neighborhood. The picture showed wreckage all over the street, and what was left of Fulford, most of it, decapitated but still unmistakable.

I was pretty stunned when I read this. While our tenement had been torn down decades ago, Fulford itself had still been going strong before the tornado hit. Erected in 1890, this date chiseled into the cornerstone, Fulford was the last of the industrial buildings on that street. It housed several tool-making

and jewelry concerns on its four cavernous floors, though the various businesses had changed hands many times over the years. The article even included a photo of a scowling machinist who'd worked there for forty years, a guy I can still recall standing across the street from our house smoking a cigar. I remember thinking, as I looked at the photographs, that I had to get down there with my drawing pad and do some sketches of the wreckage and the damaged building before the city razed the street completely.

I finish stretching, and descend the cold metal stairs of the bleachers and start running. I'm slowing my breathing down and trying to relax while images from my youth fill my mind.

It's the late '50s or early '60s. A summer evening, a cool breeze blowing down the narrow street between the factories. The height and closeness of the buildings trap the wind and send it down the road, along with far off traffic sounds, bouncing along the brick and the upper windows, like birds, ghosts, signaling the presence of another plane, away from here, rays shooting in different directions in an open area.

My younger sister and I are sitting with our mother on the front steps of our tenement. The ice cream truck has just driven off, and kids are kicking and punching each other, as Chris, the blond girl from down the street, stands with a popsicle in her

mouth, sucking it slowly, looking at me. She's a few years older, and wearing a tight black jumpsuit, bare at the waist. Unlike the other girls, she always dresses in tight clothing, walking around the neighborhood alone, and the older kids call her a cockteaser, but that's all new to me, and as I stare back at her, she looks away, swinging her hips back and forth.

My mother sits calmly in the breeze, one of the few times I've seen her untroubled, and I can hear the theme from "Route 66" coming from inside the house. The night wind swirls about, cool, unstable, and the silhouette of a drunk way up the street sways down the hill as if blown from side to side in the breeze.

There's screaming and a crash from next door, as the front door swings open, slamming against the side of the house, and our neighbor Hank, also drunk, stumbles down the front steps in a white undershirt with garage grease on it, his black hair slicked back but falling loosely on both sides of his head. He has tattoos up and down his arm, cigarette sparks falling profusely from one hand, a gray cat held by the tail, twisting and screeching in the other.

He leans, traveling sideways, over to the brick factory across the street, the Fulford building, stands near the corner of the building, hauls back and swings the cat broadly by the tail against the side of the factory. Sparks shower like fireworks off his

cigarette dangling from his mouth. The impact of the swing is surprising, like something heavier or something sprung, the cat thrashing, and my mother jumps up, her hands over her mouth. The two shadows, man and cat, shoot upwards, sharply defined in lamplight against the brick.

He swings again, sparks still flying, and the cat's body, weakened now and bleeding, snaps one last time against the wall, the sound echoing up, amplified and repeated in the passageway of the street, receding into the darkness to merge with the distant traffic.

My mother is shaking and crying. "Oh dear…oh dear God…" She runs indoors in tears.

"He was sick," Hank says, looking over at us, his words garbled, as if noticing, only now, that there are onlookers. He gestures carelessly with his free hand, the cat hanging limply in the other, and walks unsteadily back across the street to his house, the cat loose in his hand.

I hear my mother upstairs calling me in, but I stand there watching Hank meander up the driveway between the houses, toward the garbage cans in the back. As he disappears into the shadows his son emerges from their open front door, hair slicked back, cigarette dangling, a smaller, sober version of Hank. He ignores us and heads up the hill toward Broad Street.

Since yesterday Stewart Street has been strewn with debris from the tornado. One picture shows the Fulford building with its entire fourth floor missing, while another depicts the wreckage from the surrounding neighborhood that now conceals the parking lot where our tenement used to stand, until it was torn down thirty years ago. But nothing will ever erase my memories of growing up there.

When I was a child every morning felt like punishment. I'd be in my bedroom, and my mother and father would be sitting at the table in the pre-dawn kitchen drinking coffee. Cup after cup every morning before dawn. Like oil or degreasing fluid, fuel for factory workers. I learned to keep my bedroom door closed. But I couldn't shut them out of my life completely. The door was too flimsy for that.

They'd be mostly quiet, though I'd hear my mother occasionally say something. But my father didn't like to talk in the morning, didn't want to hear anything. Just wanted to get in the right state of mind so he could make it through the day. I could hear every word from my room.

The old bastard has to keep calm, not think about what he has to do. Let Irene take care of the kids so he doesn't get all nerved up first thing in the morning.

"I don't have time for any of their shit," he'd warn her. "Irene, keep those kids quiet when they come out here."

I hated to go out to the kitchen in the morning, and over time my mother would wait for longer and longer periods before calling my sister and me out for breakfast.

It'd be quiet in the kitchen for a while.

Then, "I shouldn't even have to say anything," he'd add.

In my bedroom, I'd listen to them lapping up the coffee.

"Not in the morning. I just want quiet."

My mother wouldn't reply.

"It's because of them I have to do this," he'd continue.

What? I'd think, understanding completely.

"I don't want to think about anything that happened before," he said one time. "I just want to keep calm."

I understood enough. And now, after years of coffee drinking on my own, I still have a deep-rooted, unreasoning fear of ending up like that. To this day, I have to remind myself that going to work in the morning isn't punishment, or the acceptance of defeat.

At least I'm not working in a jewelry factory this summer, as my parents did all their adult lives, and as I did after high school. I held a series of shipping/receiving jobs in those places—that's what the classified ad in the paper would often lead with:

Shipping-slash-Receiving—one company after another. I could never stay anywhere for long. And I operated most of the machines in that industry, also. Drop presses, foot presses. Degreasers. I did plating, grinding, polishing, worked on furnaces that heated metal, plastic extrusion. Injection molding. Slivers of metal or sharp plastic under my skin. The bad light, fumes, callouses, cuts, sore eyes, sore feet. Then punch out and head to the bar. All with a hangover. God, what a wasted youth. I swore I'd be nothing like my parents, and look what happened. That's what the weed and alcohol were for, I guess. So you wouldn't think about the waste. That's the trick, numb it out. Most of those jewelry places are gone now, the big ones anyway, in this city. And I almost went with them. Fulford was one of the last.

The printing industry seemed a step up, for a while at least. I ran small presses, stripped negatives, burned plates, ran bindery equipment and cutters. And I fell back into the jewelry industry a couple of times. With house painting, small construction jobs thrown in. Evictions. All to stay afloat in alcohol.

My parents did it without the booze because both their parents were drunks. Then I came along. Scared the shit out of my mother, but the old man was glad to see me go down the

tubes. Yeah, well we'll see about that now. Now that it's late in the game.

In the 70s, when I entered the workforce, Providence was a blight on the New England coastline. Terms like that were often used by visiting politicians, people from Connecticut and Massachusetts, and Ivy Leaguers in their dorms up on the hill. Many downtown businesses had closed, and boarded-up storefronts, vacant lots and ambling non-functioning train tracks were common sights. The large vacancies downtown and in other areas were evidence that city government wasn't really doing its job. Money was changing hands, or desk drawers, but it was draining off somewhere, or already had. That was clear from every unlit streetlight.

On the East Side, things were different. Even before the city's big historical preservation plan had taken hold, the neighborhood around Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design seemed an oasis of privilege, and people escaping to the illusion of privilege. When I was in my late teens I coveted the lives of those kids I knew in high school who lived on the hill in big drafty Victorian homes with their college professor parents. The houses up there looked different from the ones in my neighborhood; everything was old and had a plaque on it with an old family name. And the rooflines against

the sky at dusk looked the way I imagined old towns in Europe looked.

We'd moved out of South Providence during my mid-teens, after my father's side of the family had secured a house for him in the largely Italian middle-class Elmhurst neighborhood, far from the black people he hated. His brothers had bailed him out again. But I'd roam the East Side at night not wanting to go home, a long walk, at that time literally across the tracks, or rather under them. The city had not yet moved them underground, and after emerging from the pigeon-populated tunnel beneath the railway, vast, scarcely illuminated lots stretched from the bus station to the state house. If I didn't make it downtown from the East Side in time for the last bus, I'd have to walk back to Elmhurst, several miles, wishing I'd never heard of that side of town, or the past I'd been dropped into.

In my twenties, any fantasies I entertained of attending Brown or RISD were thoroughly unrealistic. I couldn't even afford a state school or community college. My parents, my father especially, had drilled into me the belief that I was destined for the same life he had. He was determined that I not succeed to any greater extent than he did. He didn't communicate well, threw tantrums and physically attacked

people. He'd periodically get into fights at work and lose his job. In effect, having kids was just another mistake on his part, another example of unthinking impulse. He blamed his children for his own failures, as if he would have gone on to greater things if he didn't have kids to raise, and he seemed determined that his first born, especially, was going to pay.

Before we moved to Stewart Street—when I was in nursery school or kindergarten—I was a noisy troublemaker, as kids often are. I'd slide across the tenement linoleum in my socks and collide into things, imagining I was some comic book character, and the tenants downstairs would complain about the noise. I'd get yelled at for it, then completely forget that I wasn't supposed to do it, because there was nothing better than sliding across linoleum in my socks. It seemed to me that that's what socks were for, that this was the purpose of socks. How could it not be? I couldn't resist the imaginary adventure of skidding into furniture in order to elicit crashing sounds, not only of objects falling from furniture, but also the crumbling noises of plaster and mortar behind the walls. In my mind I was knocking down a building. The fiction was more real to me than the real damage being done.

When the people downstairs called the landlord again, he threatened us with eviction. I wasn't present when it happened,

but I found out later that my father had attacked him, and when the police came, the landlord agreed not to press charges, provided we move out immediately. We had no money and nowhere to go but, luckily for us, my paternal grandmother knew the owner of the two-and-a-half story tenement where she lived with my disturbed aunt and older cousin, Karen. The building was a rundown tar-shingled tenement between factories on Stewart Street in Upper South Providence, a much worse area than where we had been living, and that's where we ended up.

The night we moved in, to keep my father from coming after me, Karen had to hide me in my grandmother's first floor apartment while my family moved in upstairs. I could hear the commotion through the thin ceiling and walls, my father screaming *I'll kill him, I'm gonna kill him*, when he saw where we'd be living, his two brothers restraining him, the banging from the struggle on the stairs, the walls and floors shaking. Though I barely knew what was happening, I'd already become numb with denial. I sat on the bed in my cousin's room watching a late night movie called *Konga*, on a small black and white TV. The film was a sort of King Kong/Frankenstein combination set in London, about an ape, appropriately enough, who kills for his master before growing to enormous size and razing the city. The climactic scene has him standing next to the Big Ben clock

tower, holding his former master in one hand while being shot at from the street.

I wasn't consciously aware of the relevance to my predicament, but after that night at least, I was always obsessed with monster movies.

Karen came into the room and said, "Don't worry, you'll be safe down here." I remember that I wasn't quite sure what she meant, though I could feel the walls shaking and could hear the shouts from upstairs. I just went back to watching the gorilla. My cousin turned up the volume on the TV, then left the room.

During a commercial, I remember looking out through the blinds on the thin side window where the house abutted out slightly from the rest of the building. It was dark outside and raining. I could hear the rain pour down from the factory roof across the road as if the walls were alive and sweating from the effort of height. Water crashed through the drainpipes and washed over the bricks like time running out.

After the commercial I lost myself in the movie again.

All during the period we lived upstairs my father would come after me whenever there was an excuse, or even if there wasn't. Often he was just out of control. He seemed mentally ill, like his sister. Sometimes I could see the regret on my mother's face, blaming herself for getting us into this. He didn't have the means

to raise a family, but my mother trapped him by having me as soon as they were married so she could escape *her* family, with its cast of drunken maniacs. She couldn't have foreseen what life would be like with this man who didn't even drink. She sealed the deal when she had me, a difficult labor but the one act in her life that was somewhat effective, though desperate. She'd regret that too though, in time, when the old man started going off around the house, revealing the way he really *was*. Like his sister—not all there. That tic on his side of the family, in those two anyway. I remember my aunt endlessly counting the fingers of her left hand with her thumb, from forefinger to pinky, then back again. Some kind of disorder in the genes. So maybe somewhere in me, also.

He'd been a drill sergeant in the army, or claimed he had and, apart from barking threats and commands, he seldom spoke. When he yelled he sounded truly demented, unintelligible when his voice accompanied the edge of his fist coming down on his kids. The pounding would resonate through my body, and that seemed loud too. Over the years I've come to suspect that he was discharged from the service due to emotional unfitness. Of course, as a child awash in chaos there was no way I could ever have sorted out what was behind the sporadic bombardments at home, or even begin to make sense of why I felt that I somehow

deserved it. We couldn't really talk to him. But I've never stopped wondering about that guy.

I know he'd been stationed in North Africa, though. He used to take pictures when he was younger, and I saw the photographs—shot in Casablanca, Marrakesh, Tunisia—of him and other enlisted men, often standing around a jeep, the desert in the background. The African conflict is infamous for its sheer number of shell-shocked soldiers who'd been unprepared for the initial German assault. So he'd seen action, and he brought that trauma home with him as an overlay, apparently, to the disorders he must have already possessed when he entered the service.

It wasn't until my late teens that I started to piece these elements together *consciously*. But it seems like there's always something in life that delays understanding, tries to stop you from moving forward, speaking or thinking. Because the clues, the overheard remarks, were always there on the back burner. It takes time to realize that you know what you know, to fully accept as earned wisdom what has been pushing down on you all along. Insight only comes after the stuff that's been covering it has worn off, been knocked off or burned. Then forgotten events rise to the surface or drop into the slots where what you think you knew used to reside. You start to see continuity between the fragments you've been stuck with, the string of

accidents that you've been paying for, incidents that occurred when you happened to be present.

As the years wore on, the words of my father made me not want to get up in the morning. The repetition of the word *work*, often said in the same cursing tone as the word *kids*. Those words seemed to bear down on us. If you hear this stuff all the time when you're growing up it's going to get stuck in your head. And all the talk about bills, and who he had to pay first. Then he'd be asleep in the big chair until one of us made a noise, setting him off. Those things he said spilled over us like the shadows of the factories that surrounded our house, their big shapes, and the distant sounds of traffic from up the road, on Broad Street, rushing past as if in a frenzy of escape.

As I edged through adolescence I began to hit back, but it wasn't long before I physically outmatched him to the point where I had an unfair advantage, so that if I pursued it any further I'd be acting like him. I saw fear in his eyes, on his face, for the first time. The expression seemed to suit him. I'd been cheated of my revenge. In the final analysis, though, it took far more effort than any physical confrontation would have to fight the words off, to try to keep the prophecy at bay.

That's what drawing was for, I guess—as a child I drew a lot and, beginning with comic books, where I was actually

motivated to know what the words meant, gradually taught myself to read to the point where my literacy was always way ahead of my classmates in grammar school. Because I was usually being punished, I was often grounded in my room, alone, and left to my own devices. Thus, the habit of self-teaching never left me. But no matter how much I learned, through the years there always remained, hanging over me, a big question mark, a lack of belief in myself that made me self-destructive.

When I started working I started drinking, almost every night, usually until I passed out, evading the fact that I was, in effect, finishing the job my father started *for* him. Finishing myself off for everybody.

Coming out of high school with no money for college, I entered the industrial work force and local wannabe bohemia at the same time. Existentialism and all. Broken glass, etc., mob slayings in the daily papers and dark characters in the trendy literature. Yeah, things were dark in Providence. But these college kids didn't know dark. Across the tracks, where *I* lived, was dark. I mean, the tracks were there. We had them.

Factories and bars. This was the subculture that formed me. My life for the next few decades would be shaped by avoidance of some places in favor of places I could stand, barely, while getting ready for something else that would never happen. But I

never forgot those dark early mornings in the kitchen, my defeated parents, enslaved by their limitations.

On those nights when I fled up the hill to the East Side and viewed the town from up there, the jagged streets below fascinated me. Angular cutting lines that seemed to cry out for charcoal and paper. The debris and industrial accumulation that ringed the city, slabs of broken concrete in the neglected areas. Everything appeared unfinished back then. From a terrace that overlooked the town I would often sketch well into the night under the lamps that lit the park, able to make out only the general shape of what I was producing on paper, often not recognizing the results when I looked at them later in good light. While I didn't want to be reminded of what I was—a Providence factory denizen—the industrial mass at the heart of the city, the stark lines, changing, hilly topography, the architectural variety, these inescapable forms became my inner landscape.

In my late thirties, as I gradually began to drink less, and running the Boulevard started to replace alcohol, I attended college for the first time. I finally figured out, I guess because I was sober, that, because I'd been independent from my parents for so long, I was eligible for education loans and grants. So I enrolled in a state school, majoring in Art.

As an undergraduate, I took all the Art History classes that were offered, and I would find myself becoming more alert when the topic in class shifted from painting and sculpture, to architecture. During the course on American Art, when the subject came up of buildings in Rhode Island, many of the images projected on the screen were buildings I recognized, and I began to research them further. Since then I've been trying to sort out my inherited sense of place, my simultaneous feeling of rootedness and disconnection.

As I continued to run in the evenings I found, more and more, that my awareness of the buildings on either side of me as I ran seemed inseparable from the process of controlling my breathing and of pacing myself. As my legs acquired more independence of movement, which enabled greater endurance for longer distances, the old buildings slipped by in the opposite direction, their shapes and design schemes peripheral to my consciousness. After a time, as the registration in my mind of historical periods and revival styles became more specific, the presence of these structures became less peripheral, seemingly more integral to my workout.

The desire to fully understand my life here has led me to investigate the history of the city itself, not just individual buildings, but the whole infrastructure, which—like my life—

didn't have an initial plan, but was rather a series of accidents, the result of makeshift enterprise schemes and geographical reorientations. Many of these adjustments were due to transportation trends and the progression from waterways to railways to highways. This pattern in a way parallels my family's harrowing last minute escapes to other districts, and my own adolescent sortie to a markedly different area and attendant shift in vocation and worldview.

This analogy of migration between personal and local history, while parallel, sometimes represents movement in reverse. For example, the commercial center of the city shifted west, historically, from the foot of College Hill—the area once known as Market Square—across the river to Weybosset, what is now downtown. During my lifetime, intuitive excursions away from my industrial roots led me in the opposite direction, across the bridge and up the hill. In the late 1800s Renaissance Revival commercial block structures began to multiply on the Weybosset side of the canal, just as they had previously in the old marketplace. And just as the relatively late appearance, in Providence, of skyscrapers came about not for lack of space, but rather—like the erection of City Hall had—for their symbolic or modernizing presence, my own progress into artistic endeavors

has been fueled by an impulse to free myself from a way of life burdened by obsolete industry and a heritage of failure.

This town's history is embodied in the shape of the place, and has informed the flavor of my own life in one more fundamental aspect. With taller structures came the 1920s zoning laws, which regulated how buildings and public spaces should be laid out in order to allow sunlight, and how far back on a sidewalk an edifice should be set. The codes were designed to keep industrial and residential areas discrete and separate from each other, so as not to mar daily life with pollution or noise. Fulford Mfg., and the other factories on the street where I grew up, were all erected in the previous century, before the beginnings of systematized urban planning were initiated and the city attempted to play catch-up for its historical lack of foresight.

My drunken travails across town during the twenty years after I finished high school had an environmental context that was much larger than I ever imagined when I was looking inward, struggling with what seemed to be working on me from the inside. There's also a consciousness—make that plural—embodied in the story of the city, a record of repeated failures, fires and storms, movements across the river, expansions and contractions of boundaries, necessary shifts in commerce and traffic. The physical shape of this environment has served as

setting for my own repetitive mistakes and occasional breakthroughs. I've tried and failed here, over and over again, so often that the history of the city during the last forty-odd years seems all bound up with my identity, as if the story of Providence were printed on the back of my driver's license.

My father's death was an immense and bitter relief, as if a burden had been lifted. I had this lingering sense that I was taking over for him, taking his place. Hell, I even looked like him. I was the man he'd tried to destroy, but couldn't. He'd been intent on my demise for a long time, but *his* demise came first. A harsh thought, on my part, but there it was, a much lighter burden than the one I'd been carrying all my life, because he was gone. It'd been years since I'd moved out of his house, the house he had since sold, and now he'd been removed from the physical world, and his house belonged to somebody else, a stranger. But he'd continue to reside in my head, together with all the issues I needed to iron out. All that stuff's still living in there, like a family in a house. But this house is mine.

There remains the necessity of recognizing the cause of my self-destructive nature, my tendency to exhibit certain types of behavior, gravitate toward certain types of people. But that

recognition aside, there's a portal one has to cross where you take responsibility for your own actions.

After a few laps around the track I stop at the bleachers, stretch some more, then start running again. This clay surface with painted lane divisions grows tedious, and I miss my sand and gravel path across town, with its old buildings on either side. To break the monotony while I slow my breathing down I look beyond the field spotlights and night lamps of the main campus, until my gaze settles on the brightly-lit library that functions as the school's design locus. The glow of this newer building doesn't reflect anything, my past or anyone's.

I'm not sure if it's a healthy sign to so closely identify with one place, to perceive the world in the context of one spot on the map, but my determination to do just that has been a dogged and lengthy pursuit. As I circle this track again, and traverse middle age, I'm wondering if I need to reconsider the whole matter from a distance, from some other locale.

A Report from Tucson

Karen Loeb

The desert is somewhat
as she expected—
no water

cactus grown to heights
undreamed of in her red clay pots
back home

the feeling that everything
will rearrange itself by morning

the highway stretching
like a tongue.

Then she tells of dead bodies
continually discovered
drifting in the sand,
assures us that she hasn't
found one yet
but she doesn't get
to the desert
as often as she'd like.

Seems the desert has become
a burial ground

for gangland murders
and a heaven for romantics
trying their camping skills
in rough terrain.

With You Always | Jason Stocks

Long Take

Robin Wyatt Dunn

I dream of sand. I live in near desert, Los Angeles. We are a cruel city and a beautiful one.

She stands in the dune, carefully constructed over the last 24 hours and I photograph her. My *shtick* is I do not digitally manipulate my images; I have worked closely with the gaffer for hours and there are little rainbows of light creeping up her naked calves.

Click. Click.

And she, threatening, her eyes that is, is a desert of sand too. What once awakened, the hunger of discovery by American mouths, I am selecting her as a fine appetizer...

I stand close to her.

"Whisper evil things," I smile, and she does.

Directors know a thousand superstitions, no different from sailors, control as tight as you want but still you are only a cork atop a sea... her whispers do the trick. There will be no

nightmare. But something is different. Her voice is growing louder.

"I wake from a dream of a drowned star city, millennium falcon ship no surprise for me, cheap snapshooter, Civil War deserter, my powder pan is full and all you can do is titillate my nipples on a score of Tally Isham axonographs..."

"Models do not act!" I shout at her, the gaffer is leaving; where did he go?

She is nude. The desert is blowing.

She is crying. "You are axonograph," she says, her lips carefully enunciating.

"What?" I say, helplessly, discarding my camera in a dune; she is still coming toward me.

"How does it feel?" she asks. "Won't you share it with me?"

"Terrible."

"Terrible how?"

"Like I'm dying. Dying underground..."

"I am only a woman but I know you are only these axons, you cheap little artmaker peeping Tom Hilfiger..."

"I need my Perrier!" I shout, but there is no world with France in it any longer. My carbon footprint is shrinking; she is in my arms.

"Am I too skinny?" she says.

"No, no."

"Hold me," she says.

There is a storm coming. Our storm. And when it arrives it will shake the face of Arrakis...

"Shhh, shhhh," she says. "How long do we have the studio until?"

"They kick us out at midnight," I say.

"Get me my robe," she says.

"Where is it?" I call, hunting.

"I left it on top of the microwave!"

It's a pretty little kimono. I drape it over her shoulder and resist the urge to stoop and taste her nipple.

"I want to taste your nipple," I blurt.

"You blurted," she says. "It's okay, I have that effect on men."

I am blushing. Am I twelve years old?

"What world is this, asked Millicent Idly," I find myself saying.

"It's called The Waste," she says, and her words are stones.

Oh, Los Angeles. What fatal nights of storms have tectons roamed beneath the mighty sea to find the curving lopes of celtic rings...

I maul her. And the set howls.

She is crying. She is moaning. The sand is surf.

"I could sue you, you know," she whispers.

"I know," I say. It's getting dark.

"Why don't you?" she says.

"Why don't I what?"

"Why don't you know what I am?"

"Don't be creepy," I say.

"I'm your agent. Give me orders."

I stroke her shoulder.

"They're going to kick us out," I say.

"Let me dress," she says.

I stand up. One of the lights has burned out; its heated fragments are smoking on the sand. I can't even find my camera. I grab my laptop and luckily the wireless was working; I've got about a gig of stills from today... I don't want to look at them yet, I feel nauseous.

"Do you want coffee?" I shout, but she is gone.

"Gail!" I shout. "Gail!" I hear the back door, slam, I sprint to it, slam through, she's already in her ride, a silver Volvo, tinted windows, off down the alley...

I go back inside and call Marcel, apologize for going late, promise not to do it again. I wire the money for the shoot and go home.

I am thinking of taking up spoken word poetry. I'm not political enough for it, I don't think, but I have to say something...

But what could I say. The fatal gift, vision, must not be put into words in a union town, you keep your mouth shut. I am a good worker. I am a loyal steed, ride me, Los Angeles, I am fast and tame-wild, wild-tame, in just the right amounts, I carry the bourgeoisie to victory...

I am asleep. No, half-awake. What is it, 2 a.m. I've called her twice, her voice-mail is mysterious. Some soundtrack with moaning in the distance, then a click. I left my phone number twice, she does not call.

I pore over the images. The best work I've ever done, probably. But scary. Too arty. It's a goddamned fashion shoot, for god's sake, you can barely see the shoes...

Christ.

I fall asleep.

ᘐ

The nuclear blast of a late august morning in Silverlake is the best drug I could ever want. I want to die here. I want to die a slave here. I go to The Coffee Shoppe.

"Hey, Tom, the usual?" says the barista, and I nod, smiling, off my game. I almost forget to tip. I sit outside and smoke, another no-no. I do not care. French cigarettes keep me sane. Saint Gauloise, *mon frère*...

She is across the street. I resist the urge to shout. She looks at me, enters the café. My eyes are wide. I look a fool. I'm wearing black, is my hair okay? My glasses? I should shoot myself, make it public...

She comes back. She's wearing yellow. She looks older, wiser, in this light, crueler, and I expect that, but still, her eyes, she's not on drugs, no, shit it's creepy again, just chill Tom, you've been sober for five fucking years, chill the fuck out—

"How are you?" she says coolly, sitting.

"Good, and you?" I am speaking. Voice normal. Check.

"I'm okay. You frightened me."

"I'm sorry."

"I haven't been doing this that long, you know. You must think I'm really easy."

"No, no I don't. I don't."

"There were only two guys before you."

"How long have you been in L.A.?" Has she been here long enough to undergo the change?

"Two years," she says. Right on the cusp.

"What do you think of Silverlake?" I ask her, and suddenly everyone is all ears, twenty yards around. She senses it too, of course.

"Let's go for a walk," she says, and we do, down the street, approaching Heliotrope, in late autumn, here under the veil of capitalism, I am mind, body, skill set and bank account, I am herr director, I am *Kamera,* Oh *Kamera* you evil bastard of my last nights...

"How are you really?" she asks.

"I don't know," I say. "I don't."

"Do you want to get together?" she asks.

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"What, do you have to call your agent or something?" she says.

"No, of course not. I just mean, what do you mean? People mean so many things."

She sighs. “Do you want to... be together?”

“Yes,” I say. “Yes.”

“I don’t want to move in unless I marry the man,” she says.

“Okay,” I say.

“Okay what?”

“I understand,” I say.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” she says. “It’s beautiful today.”

“Yeah, it is. Listen, are you okay? Really? Did I hurt you, or...”

“No, I’m okay. I’ll be okay. I’m a tough girl, you’ll see.”

There is something in her eyes.

“I fucked up,” I found myself saying. “We have to go back.”

“We don’t have to if you don’t want to,” she says, lying.

I take her to my car.

I hate few things about L.A., actually, not even the driving, but this is the one part I hate, the one part I hate of driving, the bucket seat and what it does, it has invaded even classic cars, the awareness of the other body... here in this game of the kings and queens of the silver screen, the posture alone can kill you in its thousand degrees of erection—

"Here," she says. "Park here."

There is another shoot. Luckily Fernando is working the front desk, I ask politely and with a pretty girl with me he allows us past; we wait for a lull in the activity on set and slip in, standing on the sidelines, nod at those we know.

"What do we do now?" I whisper to Gail, but she says nothing.

It's an art shoot, *tableau vivante*, topless young women beautiful as hell, and some guy dressed like Jesus smoking an herbal cigarette.

"Just wait," she whispers and so we do, watching the shoot for the next hour, saying almost nothing. Sweep the sand on the ground...

I watch the deck crewman massage the sand into the proper shape, the broom smooth in his accomplished hands.

And I remember then. Did I forget? Desert.

"Desert," I say to her.

"Yeah, I know," she says.

"Are you religious?" I ask her.

"Spiritual," she says.

"Okay."

We go outside to smoke.

"We have to work here," she says, pacing, filled with narrow energy.

"At this set?"

"Yes. Can you buy it?"

"Buy it? Hell no..."

"Then we'll buy it together. There's something in there we need..."

I stop working for a while. Then I work for eighteen months non-stop; Paris, London, Sydney, even Beirut. She follows, or we meet up in foreign cities jetlagged out of our minds.

Loneliness is strange when shared, you forget how to think, forget who you are, in a good way. I love her body, so much. Her nose, her lips, her voice. I am one of the lucky ones, but this kind of luck is spooky.

We buy it. Cheaper than it ought to have been, a favor, I think. In this town, sometimes you can't be sure who from. From God, maybe.

We put the sand back. The sand.

"Desert," she says, and smiles. And I pour water over her naked body and chant my mantra.

"You're beautiful," she says to me and I want to hobble her.

And then the lights go out.

"Herr Direktor," she whispers. "Put your finger in my cunt."

I do. We listen to the dark of this strange little desert. Two self-involved Hollywood freaks, yes, I know, but...

"I am so many women now," she says.

"Can't you just be two or something?"

She laughs a little. "Not yet."

"Axonograph," she says.

"Yes," I say.

"Give me a little nerve spike."

Which Baal was yours, Jew of the old time, the second Zion, Hollywoodland cult Hebrew, the idol you learned and drew?

We keep the sand in the corner, like vampires keep their native earth, no matter the shoot. We fence it off with yellow tape; some assume it's a bizarre kitty litter box.

I feel we're sinking into the religious brain of the nerves of cheap cinema, like into a bath of warm milk. New York has its shrinks; we have our mirrors, made, after all, from sand.

In a generation if not before I know Los Angeles will be a de facto city-state, inert and howling, new thallosocracy, and Gail and I will, as oligarchs, enforce our religious pluralism with the sweetest of blood rites.

"You want to go to the beach today, honey?" I ask her.

"It's a beautiful day to die," she says.

Underground

Amanda Sanseverino

You know them when you see them, the ones who go through life bouncing through endless strings of parties—never growing tired, never growing old. They're all revved up after their bartending and barista shifts; they're the starving artists who rest all day and rave all night. You can't bring these people down. Phosphorescent blood and absinthe gush through their veins in an effort to break free. They dress up in colors and mess around with their hair, inventing patterns that flicker against the lights. Guys wear T-shirts that play tribute to rock bands from the seventies or express romanticized messages of freedom. Tiny, beautiful girls dance with bracelet-lined arms.

But if you find yourself at one of these underground warehouse parties and look closely enough, you'll see others taking in the nightlife scene, the ones who do it against their nature because something inside them begs for it. You'll find the neurologists, Wall Street bankers, and kindergarten teachers. You'll find the priests, divorce lawyers, and tax accountants. So

imagine you're at a rave in Bushwick and you first spot the closet partiers, mixed in with the scenesters and lifetime thrill-seekers. They try to blend in but they're easy to find. They don't have facial piercings or visible tattoos. They scan each room with impassioned eyes. They take it all in; they savor it. These are clues but the crucial giveaway is that they come alone.

Once you discover the other closet partiers, you run into them everywhere. You'll be sitting through a meeting only to notice a faded strip of midnight blue in the new intern's hair, the part that wouldn't wash out after the weekend. You'll be getting a cleaning and catch a glimpse of a black stamp as the dentist's hand nears your mouth. Your neighbor, an IRS auditor, will leave his door open a crack and you'll catch a glimpse of his apartment, a sanctuary for massive psychedelic paintings and elaborate glass bongs. You'll end up talking to the closet partiers because they'll talk to you first. They think they need to find others but that's where they're wrong. Certain things should be kept separate from everything else. When you're trying to escape from something, you shouldn't network too much and you shouldn't keep ties. You can't start mixing the day and night worlds. Things get all messed up.

In my junior year of college, a bubbly woman called to offer me a position in the Summer Analyst internship program at an investment bank. The call convinced me I had moved to New York City for a reason. I grabbed a sweater and went to the campus coffee shop, waiting to see someone I recognized. I felt a tremendous need for interaction, so I gave the barista an enormous smile when she handed me my coffee and even said something like, "Hang in there, only a few more hours to go!" I sat down at one of the little wooden tables and my cell phone rang—my friend, Victor, had also received the call.

Victor joined me at the coffee shop, said "Fuck the accounting class I have right now," and we talked with the fervor men feel after having sex with a woman for the first time. The news created a sublime reverberation and there existed a need to smoke a deliberate, satisfyingly slow cigarette. Our mothers would have been thrilled had they been able to see us in that moment—such dear boys, becoming men. Victor and I were on our way to penthouse apartments, intellectual superiority, and dates with women in designer cocktail dresses, and we decided things could really get no better than that.

So when the internship started, I walked in there like I had just won an award for unparalleled performance. The internship was a simulated world where attractive fledglings were paid to

feel even better about themselves. I cruised on adrenaline for a short while, and when the adrenaline died out, I made an earnest attempt to force enthusiasm. Victor, on the other hand, seamlessly adapted to the culture, blending in almost to the point where his fingers were an extension of his keyboard and his ass an extension of his office chair. He had an aptitude for spreadsheets, pitching, and presentations, so he bailed me out when I couldn't remember formulas or lost my focus during conference calls. He kept me motivated when it was two in the morning and I was still working and hung-over from the night before.

My team insisted on taking me out almost nightly once I came on full-time. I became familiar with overcrowded rooftop lounges, strip clubs with sticky floors, and steakhouses filled with large aging men, sipping single malts older than the interns they flirted with. I mostly remember apologizing for our behavior, especially early on. "It's just how he gets when he drinks," I'd say with a thirteen-dollar Jack and Coke in my hand, trying to calm a dark-haired, fervid-eyed woman. With revulsion, she'd explain that she just wanted to celebrate her sister's birthday over a few glasses of wine. She said that we were appalling; people like us were appalling. "He only said that because you don't want to sleep with him," I'd say, which could never have

made the situation better, but back then I saw it as a compliment. When I told waiters we were sorry for disturbing other diners and would keep our voices down, the group would explode into a fit of laughter, leaving the waiters to think I was fucking with them.

I've heard men and women laugh about skipping their wedding anniversaries to wrap up a deal—shrugging their shoulders and saying it's the nature of our work. My chuckles were never wholehearted enough because intermittently there was someone with his hand on my back, professing that getting into this industry was the most significant thing that could have happened to us and we shouldn't take it lightly. One time, my Managing Director explained with slurred speech and languid eyes that I needed to fail more if I wanted to be better. A Vice President once told a first-year analyst, "from one female to another," to pay more attention to the way she dresses if she wanted to be taken seriously. On another night, the same analyst had too many Manhattans and cried, confessing that she hated Manhattans but she mostly hated the island of Manhattan.

There was one associate who repeatedly asked about everyone's kids. When I started, he told me it's a fantastic trick to learn if you want the higher-ups to like you, since people *really* love their kids and if you let them talk about their kids, they will

subconsciously decide that you are somebody who knows what is important. There was an intern that stared directly into my eyes every time we spoke, something he must have learned from a career guide.

Sometimes I thought about asking the ladies and gentlemen who they really were. I mulled over the reactions I would get if I came straight out with a question like that. I pictured the interrogation intensifying once they had a few drinks in them and in my mind saw them breaking down, exposing their souls to me, and imagined I would change their lives forever. They would say something like, "He's quiet, but he really knows what he's talking about."

The camaraderie between Victor and I eventually dwindled to vacuous small talk and work-related prattle. I still heard him though, given that he sat one desk away from mine, given that he *talked and talked and talked*. By the end of his client calls, men were flinging their wallets at him. *Take everything! Please! We love you!* Sometimes he interrupted my calls and mouthed the words "more aggressive." Other times he tapped me on the shoulder and waved his fist in the air. See, this is an old story, an old high school tale.

Whenever I thought I could get away with it, I'd go to Brooklyn for lunch. There are daytime events for artsy types but

they aren't as spellbinding as the nighttime ones. Everyone is exposed in the light. The glamour isn't there. It's like riding the subway home from a party at seven in the morning and everyone can see the real you.

The first time I found myself at a Brooklyn warehouse dream-themed party, I was too high to notice anything. The colors passed in a blur. The glitter in girls' hair gleamed for a second before they started twirling again, spinning themselves into a trance. People glided across the floor, using silk ribbons and bubble wrap strands as dance partners. I remember a man wearing a sequin jumpsuit and a woman in a long, red gown on stilts.

I've been to fetish parties in dark basements, Goth clubs, parties with robot themes, mermaid themes, and circus themes. I've been to corporate gatherings, singles events, and loft parties. There's a party for everyone if you live in New York City, and I always go alone. In a group of friends, everyone sticks together in a self-conscious circle and you might lose sight of where you are. You don't see the subtle things, like the hesitation in someone's eyes when they first meet you and don't know

whether to hug or shake hands. You don't notice the woman holding up her glass for a toast, crinkling her nose in the slightest way, giving away the fact that she'd rather do anything than take another sip. You don't see the one guy who looks so desperately like he's trying to blend into the walls—if only department stores sold floral wallpaper jackets and wood panel cargo shorts.

There was a new warehouse party in East Williamsburg that I had been meaning to check out. I made it out there a little after midnight, grabbed a PBR, and found a good corner to stand in. I saw a naked Hasidic Jew bobbing his head in front of an empty stage in the basement. His homemade kippah flaunted the colors of the Jamaican flag and his two curls were braided and clipped back. Strobe lights pulsed on his middle-aged body. I thought of his wife, his kids, how they probably thought he was visiting a cousin in a bind. But I also thought, Good for him. Good for that guy.

Phrases, photos, and drawings adorned the walls of the three floors. Index cards were passed out for people to write on. A guy in a pale yellow shirt collected them and taped them to the

wall. One card said, "Eating pot brownies makes me feel like I'm on a boat, like all these waves are surrounding me." Another one said, "Fight the power, motherfuckers!" A third card said, "Sleepers awake. The walls are breathing." I read them for a while. Some people, at a loss for words, drew pictures or symbols. I wanted to write something about life and death but nothing came to me.

Teeth and white shirts glowed in the black light and disco ball rays reflected off sunglasses. Star-shaped balloons and painted cardboard cutouts hung from the ceiling. A black woman with dreadlocks and feather earrings sat in a corner on the floor, laughing. She held a flashing red-lit necklace in front of her, waving it back and forth, bringing it close to her eyes and then farther away. So many faces were hidden behind masks—some shaped like butterflies, some with phallic noses, many covered with glitter. It was only the middle of September and someone had come as a Christmas tree. He wore a textured green bodysuit and a headband with a giant star attached to it. Ornaments dangled from his two pierced ears. String lights went around and around him. Aluminum foil and tinsel hung from the lights.

In one of the rooms you could get a hash brownie for three dollars. I was waiting on line when an older, blonde woman asked if I wanted to buy a sunflower. The hollowed out tree

trunk she wore as a backpack was filled with a variety of berry branches and other plants. I considered the offer but she didn't wait for my reply and moved on. A remixed, fast-paced version of a Pink Floyd song started playing through a speaker close to my ear. It was what everyone wanted to hear. A vivid girl with fluorescent hair waved two orange glow sticks in the air while she danced. The brownie was wrapped in plastic; I paid for it and put it in my pocket. The bar that was really a folding table was selling absinthe. I put two dollars into a mason jar and took the shot down slowly, sipping it like a scotch. A burning sensation moved down my throat and into my stomach, and my hoodie slid from my arm to the floor. I walked toward an illuminated mushroom mural but then a girl with a ballerina body grabbed my arm and put the hoodie in my hand. When I smiled and thanked her, she hugged me and walked away. It was sweet.

My body was warm with liquor and I needed air. I climbed a ladder on the outside of the building leading to the rooftop. When I reached the top, I saw people holding small tubes of bubbles that I hadn't seen since I was a boy. They dipped miniature wands into the soapy liquid and brought the wands to their lips, narrowing their eyes until they finally blew the iridescent forms into the beautiful, polluted air. I looked over the

ledge and watched a solitary car drive through the industrial landscape, past the factory buildings, past the sidewalks littered with beer bottles.

A voice stood out against the array of muddled conversations.

"Hey man, come over here. We need an opinion." The guy had long, tangled blonde hair and was in a group of three girls and two other guys. Kaleidoscope-like designs were painted on their faces. He nodded and smiled as I walked toward them.

"Tell me something. What does this look like to you?" The guy pointed to the face of one of the pretty hippie girls. Her hair was chestnut and her clothes draped loosely over her body—the most comfortable clothes I had ever seen. The purple paint on her face hadn't dried yet. She watched me with soft eyes.

"It reminds me of peacock feathers," I said.

"Can I paint your arm?" the girl asked.

"Sure." They were at the peak of an ecstasy high and the euphoria showed on their faces. At least twelve different paint colors and an assortment of brushes were laid out on a small, rusty bench. She held my arm and started painting. The others were hypnotized.

"Wanna roll?" she asked a few minutes later, reaching into her bag.

"Nah, not tonight," I said. She playfully raised her eyebrows and I added, "I would, but I have to wake up early."

"You're here alone?" she asked.

"Yeah. Late nights I get restless and need to get out."

The blonde-haired guy nodded his head in approval. "That's how you gotta do it," he said. "That's the way to be."

"You look tired," she said with a grin. She wore a pearl necklace wrapped around her neck three times.

"Long day," I said. "It's funny though. I have one of those faces that looks drained even when I'm wide awake." The girl and I were quiet for a while, and the others alternated between chatting and gazing at the painting.

Her painting had made its way down to my forearm. I looked down and saw a simplified version of one of those Venetian masks. It had dark blue curves with moon-silver accents. I watched the image develop and eventually she said, "I went to the Carnival of Venice this year, so I guess it's on my mind."

I nodded.

"Do you work?" she asked.

"I'm in banking."

I heard muted electronic music and felt vibrations under my feet. The girl looked up and smirked. I half looked at her and half looked at a shape chugging a beer on the other side of the

roof. His wrist sported a reflective watch and his eyes were hidden behind sunglasses. The shape stood out to me; it was someone I knew. He wiped his forehead and reached into his pocket. He pulled out a cell phone. He put it to his ear. There he was. Victor. It was him even though he's more suited for swanky lounges—not quite good enough to cut the line but good enough if he waits twenty minutes and agrees to buy an overpriced bottle of vodka. He was stationed near the ladder. The air seemed denser. There was no chance of escape. A breeze made the girl's brush feel cold on my arm.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

I looked down at my arm and smiled. An eye was right below my elbow and another was above my wrist. "It looked weird without the eyes," she said. "So I had to paint them in."

He seemed to look toward us but I couldn't be sure.

"It's awesome," I said. "How could I not like it?"

More people climbed the ladder and Victor finally relocated to a spot near the cooler of beer. I told my new friends I would be back and sidestepped over to the ladder. There were three people climbing so I waited. The paint on my arm was still wet.

"Sammy?" Fuck. I didn't turn around, opting to pretend the noise stifled his voice. I focused on the people climbing up. The first girl to reach the top widened her eyes when she saw me and

smiled a childish smile, as though she were experiencing the world for the first time.

"Sammy?" A hand on my shoulder now.

I turned and feigned a surprised expression. "Oh man, buddy. What are the odds?" I grinned and put my hands in my pockets. "Did you come straight from work?"

"Straight from work. Had to change in the bathroom." He was out of place in a slim-fit lavender polo. He offered me a cigarette. "I'm fucking wasted," he said, taking off his sunglasses.

I waved my hand, turning down the cigarette. "Have you been here before?" I asked.

"Actually, no. This is wild. I grew up with a guy who was into this shit. We met for lunch and he convinced me to check this place out, so here I am. Kind of figured he would be here." He sipped his beer and glanced around. "Anyway, I'm enjoying myself," he said.

"It's a decent spot. I've heard there are better ones."

He stared somewhere behind me. "Oh yeah? I want to hit up these places more often. I'm always in the city so I end up forgetting about Brooklyn."

"The city's good too," I said, because there was nothing else to say. I saw that the ladder was clear. "I was just going to the bathroom before. I'll be back."

"I'll join you. I need to recharge." I let him go in front of me. "Nice arm, by the way. Adorable." He laughed as he climbed down the first few rungs.

I smiled in spite of myself. "You *would* like this, you gay bastard."

When my foot hit the last rung, I jumped down, landed on the third-floor fire escape, and ducked into the window. It was hot inside. Heavy bass combined with rhythmic drumming made the dancing seem tribal. The partygoers were a single chaos-seeking unit. I passed a kissing booth and one of those funhouse mirrors. A few people played volleyball with a beach ball and no net. A warped circle had formed around an average break-dancer. An Asian raver with LED gloves put on a lightshow for a dazed girl wearing angel wings. I pushed past people and nobody even realized. The bathroom was at the end of a narrow hallway lined with red lights. I closed the door behind me and was relieved to hear the bump of muffled music.

"Well, we made it." Victor smirked and headed for the stall farthest from the door. I stood at a urinal and looked in the mirror that covered the top-half of the wall. The mirror had been vandalized with permanent black marker. The words said things like, The earth without art is just eh and Shut up, you look fine. My shirt was a mess of smeared paint.

"Have you thought about the Buckman call next week?" Victor yelled from the stall.

I wondered if the girl on the roof would be there when I got back. In the mirror I saw tiny cracks on the wall behind me. The place was in a state of decay. I thought I saw something grey scuttle across the floor but when I looked there was nothing.

"You gotta have some of this. Get in here," Victor said.

"Hey, I wanted to ask you something," I said, watching a few ants crawl in the off-white grout between the tiles.

"Ask away," he said, and a kid that couldn't have been older than eighteen walked into the bathroom.

"Do you ever feel bad?" I asked.

"About what?" When I didn't answer, Victor repeated, "About what?"

"It's not my business, but I'm curious."

"Well, what?"

"You know, when you pitch something and they lose money?" I paused, noticing how strung-out my eyes looked. "What I mean is…"

"My god, this stuff is incredible. I only get from this one guy now that Allan hooked me up with. Goddamn." There were a few seconds of silence and the bathroom hum filled my ears. "Shit, I cut you off. Alright, keep going."

"Another time. It's not important," I said.

"Nah, I remember now. Look, I totally see where you're coming from. You think that never crossed my mind? The truth is these people have so much fucking money. These are educated people. You think they don't know the deal? Shit, they know the deal. They know I want to make money and that I'll tell them pretty much anything. Don't forget, there's a good chance they'll come out ahead, and if they don't..." Victor sniffed a sniff of elation. "Well, there's more where that came from. Losing money from one deal isn't putting anybody on the streets."

"But is there a reason to lie so blatantly?" I asked.

"Listen, I hear you on the phone sometimes. You don't push enough. People want enthusiasm. They want to feel like somebody cares about them. You're the one who decided to make this your career, so why do it half-ass?" He stopped for a second. "Don't take it the wrong way. It's just how I look at things. We all have our opinions." For some reason, he laughed. "I really do feel bad sometimes though."

The ants weren't there anymore.

"There was a pretty hot girl up there," Victor said. "On the roof."

I nodded at my reflection and pulled my phone from my pocket. It slipped from my hand onto the damp floor and I

scrambled to pick it up. I walked to Victor's stall and flung the door open.

"Dude, what the fuck? Close the door," Victor said, his head bent over the toilet paper holder lined with cocaine.

"Sorry," I said, and joined him in the stall. The bathroom door opened, amplifying the music for a second. The eighteen-year-old had left.

"Here," he said, passing me a rolled up dollar bill.

"I need a second. Feel weird from the beer," I said.

When Victor put the bill up his nose and bent down again, I snapped a picture.

He squinted. "How drunk are you? Delete that shit."

"Not sure I feel like it," I said.

"Is there a problem here?" he asked, tilting his head.

"You shouldn't come to these things anymore." My inhalations seemed rushed and desperate.

He stood up and said, "I'll go wherever I choose to go. This is a free party."

"Well, I'm getting out of here."

"Seriously, are you on something?" he asked. He stood there, waiting.

I walked out of the bathroom, shoving past girls in flowing skirts and guys with eccentric haircuts. It was less crowded; time

to go home. The partygoers looked at me with confused and disappointed expressions. They had overlooked everything in the haze of the darkened, sparkling madness—but they took notice now. I caught a glimpse of the friends I had made on the roof, watching me. I started to run, looking back every few seconds, expecting Victor to be following me but he wasn't there. When I got outside, my eyes had trouble adjusting to the soft light so indicative of early morning.

A Moonless Night

Rachel Heimowitz

Chugging for home
to the boat-engine's dying
cough and sputter,
five of us alone together,
in the deepest part
of a moonless night,
18° North of the equator,
under a milky-way so thick
you could pour it into a glass;
my father, his loud
black shadow haloed
against the night,
ranting at the stars:
his shitty boat, shitty life,
shit on by everyone,
the thief mechanic,
incompetent wife, his three useless
daughters, each respectively renamed:
the dumb head, the saddle,
the power-hungry bitch—

And underneath this heft and punch
the sounds of soft water
lapping against the boat
and hundreds of sudden

rain-like splashes
as schools of small fish
rise wave after wave
as if from an underwater explosion
trying to escape what we could see
lit up perfectly in its own radiance:
a shark's suave body swimming
with its mouth wide open.

Checkpoint Calandia

Joanna Chen

It's the end of November, hot as hell,
travelling to Ramallah in a white limo
with tinted windows others can't see
through. I'm hunting for a sound bite, sharp
quote, a bit of Convergence, Resolution

or Dialogue will do. I am dubious conveyor
of information, driven by Kareem, who chews
his nails fervently and laughs all the way to
destination point: His Absolute Excellency
Salam Fayyad (at this very moment sifting

through papers in an office lined with pale stone,
a bowl filled with macaroons placed on his desk).
"It's about creating positive facts on the ground,"
Fayyad recites to me later. In the back seat,
I clutch my papers with the questions printed

out. I know the answers, only the questions
shift perspective. I can see clearly now Banksy's
grey wall on wall snaking around. He painted
a big crack in the wall to see right through
to the other side, blue sky revealing more

blue sky. Kareem says he saw the movie
but he's smiling again and I don't believe him.
Reaching Calandia we transit checkpoint.
To transit checkpoint: Stop. Prepare documents
for inspection. To transit checkpoint stop. To

transit checkpoint stop and prepare documents
for inspection. To transit check point wait
for instructions. And wait. Arafat Lives On,
apparently. Soldiers Go Home. I am always
objective, I report what I see. Window rolls

down, documents are handed over. No eye
contact at Calandia. The Israeli guards are jumpy
scared and I know this because it was on the news
last night, it's because they are nineteen years old
and their mothers always put softener in the final

rinse. A white turkey with punky feathers ascends
the sidewalk as documents are inspected, checkpoint
transited. It's Thanksgiving soon, *Inshallah, B'Ezrat*
HaShem, in any language, at least for the Americans.
Ezra Pound lived in a cage and hated Jews but he was

a good poet, no? Literature is news that stays news
but in the Middle East everyone knows that no news
is good news and the answers were written so long ago
that no one can really remember any more. Check.
Point. I think I'll bake macaroons this afternoon.

Mourning Cloak

Gail Wallace Bozzano

The butterfly sailed toward me, dodged past, and landed on the beige brick wall of my house, a foot from where I stood. It opened and closed its wings a few times. Then it spread them out to receive the waning autumn sunlight. Something inside me whispered, "*Look*."

I didn't know what kind it was. It looked as big as a monarch, and dark, its wings a deep brownish-maroon bordered with pale yellow. A line of bright blue dots edged the yellow border. The wings seemed lit from within. They were the color of kidneys, the color of dried blood, the color you see behind closed eyelids. The color of a dream.

I'd dreamt of butterflies the night before. The heaviness of that dream had stayed with me, mingled with the heaviness of a depression I tried hard to fight. I was burned out from caring for my three children, the youngest a toddler, the oldest on the autism spectrum and about as difficult as they come. We had had a tough week and I was in despair.

This is the dream: I walk through a forest dappled with sunlight. A friend—I don't know who—walks beside me. Suddenly a butterfly, a yellow and black swallowtail, swoops past us, and we laugh and follow it deeper into the woods. It leads us to a clearing, a bright enough, open enough place. But then I look closer. Spider webs—enormous, a nightmare out of Tolkien—are strung between the trees. Trapped in the webs are butterflies. They aren't the color of the swallowtail that led us to the clearing. They are deeper, darker, the color you see behind closed eyelids. The color of a dream.

The wings beat again and again at the air that cannot carry them. It would take so little, I think, to set the butterflies free. My friend has the same thought. "Let's help them," she says, and steps forward. I start to follow her but freeze. Spiders crouch in the webs, silent and still. Waiting. Their bodies are as big as my hand, their legs as thick as pencils. What would they do if I reached out to touch the butterfly in the nearest web? Nothing, perhaps. But the fear that courses through me is so strong and thick that I can't push through its current. The butterflies beat and beat their wings. I stand trapped.

I woke up shaking. Seven hours later, the butterfly landed on my house. An apparition from my dream world? I didn't know what to believe. I only knew that watching that butterfly brought

me to a place of peace. I saw how it took in the unexpected warmth of a late October day, marshaling strength for another journey. Eventually it snapped its wings shut and opened them again. Then it leaped into the air, floating away in the direction it had come, past the oak tree in the front yard of the house across the street. I watched it until it disappeared. Its zig-zag movement only seemed erratic. It knew where it needed to go.

Later I learned its name: *mourning cloak*. The dark color of its wings, which gives the butterfly its name, helps it to store warmth and light. Mourning cloaks live longer than any other butterfly. They are the only species that overwinter, which means that while other butterflies migrate or die before the first frost, mourning cloaks creep into hidden crevices deep within trees and wait it out. They live to see another spring.

I took comfort in knowing such a fragile creature could survive the brutal Midwestern winters. Maybe I could overwinter, too. I'd worked so hard to be a good mother to my kids, the youngest son unplanned, the oldest son more than I ever bargained for, and my four-year old daughter, in the middle, too often overlooked. Gabriel, my toddler, still wasn't sleeping through the night. Mark's tantrums were frequent and epic and left me drained. I worried constantly what the household stress

and my own depression did to Lauren. I went to bed exhausted and woke up, still exhausted.

Somewhere along the path of motherhood, I had lost part of myself. I stopped listening to that wild dream-child deep inside me, who loved to write and ride horses and explore the woods and dig bare feet deep into wet sand. How could I listen to her when there were diapers to change, sibling squabbles to referee, endless rounds of therapy sessions to drive Mark to, books on Asperger's and ADHD to read? How much more abandonment could that dream-child take before she quietly gave up and died?

But against the wall of my very own house, I found her—still fighting. She had enough strength to whisper "*Look*." Somehow, I had enough sense to listen.

Five months later, I found myself in a forest. I should have been doing other things that afternoon, but Mark and Lauren were at school, and Gabriel was at the babysitter's. I had a few precious hours to myself and it was early April. The sun shone and the winter had been hard. A voice deep within me urged, "*Go outside*."

I drove to an oak forest along a river corridor that is thousands of years old, left the car, and took a path into the woods. Spring came late that year and the tree branches were still

bare. The woods appeared brown and gray and silver where shafts of sunlight hit the tree trunks. Last fall's oak leaves littered the ground. I drank in the sunlight and blue sky and sounds of old branches creaking in the wind. The woods felt hushed, as if waiting for something.

A flash of movement caught my eye. A bird, surely; what else would be out and about this early in the season? But something inside me already knew. An eerie feeling swept through me, raising the hairs on the back of my neck. I stood and waited as the butterfly sailed toward me. Its wings were the color of kidneys, of dried blood, the color you see behind closed eyelids. The color of a dream.

This time I knew its name. This time there was no heaviness inside me. This time the butterfly wasn't trapped. There were no spiders. The friend beside me was inside of me, the voice I had learned to trust.

The mourning cloak flew close enough to brush the strands of hair near my face. Without slowing down, it sailed right past me, down the forest path. I stood for a moment while my heart opened and opened, spreading itself to receive warmth and light. I followed the butterfly into the woods.

A hunger for stone

Stephani Maari Booker

I began to hunger for stone
Licking my lips
parched with no want for wetness

Denying, denying, until memory
slips into my mouth—

White gravel tumbles into
my cupped palm
Toss the pile into my mouth
crunching, soft and dry
grinding into powder

Eatin' that Argo starch
with my mama
with my auntie
like my grandmama

Satisfying a thirst for dust
Older than Georgia white clay
Older than Alabama red dirt
Famished Brown wombs
craving the good earth
Pure dust free of the rot

They claw for precious stone
in the mother ground
Biting chunks out of boulders

Our iron-drained vessels
have been starved
for so long
So many mothers and daughters
Bodies hungry for ore
Driven to feeding on stone

My foremothers' blood—My poor blood
Seeking strength from the rock

I thank my blood
for sending me the craving
and teaching me the healing.

uncle

Nicole M. Ellis

we didn't find you until you were cold
Christmas eve
father led the way
my brother and I
stepping in the holes where
snow outside your door was deep

inside I breathed out
in a rush
hoping the white plume of my breath
would hide the
blood that was already a dried crust
on your lips

six bottles of vodka on your table
all for your birthday
cat curled into a tattered armchair
stained with dirt and grease
tv still crackling christmas cartoons

bottles of pills
filled the sink

slumped against the wall
you looked like a child

who had fallen asleep on the couch
waiting for santa

my father was the parent
trying to wake you
to take you to bed

but he was your younger brother
and you were the closest thing he had
to a father

he shook you
your head hit against
a log meant for the woodstove

but the fire was out

Baba

Matea Kulic

my muse is
a sharp migraine

an old woman
a sponge soaked cake

her body
mourning

a bridge

trodden
the way

pull the root
trace the veins

clear leaves
of your map

nothing in
out

nothing

wait.

(I said)

wait.

out
nothing in

nothing

of your map
clear leaves

trace the veins
pull the root

mourning
trodden

abridge

the way
her body

a sharp migraine
an old woman

a sponge soaked cake

my muse is

Go Cowboys

Cathleen Calbert

First of all, Shonna talk to your brother.
This is not a loss, this is a win.

I love everyone that loves me.
I am good, I am straight, don't trip.

I loved your daughter. Can you hear me?
Things happened. Let me rest. It's burning.

I'm not a killer. My momma was abused.
I'm sorry for what you've gone through.

Did I ever tell you, you have Dad's eyes?
I have no final words. On my side,

I helplessly rehearse the news
of tumor, of trouble, what some doctor

will tell me I must undergo, must endure
before I get to leave this confusing world.

Jesus, I'm the weakest lily, silly
with self-love. *I am the sinner of all sinners.*

People hollered for my life,
and they are to have my life tonight.

No wonder I wondered as a girl if I, like Mary,
could get off the hook of bodily putrefaction

and float straight on up to heaven because
wasn't I also pretty good, kind of special?

I can taste it. Life is death, death is life.
Cowboy up, I'm fixing to ride.

At the women's prison in Connecticut,
I fed inmates images until lunch wheeled in:

orange and gluey food a poor mother
might feed her unhealthy children.

Anyway, the guardian lady already had said
to "keep it clean" when my "students" read

their captive poems as if poetry freed anybody.
I felt a fool for trying. This lime-tree bower my...

Tell all the brothers to keep their heads up,
eyes toward the sky. I never done anything

in my life to anybody. I am coming to see you.
We need to love each other like we used to.

In short, I don't want to be told I'm dying.
These Texans whose words I've taken were,

of course, on death row in the Lone Star State,
whose official motto is simply "friendship."

Given "the situation," why not a final shout
out to your team? Return to your boyhood

of games and hopes before you clubbed
someone to death, before you faced your own?

There are worse ending lines, right?
In my worried, white mind, I'm liking:

That's it. Let's go. Let's roll.
Warden, take me home.

Virginity, a Dirty Word

Megan Rahija Bush

"Come on, girl, you have to know where your hole is."

An experience that cannot be mine. I look down at her instead; God and I stare in shock. A girl, younger than she thought she was; a bed, a boy, the magic and the punch no longer quite so strong. A heap of leather boots, a bong, one dim lamp stifled by a tapestry, a desk, a not-quite-finished paper strewn, forgotten.

"We can always stop," he whispers. His unfamiliar hands hold hips that curve like dollar signs. Earlier, she'd liked the way his eyes looked up, then down, appraising. "I've worked hard this week," he'd whispered to himself. "I deserve a little fun." He'd said it loud enough for her to hear.

She's naked on the bed. Her shoulders, lips and legs are stiff and straight, anesthetized with determination. He looms above her, she feels his eyes more than his hands—he traces collarbone, breast, and thigh. His breath is wet, he smells of

smoke and grass and beer. She hopes he cannot feel her fear. Relax, body, relax; lie still, lie still.

"Come on, girl."

He's frustrated; she hears it in his voice. Blood rushes to her cheeks and not her groin. No, she thinks, horrified. But she spreads her legs, her muscles twitch, myofibrils taut like bodies at war.

No, her body says. No, no no no no no.

But its "no, don't stop" she whispers into his ear.

He pushes against her; she doesn't know where he's supposed to be. Pubic hair scrapes pubic hair. His breath is rough. She panics that she's doing something wrong. It hurts! She grinds her teeth, too conscious of herself, she wants out—God, let her out!—too conscious of her legs, her arms, her hips, her hole, too conscious of the roughness of the push, the rip, the pain. She lets him lance through her. If she's still it will be over. If she's still she'll wake up and no longer be that dirty word.

And from above I can only watch. Through a glass I stare at her, a patient on a the table, we all watch, our lab coats hang like angels' wings, objective interest in the body lying still. You don't have to! I want to scream, bang on glass, but she cannot hear.

Around me you all scribble notes—thinking, "Yes, yes, it happens, it happened to me too. There's always that first time. She'll learn the motions; she'll learn to feel less naked and less judged. Even in this night she learns: look, watch, see how the body learns. She'll be ok."

The body barely shows its pumping heart: it's calm, it lets what must be done, be done, while through the glass I scream. And mortification sears like blood-red coins branded on each cheek, even now, even still, even staring at a memory. He's gentle but it's just more shame, this boy known only this one night, stealing intimacy from a body that does not understand itself.

And from the ceiling John Belushi stares too, one eye on her, COLLEGE plastered to his chest. He winks, and downs his Jack. No. We shut my eyes and wait for it to end: mind over body, mind over body, mind over body, mind over body. Lie still, lie still, lie still.

My mother can always tell a done woman.

Sara Kachelman

The first,
A car swung into the gas station parking lot.
The girl grabbed her purse,
Gone.
"She left that bastard for good," my mother said
And turned back to the red light.

The second,
There was a high, high hill
And the woman had two suitcases.
She'd drag one for ten paces,
Drop it,
Turn around and drag the other one ten paces,
Drop it.
She came back three times before the light turned green.
"Look at that," my mother said. "Just look at that."

Both times I asked her how she knew
And she'd say it's how you walk away.

Who watched from a waiting car
When she made her decision?

Animus

Jessica Irwin Shaw

I love women who look like
horses
women who look
like birds
women who unfold
and unfurl
in my hands
women with shoulder blades I can grip
caress
hang gasping
from
face in neck
shielded by
by a swing
of hair
women who
gallop
stampede
through my room at night
women with wings
and beaks
that pick
and tear at me
and never give me a peaceful
minute

waking or sleeping
women determined
to devour
my heart
whole
and still beating.

The Parts of Me

Chelsea Sutton

Ms. Jenkins has three buttons where her nose should be.

She frowns and sneezes as she counts out nine dollars for the day-old bread. One of the buttons detaches itself and rides the sneeze all the way to the counter where it lands on the back of my hand. It has a mother-of-pearl sheen to it, with bits of velvet thread still clinging to its holes. She must have removed it from an old Sunday coat.

The rumor was, Ms. Jenkins had fallen in love with a college professor years ago. But when he finally shunned her, after several trysts in the most remote parts of the campus library, Ms. Jenkins awoke the morning after with her nose disappeared from her face.

Ms. Jenkins has said that she is happy of the fact she never again has to smell the aroma of ancient books.

Falling in love and falling out again could be a dangerous business. You never come out fully in tact.

I had lost my left eye and my right ear nearly a year ago. Denny had been a musician and a painter, and so they were ripped from me after things went sour. I may be deaf on my left side, but I at least have a set of marbles and beach stones I like to wear in the empty eye socket—today, I am wearing a green marble with squiggles of white and purple.

I hand the button back to her and she grabs it with a grunt.

"You must get that oven fixed, Riley," she says, gripping the bag I had stuffed with three loaves of yesterday's batch.

"I've already called for the repair, ma'am."

"I have half a mind to go to Helson's bakery from now on. He has working ovens and never sells anything he baked the day before." She's trying to tie the lost button back to her face.

"Half a mind?" Mr. Link's voice comes from behind her, where he's been waiting to order his usual Tuesday breakfast. "Did you lose your mind along with your nose, Ms. Jenkins?" Mr. Link taps his thread-bare newsboy hat and gives her a toothy grin.

"Literal old fool," Ms. Jenkins turns red and kicks at the umbrella that stands in place of Mr. Link's left leg, which disappeared shortly after his wife died not five years ago.

"Here." Mr. Link lifts his right hand where a needle has replaced his index finger, and a spool of thread lives where his

thumb should be. With a quick flick of the wrist, Ms. Jenkin's button is sewn back to her face.

"See?" he says. "We're made for each other, you and I."

Ms. Jenkins grunts, shoots me a warning look and leaves with her bread.

"I suppose she doesn't agree. You think I have a chance, Riley?"

I pour him his usual cup of coffee and grab one of yesterday's scones from the display. "Maybe if you wear a different hat," I say.

"Yes, it's probably the hat."

There is a jingle at the door and Gage enters carrying his signature rusting tool kit and wearing his oil stained canvas jumpsuit, though today there's dark around his eyes, and he moves with careful steps.

Gage has no missing parts. He is fully whole. A rarity.

I am also in love with him. Which is dangerous.

He smiles at me and mumbles something about good morning. I try to mumble something back but smile stupidly instead.

He almost doesn't notice his father at the counter.

"You're late, my boy," Mr. Link says, clapping his son on the back. "Ms. Jenkins has already accosted Riley about the lack of fresh bread and I blame the whole incident entirely on you. Say sorry to the poor girl."

"Sorry, Riley."

"Oh, that old goat Jenkins will never get her baked goods from Helson's, anyway. George Helson is how she lost all the toes on both her feet. You never see it because she's always wearing those clunky orthopedic shoes." Mr. Link says, settling at a table by the window.

I pour a cup of coffee for me and Gage.

"Riley needs a new oven. I can only fix it so many times," Gage says, starting toward the kitchen.

"Yes, well she needs a new eye too, but we can't always afford the things we want, can we?" says Mr. Link.

"I disagree with the first part," says Gage, disappearing behind the kitchen doors.

Mr. Link turns to me and holds up his needle and thread fingers. "I could sew a new ear on for you, if you like."

"What's that?" I say, feigning deafness in my good ear and hurrying to the kitchen with the coffees.

Gage has already managed to pull the oven slightly out from the wall and is tinkering with things I can't see. I watch him for a

moment. We have spent many mornings like this in silence, Gage repairing my oven and letting his coffee go cold, with me looking on, useless.

"I didn't tell you what was broken," I say as I spread flour over the counter top and start to roll out dough for sugar cookies, in hopes the oven doesn't stay dead this time.

"It's always the same problem," Gage says from behind the oven.

"Maybe you should just teach me how to fix it." I always say this and he always laughs and teases me for my ineptitude with machinery.

Gage's tinkering stops for a few beats. My heart seems to flicker as I wait for his usual response. "That's not a bad idea," he says.

Gage leans against the wall, takes several deep breaths. He plugs the oven back in, shuffles to the front knobs and switches it on. When nothing happens, he slams his foot into the side of the oven and, after some shuddering and shaking the oven coughs to life.

"See? I'm a professional," Gage huffs.

"What do you mean, it's not a bad idea?"

"Huh?"

"You retiring or something?"

Gage moves in micro steps. He hangs on the counter for support and stops close to me. I'm squishing a ball of dough in my hand and I feel my face flushing. We've seldom been this close. I can feel his breath on my cheek.

"I have something for you." Gage pulls out a glimmering mess of metal and tubing from his pocket, a trinket shaped like an ear. "It's made from broken pieces from your oven. To replace the one you're missing."

Gage slips my hair off my shoulder and places the thing where my old ear used to be, a place I've kept clean and open, in case the ear ever decided to return on its own accord. It fits snuggly against my skin and stays there.

I don't know what to say.

I think I might kiss him. This might be one of those moments. When the music swells and butterflies fill my stomach and we fall in love.

But instead, Gage collapses to the floor.

It takes both Mr. Link and I to pull him up and onto the counter in the kitchen. Mr. Link slaps at his son's face. He stamps his umbrella leg and yells Gage's name.

Gage is still breathing but I hear a faint ticking coming from his chest. I think for a moment I might be hearing it from that

new ear, Gage's gift, but I lean my good ear down and there it is, faint and sputtering—a clock ticking.

I unbutton Gage's shirt and Mr. Link steps back from the table. Gage's chest is cut wide open near his left side, and through the hole we get a clear view of where Gage's heart should be.

But it's no longer whole—pieces of ventricle and tissue curve around a small alarm clock, which Gage must have installed himself. And the clock is slowing down.

"Did you…" I stutter at Mr. Link.

"No idea," he says.

"I thought he was… he'd never…"

"Once. He fell in love once. But that was years ago... I thought… he seemed fine when it ended. He had all his limbs for God's sake."

The clock seems to wind to a stop, there are coils of wire and springs sticking into his rib cage. I tap the clock's face and it jolts back to a weak but working life.

"It has to be replaced," I say.

"With what?" Mr. Link looks panicked, the most unraveled I've ever seen him before.

"Could you go out to the front and lock the door and turn off the open sign?"

"But—"

"I have an idea. But I need a minute."

"I hear you. I hear you, Riley."

Mr. Link shuffles out of the kitchen. I hear the click of the lock, the string being pulled on the sign. I hear this with both my ears, it seems.

I don't actually have an idea. But then I remember the dough in my hand.

As the oven continues to heat up, I roll and beat the dough, I shape it into a heart.

But no, that's not enough.

I pull chocolate chips and blueberries and cinnamon from the cabinets and add it to the dough. What else does Gage like? Peaches. Caramel. Brown sugar. It all goes in.

I roll the dough again and shape it again and throw it in the oven. And I wait.

I hear the jingle of the door opening and Ms. Jenkin's voice. Then Mr. Link's voice. I hear what they're saying but the words aren't reaching my brain. I'm counting. I'm timing this perfectly.

I continue to count. Their voices subside and I think I hear crying and pacing and coffee being poured.

I pull the giant cookie from the oven. It's bubbling and squirting juice and slick with chocolate. It is a far cry from my perfect pastries I have so much pride about.

Ms. Jenkins and Mr. Link come into the kitchen as I cradle the hot heart-cookie and stare down at Gage. I imagine what it might be like to kiss him, something I've imagined hundreds of times before. I kiss the cookie instead, and caramel drips from my lips.

I pull the clock gently out of his chest and it makes a sickening *ploop* sound. Gage stops breathing. I stop breathing.

I place the heart where the clock once was. It steams against his insides. I attach the remnants of his heart tissue to the cookie and they fuse from the heat and the stickiness of the caramel.

We wait. It seems like hours but it's only seconds before Gage begins breathing again.

"I've never seen anything like it," Ms. Jenkins says. "No one makes parts for other people. I had to make my own new nose."

"It's obvious," Mr. Link says.

Ms. Jenkins goes to jab him in the ribs, but kisses him on the cheek instead.

"Gage made me an ear." I point to the Frankenstein trinket on the side of my head.

Ms. Jenkins and Mr. Link stare at it with open mouths.

"It's not the prettiest thing, sure, but I thought it was nice. I fell in love with it," I say.

"It looks—so authentic," says Mr. Link.

I reach up and touch the trinket and feel flesh instead of tubing. I hurry to the kitchen bathroom and there, in the mirror, I see it. A soft earlobe has formed around Gage's handiwork. I snap my fingers. I can hear it. I touch the metal bits at the top of the ear, I try to pull it off, it won't move. It's a part of me now.

When I come out of the bathroom, Gage is sitting up on the counter, Mr. Link and Ms. Jenkins jabbering and forcing a glass of juice into his hand.

"I lost plenty of parts before your mother," says Mr. Link. "But even when she died, I didn't internalize it, son. It would be like you to start falling apart on the inside."

"I'm missing my toes," says Ms. Jenkins.

"I know," says Mr. Link.

"But also a little piece of the back of my ankle," says Ms. Jenkins.

Gage gazes at me as I walk into the room. He pulls himself to the end of the counter.

"I'm missing a bit of my eyebrow, see that?" says Mr. Link.

"That's nothing. My belly button disappeared," says Ms. Jenkins.

I can't seem to take my eye off of Gage. I might be crying a little, even from the empty eye socket. I point to my newly forming ear.

"Your belly button? I don't believe it," says Mr. Link.

"I'll show you," says Ms. Jenkins.

"Are you trying to seduce me, Ms. Jenkins?" says Mr. Link.

"Absolutely not," says Ms. Jenkins.

And I'm there, as close as I've ever been to him. He's looking at my ear.

I'm looking at his heart. The heart-shaped cookie monstrosity is beginning to grow and change, shifting into a real heart, and his chest is melting, ever so slowly, back together.

"I remember it was painful," Gage says. "I mean, my chest opened up and half my heart just dropped right out after Jenny… well… it was the worst thing there is. Only had about a minute to find something to fill the hole. But I could feel the clock slowing down… I could only fix it so many times."

"I think that was an invitation," says Mr. Link.

"I would never invite you anywhere," says Ms. Jenkins.

"Don't play coy," says Mr. Link. "You know why we're meant for each other, don't you?"

"God forbid you tell me," says Ms. Jenkins.

"I've wanted to tell you for a long time," says Gage.

"Tell me what? That you've been hurt, just like everyone else?" I say, touching the new skin around the hole in his chest.

"Not exactly," he says. And kisses me.

"I have two belly buttons," says Mr. Link. "That's why."

Our kiss is long and wet and tastes of caramel and blueberries.

"You do not," says Ms. Jenkins.

I feel his heart beat faster and smell chocolate on his breath.

"I'll show you," says Mr. Link.

I hear peaches in his stomach.

"I don't want to see," says Ms. Jenkins.

I see cinnamon in the air around us.

"You can't ignore our connection forever," says Mr. Link.

"I have great stamina to ignore you," says Ms. Jenkins.

"And I have great stamina to wear your stamina down," says Mr. Link.

"That's what I've been wanting to say," says Gage.

I wonder how long he'll taste like that. And I'm looking forward to finding out.

Madrugada en la mira

Alejandro Saravia

El día en que cumplió diez años su padre le regaló una escopeta Winchester. Aim… steady… hold it steady… le susurraba su voz ronca mientras el niño, con el pulso vacilante y los ojos aterrados, apuntaba con el alza y la mira al pelaje de una nerviosa liebre a la distancia. Veinte años más tarde todavía recuerda claramente el olor de la pólvora tras el golpe de la culata, pero ya no quedan liebres en los parajes de su infancia. Desde su polvorienta granja se puede ver a la distancia el grisáceo brazo de un río. Si uno fuerza la mirada, se pueden divisar las casas, las calles al otro lado de la frontera. Cada domingo el reloj le despierta a las dos de la madrugada. Ésa es su hora más generosa. Se levanta a oscuras, se viste a tientas y sale a la veranda de su granja. El aire huele a cueva húmeda, a humo. Al otro lado del río se ven las luces que parpadean en las esquinas del pueblo vecino. A esa hora el río que parte en dos al mundo es una serpiente negra. El hombre conoce de memoria los pasos que hay que dar, los movimientos que hay que hacer en

los cuartos oscuros de su casa para encontrar el armario exacto de donde saca un fusil, un Remington 700, dormido en su funda. Le coloca la mira telescópica infrarroja. Acaricia el largo cañón, la nitidez de la culata y siente, reconfortado, el olor del lubricante. Atornilla el arma sobre un trípode que ahora mira al río. Solamente por el ojo del telescopio se puede ver a veces los movimientos intempestivos de algún roedor que avanza y se detiene entre los arbustos a la distancia. Coloca un proyectil 7.62 en la recámara del arma y espera. A veces espera y espera y llega el fulgor de la mañana que lo sorprende dormido, sentado frente al trípode y con la saliva seca en la comisura de la boca. A veces, a la media hora de estar sentado esperando, puede detectar entre la oscuridad el contorno térmico, el fulgor jade de cuerpos humanos en movimiento, avanzando por el borde al otro lado del río. Entonces siente que de golpe se le seca la garganta y se le hinchan las venas. A veces es tal el caballaje de sus latidos que no le deja escuchar los ruidos de la madrugada. La bocina de un camión, el lejano aullido de un coyote. Por la mira puede ver que aquellos cuerpos se detienen a ratos. Su talla es siempre diferente. Es difícil saber si lo que se mueve es un hombre o una mujer, porque la distancia es enorme entre el cañón de su fusil y el cuerpo que se mueve al otro lado de la ribera. Pero su arma es potente. Ha aprendido cómo seleccionar su blanco entre los

halos verdes que avanzan cautelosamente. Escoge el cuerpo más grande, el más tanteador del terreno. Entonces lo sigue con la mira. Espera y espera. En algún momento tendrá que detenerse para medir la fuerza de las aguas antes de animarse a vadearlas. Ése es el momento preciso. Son como liebres, se dice escuchando en silencio la voz de su padre. En ese mínimo segundo el hombre aprieta el gatillo con fuerza. Hay un fulgor breve que ilumina el perfil de su rostro, las columnas de la veranda. La fuerza del disparo le golpea el hombro, le hace temblar el arma y por un momento se pierde de vista el halo térmico del blanco elegido. Mira de nuevo por el ojo telescópico, atento. Encuentra que el fulgor del cuerpo apuntado ha caído al agua y puede ver a veces los manotazos inútiles mientras lo arrastra la corriente. Puede ver cómo otras formas, esta vez agitadas, cayéndose, levantándose, corren por ese lado de la ribera, ya sin cuidarse de guardar el sigilo, siguiendo al cuerpo que se hunde y se levanta. A veces puede escuchar débilmente gritos a la distancia. Esos perfiles de cuerpos grandes y pequeños siguen por un rato al cuerpo inmóvil que las aguas se llevan flotando. Siente la tentación de recargar su arma y disparar de nuevo, pero se contiene. Mejor no exagerar, mañana habrá otros, se dice, mientras observa cómo los cuerpos van retrocediendo paulatinamente por el camino recorrido hasta perderse de

regreso por las calles temblorosas, al otro lado del río. A veces, por un instante, a esa hora el viento suele traer una ráfaga de olor a frituras, una desgajada música de mariachis que se desvanece en el aire de la madrugada.

Dawn in Sights

Translated by María José Giménez

On his tenth birthday, his father gave him a Winchester shotgun. Aim… Steady... Hold it steady, the husky voice whispered, while the child, with trembling hands and frightened eyes, looked through the scope and aimed at the quivering fur of a wild rabbit out in the distance. Twenty years later, he can still remember the sharp smell of gunpowder after the recoil, but there are no wild rabbits left in his childhood roaming grounds. From his dusty ranch, he can see the grayish arm of a faraway river. If he looks hard, he can make out some houses and streets on the other side of the border. He wakes up at dawn every Sunday. Two o'clock is his most generous time. He gets up in the dark, gropes around for his clothes and walks out to the veranda. The air smells like a damp cave, of smoke. On the other side of the river, lights flicker in the corners of a nearby town. At that hour, the river that splits the world in half is a black snake. The man knows by heart how many steps he needs to take, the path he must follow through the dark rooms in his house to find

exactly the case he wants and take out a rifle, a Remington 700, asleep in its sleeve. He mounts the infrared scope on his rifle. He caresses its long barrel and smooth stock, and he breathes in the soothing scent of grease. He screws the weapon down onto a rest and points it toward the river. Only through the eye of the scope he can see the awkward movements of a rodent starting and stopping among the shrubs out in the distance. He loads a 7.62-millimeter cartridge into the chamber and waits. Sometimes he waits and waits until the morning light catches him asleep, sitting by his gun with crusted saliva at the corners of his mouth. Sometimes, after only a half hour of sitting and waiting, he starts to see the thermal contour in the dark, a moving jade glow of human bodies making their way along the bank on the other side of the river. Suddenly his throat is parched, and blood swells up in his veins. Sometimes the pounding gallop in his chest is so loud he can't even hear the sounds of the night. A truck honking, the faraway howl of a coyote. Through his scope he can see the bodies halt every now and then. They are always of different heights. It's hard to tell if the figure is that of a man or woman because of the wide distance between the barrel of his gun and the moving body on the opposite bank. But his weapon is powerful. He has learned how to select his target among the cautious green halos. He picks the largest body, the one feeling

around for the path. Then he follows it in his sight. And he waits. At some point the shape will have to stop to test the rushing waters before daring to wade across. That is the right time. They're just like wild rabbits, he says to himself, hearing his father's voice in his head. At that precise instant, he pulls hard on the trigger. A brief glow lights up the profile of his face and the rails of the veranda. The shot kicks his shoulder back, the rifle almost shakes loose from his grip, and for a moment he loses sight of the thermal halo of his chosen target. Alert, he looks through his scope again. The glowing body has fallen into the water, and he can almost see it struggling, arms flailing in vain as the current carries it away. He can see other shapes, now agitated, falling down, getting back up, running along the bank of the river, no longer attempting to be stealth, following the body down the river as it sinks under and rises back up. Sometimes he can hear faint screams. The silhouettes, some smaller, some larger, follow the lifeless body as it floats away. He feels tempted to reload and shoot again, but he holds back. Shouldn't overdo it, there will be more tomorrow, he says to himself as he watches the bodies gradually retreat along the path until they disappear into the flickering streets on the other side of the river. Sometimes at that hour, for a brief moment, the

breeze brings a waft of fried food, a tattered music of mariachis that fades into the air at dawn.

Mahatma Dandys, Buenos Aires, 2011 | Harry Wilson

Bios

Karen Boissonneault-Gauthier is a French Canadian Métis who likes to see the world in a way others may have missed. Her works have been published in national and regional papers, vocational, poetry and literary journals as well as heritage museums. To see more of Karen's photography, visit *Zen Dixie Magazine*, *Dactyl*, *Synaethesia Magazine*, *Vagabonds Anthology* and *Crack The Spine Literary Magazine*, to name but a few journals where her work is featured inside and on covers. You can follow Karen on Twitter @KBG_Tweets.

Stephani Maari Booker of Minneapolis, MN, writes prose and poetry for the page and for performance in which she wrestles with her multiple marginalized identities: African American, lesbian, lower-class, nerdy and sexy. Her creative work has been published most recently in the journals *Skin to Skin* (http://s2skin.com) and *phati'tude Literary Magazine* (phatitude.org) and the charity anthologies *Write for Light: A Collection of True Stories and Poems about Finding Light in the Darkness* edited by Dean Tucker (CreateSpace, 2013) and *Coming Together: Girl on Girl* (EroticAnthology.com, 2013). Visit Stephani's website for more information about her work: www.mnartists.org/Stephani_Booker.

Gail Wallace Bozzano is a former newspaper reporter and editor, and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia College Chicago. Her work has appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Hair Trigger*, and local newspapers. She lives with her husband and their three children in the Chicago area. This past winter she spent many hours cross-country skiing in the forest preserve where the butterfly synchronicity took place, communing with deer and a coyote.

Megan Rahija Bush is completing her MFA in Creative Nonfiction at University of Alaska Fairbanks. She hails from a functional family in Alaska's capitol city, but now lives by herself with a dysfunctional dog in a cabin in the Alaskan woods. She is currently writing her first memoir about growing up with her paranoid schizophrenic grandmother. Her work has been published in *Tidal Echoes Journal*.

Cathleen Calbert's poetry and prose have appeared in many publications, including *Ms. Magazine, The New Republic, The New York Times, The Paris Review,* and *The Women's Review of Books.* She is the author of three books of poetry: *Lessons in Space* (University of Florida Press), *Bad Judgment* (Sarabande Books), and *Sleeping with a Famous Poet* (C.W. Books). She has been awarded *The Nation* Discovery Award, a Pushcart Prize, and the Mary Tucker Thorp Award from Rhode Island College, where she is a Professor of English.

Joanna Chen is a journalist and literary translator so that she can write poetry. She has written for *Newsweek, The Daily Beast and* others, covering events in Israel and The West Bank. Her poetry and essays have been published in *Poet Lore*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *The Bakery,* among others. Translations into French of Joanna's own poetry have been published in *Recours au Poemes* and *Terre a Ciel.* She is guest poetry editor of *The Ilanot Review.* For more information, please visit her at www.joannachen.com.

William D'Arezzo is a native of Providence, RI and has lived most of his life in the New England area. In the arts he is largely self-taught, having drifted from one day job to another for twenty years while spending his evenings playing saxophone in local bars. He didn't enroll in college to formally study art and creative writing until his middle age years. "Infrastructure" comprises an autobiographical section from his first novel, *The Rhonda Front*, a different excerpt from which will appear in an upcoming issue of *The Milo Review.* His short fiction has also appeared in *Niche Literary Magazine*. He is currently at work on his second novel.

Robin Wyatt Dunn lives in southern California and is the author of three novels. He was born in the Carter Administration. You can find him at www.robindunn.com.

Nicole M. Ellis is a recent graduate of The University of Farmington at Maine where she studied Creative Writing and Psychology. She is now managing a small artisan bakery/café in Lewiston, ME while impatiently waiting to be able to move across the country to escape cold, snowy winters forever, to collect new stories from new people, and to pursue writing in any shape or form possible. Her dream is to find a career that involves writing, baking, and regularly cuddling adorable animals.

E. J. Evans is a poet, photographer and musician. Formerly a long-time resident of Florida, he now lives in Cazenovia, New York and is married to neurophilosopher Heidi Ravven.

Eleanor Fogolin received her Master's Degree in Literature from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her work has also been featured in *The New Quarterly*. She currently lives in Ottawa.

Erica Garza is a writer living in San Diego, California. She is currently working on a memoir about obsession called *Hairywoman* and writes for the feminist website *Luna Luna*. Her essays have been published by *Salon, HelloGiggles, Hot Metal Bridge*, *Airplane Reading*, and *C.L.A.P.* Read more at www.ericagarza.com.

Jennifer Genest grew up riding horses and playing in the woods of Sanford, a mill town in southern Maine where her family still owns a concrete company. In the past she has worked as a chambermaid in a beachfront motel, for a patriotic beer company in Boston, and as a copywriter in Los Angeles. Jennifer was a Peter Taylor Fellow for the 2013 Kenyon Review Writers Workshop. Her novel manuscript, *The Mending Wall*, is currently seeking publication (D4EO Literary Agency). Jennifer lives with her husband and daughter near Long Beach, CA.

María José Giménez is a Venezuelan-Canadian translator and rough-weather poet with a rock climbing problem. She has lived in the US and Canada since 1993. She has studied French, Spanish, and Translation, and she was a Banff International Literary Translation Centre participant in 2010. Her original work and translations of Latino-Canadian literature appear or will appear in journals such as *The Fourth River, The Apostles Review,* and *Drunken Boat*, and in anthologies (*Cloudburst: An Anthology of Hispanic Canadian Short Stories* and *Cuentos de nuestra palabra en Canadá: Primera hornada*). Her translations include poetry, short fiction, essays, screenplays, and a forthcoming memoir.

Johanna Grea was born in Toulouse, France and raised on the small Caribbean island of St. Martin. She has been living in New York for seven years now and is currently completing her MFA in Writing at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York. In 2013, Johanna was the associate editor of "The Manhattanville Review" and in 2012, the editor-in-chief of "Graffiti Literary Magazine". In 2011, Johanna wrote a weekly

fashion column for *L'Elite Magazine*. Her short story, "The Modiano Cafe", was awarded the 2010 Eileen O'Gorman Prize for Fiction. Johanna is working on her first novel and currently lives in Westchester County with her fiancé. Authors that have inspired her work are Dorothy Allison—for her fearlessness—and the one and only Alice Munro—for her subtle understanding of women's psyches.

Rachel Heimowitz is an emerging poet living in Israel. Her work has appeared, or is due to appear in *Spillway, Crab Orchard Review, Prairie Schooner, Oberon Poetry, Poetry Quarterly,* and *Poetica*. Her poems were nominated for The 2013 Pushcart Prize. Rachel is currently pursuing her MFA at Pacific University and her first chapbook, *What the Light Reveals* is due out in 2014 from Tebot Bach Press.

Sara Kachelman is a freshman at the University of the South. She is from Florence, Alabama. "My mother is a done woman" is her first publication.

Rebecca Kaplan is a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has been published in *The Daily Palette* and *Likewise Folio*.

Dicko King lives in Phoenix, Arizona. He has done graduate studies with the poets at ASU. His book, *Doggerland*, was a semi-finalist for The Blue Lynx Prize, a finalist for the Louise Brogan Award, and is prize-winner with Off the Grid Press, and is forthcoming in 2014. Other poems coming soon in the journals *Prime Number* and *Portland Review*.

Matea Kulic is a writer and literacy tutor living in Vancouver. She has been published in *RicePaper*, *Emerge*, *The Liar* and *Invisible City Press* and is currently at work on her manuscript titled *Baba*. The poem featured in this issue is a page from that larger piece. Between work and writing, she makes time for swimming.

Karen Loeb writes and teaches in Wisconsin. She has lived in Asia, and often writes about China and adoption issues. Her poetry and fiction have appeared recently in *Coal City Review, Boston Literary Magazine* Fall '13, *Hanging Loose* #99, *The Main Street Rag, Bloodroot, Otis Nebula* and *Thema.* Poems are forthcoming in *Edison Literary Review* and *Nerve Cowboy*.

Jude Marr is originally from Scotland. She is currently a teaching fellow at Georgia College in Milledgeville, from which fine institution she will soon

graduate with an MFA in poetry. It's a long story. Jude's work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *The Cortland Review*, *r.kv.ry.*, and *Cider Press Review,* among others. When not writing or teaching, she reads for *Arts & Letters* and *WomenArts Quarterly*, and she is an assistant editor at *Ghost Ocean*.

Darla Mottram is a student at Marylhurst University in Lake Oswego, Oregon. She likes to leave herself sprawled across chalkboards and tucked into library books. Her long-term goals involve earning an MFA in creative writing and maybe someday kicking the nail-biting habit she's been toting around since childhood. Her work has been recently published at *The Camel Saloon* and *Dead Snakes*, and will be featured in *Eunoia Review* in summer 2014.

Loretta Oleck is a psychotherapist, writer, and photographer with creative work recognized across a variety of disciplines. Her poetry has been published in dozens of publications including *Feminist Studies, Cultural Weekly, Word Riot, High Coupe, Right Hand Pointing, Commonline Journal, The Westchester Review,* and *Mom Egg.* Her ekphrasis poetry was performed at the *Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art* and selected for readings at many other venues. *Persephone Dreaming of Cherries* is her first chapbook to soon be published by *A Hurricane Press*. She is pleased to now begin the journey of sharing her still photography in magazines and journals.

Amanda Sanseverino is a fiction writer and tax accountant living in New York City. She grew up in Brooklyn and is a graduate of St. John's University. She often feels compelled to capture beauty and loves the way words look on a page.

Alejandro Saravia was born in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and since 1986 has lived in Quebec, where he works as a journalist. His publications include the novel *Rojo, amarillo y verde* (2003) and six books of poems: *La brújula desencadenada* (1996), *Oilixes helizados* (1998), *Habitante del décimo territorio* (2000), *Ejercicio de serpientes* (2004), *Lettres de Nootka* (2008), *Jaguar con corazón en la mano* (2010). His work appears in Canadian journals and newspapers such as *Quiebre*, *Tinta y Sombra*, *Mapalé*, and *Alter Vox*. He has earned awards and mentions in poetry and short story contests and is part of Montreal's Hispanic-Canadian collective *The Apostles Review*.

Jessica Irwin Shaw writes poetry and alienates her neighbors in suburban Colorado.

Jason Stocks is a poet, fiction writer and photographer born in Arkansas and raised in Mississippi. He received his BFA from Goddard College and an MFA from Pine Manor College, but credits life experiences for informing his work. His interests are ancient mythology, environmental stewardship and architectural restoration. He lives and works in Florida.

Chelsea Sutton is a fiction writer and playwright in Los Angeles. Her fiction has appeared in *Bourbon Penn*, *Farmhouse Magazine*, *The Catalyst*, *Spectrum*, *Eclectic Voices*, and *Fictionade*. She was the 2011 Winner of NYC Midnight's Flash Fiction Contest and received Honorable Mention in *Glimmer Train*'s Short Story Award for New Writers. Her plays have been developed and produced in Santa Barbara, New York and Los Angeles, most recently with Skylight Theatre Company's PlayLab and The Vagrancy. Her play *The Dead Woman* was recently named a Semifinalist in the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference 2013 and a finalist for the Stanley Drama Award. WithCoffeeSpoons.com

This unknown photographer and backwater malcontent has had his work published and exhibited somewhat widely. **Harry Wilson** has been on the brink of a brilliant career for 50 years. He lives in Bakersfield, California. www.harrywilsonphoto.com

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