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Table of Contents

Wildbirds among Branches | Dmitry Borshch

Hawk Ann in Love

Kathy Anderson

Hawk Ann lived in *slower* Delaware.

Fairfax wouldn't know slow if it reared up and bit her on the nose. She was like a little rocket, exploding all over the gaybar where Hawk Ann bartended.

"I bet you taste salty, girl." Fairfax grabbed Hawk Ann's suspenders and pulled her close, kissed her on the lips right in front of everyone.

Hawk Ann didn't like it. She wanted to court a woman properly, feel that slow heat grow until they couldn't stand to wait anymore, till they had to have each other or die. She felt incredibly bashful and odd, like her customers and friends and all the strangers in the bar had just seen her naked as the day she was born. Besides, she had met Fairfax only one hour before and didn't know a thing about her except that she had tawny skin that Hawk Ann was dying to touch and lips that tasted like Limoncello liqueur.

Slower lower Delaware was dairy farms; foxes standing at the edge of fields at twilight; long back roads with treacherous ditches running alongside; pea soup fog mornings; abandoned school buses and house trailers with their windows punched out, rotting in overgrown patches of woods; hefty red-faced men fishing on the beach, their rods planted deep in the sand; horses in front yards; and children playing baseball near a canal where foul balls fell to the water floor and stayed there in the muck. Hawk Ann had been one of those kids.

But the inner circle of the area was also a prime tourist playland, with outlet malls and waterparks and chain restaurants crammed up next to each other for miles leading into Rehoboth. The town was an epicenter for gay and lesbian tourists from Washington DC, Virginia, Wilmington, Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia. They came in droves for Pride Week, ManDance, Women's Festival, and Camp Rehoboth parties. They ate in gay-owned restaurants and cycled slowly around town on rented bicycles. They arranged themselves on rainbow towels at the women's beach and the men's beach, not officially designated as such but very clear to anyone walking by. Boy boy boy boy boy boy, girl girl girl girl girl girl.

Hawk Ann tried many times to hang out at the women's beach but she always felt like a German shepherd dog trying to curl up

with frisky kittens. These visitors traveled in girl gangs. They rented houses together, roamed around town together, ate together, and most especially, drank together.

Hawk Ann could testify to the drinking. Friday nights, the women blew into the bar with whipped up energy they brought with them from their high-paying jobs where they thought fast and talked fast and did ten things all at once and if they paid for a beach house, dammit, they were going to throw themselves at having fun there, cram it all into one week or a summer full of weekends.

Once, when Hawk Ann was working, a woman planted herself at the bar, yelled at Hawk Ann over the music, "Take me out of here right now and fuck me silly," loud enough that everybody swiveled around and burst out laughing. Hawk Ann could have fainted from pure embarrassment. Plus she wasn't anyone Hawk Ann ever would have wanted to fuck. She was afraid of women like that, whose bones poked out from their skin. Too sharp, hard as a knife—Hawk Ann thought a woman like that might be the death of her.

But the woman was a steady customer, had been in every night for a week, blowing piles of money on pitchers of martinis with her friends. And Hawk Ann's boss was a jerk who watched her every move. So Hawk Ann said, sweet as pie, "Sure thing, have

one more drink while I finish up here." She knew giving that woman one more filled-to-the-brim drink was like knocking her out with a mallet to the head. Hawk Ann waited until the woman's eyes glazed over, watched as her head sank lower and lower and her forehead rested on the bar. And then Hawk Ann was nice to her, placing a bar towel under her head so she had a soft place to land. Even though the woman had been nasty to Hawk Ann, she couldn't be nasty back. Hawk Ann was just built that way.

This Fairfax was one of those grabby women, Hawk Ann could tell. One of those women who thought because she wanted something, she was entitled to it. Who thought because she was on vacation, manners and politeness didn't apply, that she could behave any old way and get away with it.

When Hawk Ann's boss stepped out back to smoke, Hawk Ann walked around the bar and over to Fairfax's table.

"May I speak to you?" Hawk Ann said.

Fairfax grinned up at her, then looked around the table at her friends like it was a little victory she won. "Did you come over here for another smooch?"

"In private, please."

Hawk Ann and Fairfax stepped into a corner. Hawk Ann kept her eye on the bar, watching for her boss. She didn't actually

know what to say. Her mouth was stuck shut. She loved the lemony kiss but she was mad about it too.

Finally Fairfax said, "I'm sorry. I think I upset you by fooling around like that. I apologize."

It felt like the sun burst over the horizon to Hawk Ann.

"I get a little wild sometimes on a Saturday night," Fairfax said. "I swear you are such a hunky woman I got extra carried away. Please don't report me to the sexual harassment police."

"I will too," said Hawk Ann. "They have a special jail in town for women like you, who bother women like me while we're just trying to do our jobs."

Hawk Ann fell in love right then, hearing Fairfax's laugh. She felt that laugh all the way down her spine.

Fairfax asked, "What's your name anyhow?"

Hawk Ann answered, feeling that tinge of shame she always felt hearing the sound of her name. To her ears, though, Fairfax's name sounded like hands clapping.

"Hawk Ann," said Fairfax. "I'd appreciate starting over." She reached out to take Hawk Ann's hand.

"Yes," Hawk Ann stammered.

Fairfax raised Hawk Ann's hand and brushed her lips lightly to it. That did it, sent Hawk Ann over an edge inside herself, like she was running for the fun of it, no brakes, no fear.

They managed to talk a few times that night, Hawk Ann pouncing on every pause in the action at the bar to find Fairfax. At closing time, Fairfax was waiting for Hawk Ann by the front door.

Hawk Ann walked Fairfax home to her rental house in the Pines section. It was dark and quiet out, now that the bars had closed, and the women held hands all the way. Hawk Ann felt an immense happiness balloon out of her heart and bob around them as they walked.

They talked about playing Hide and Seek at night when they were kids, how wonderful it felt to scream into the dark when you felt that hand on your neck. Fairfax told funny stories about her friends in the beach house, stories that wound around exes and crazy affairs with co-workers and long distance love gone wrong. They fell silent when they got to her porch, tiptoeing up the steps. Finally, Hawk Ann pulled Fairfax close and kissed her. It was amazing to feel Fairfax kiss her back the right way, like she knew who Hawk Ann was this time and she was giving her a little hello message with her lips. Fairfax stood in the doorway grinning and waving goodbye before she finally went all the way in.

Hawk Ann deliberately didn't ask Fairfax what her plans were for Sunday or if she was in town for the whole week or summer. She didn't want to let her needy self out, that monster who roared

and devoured everything in its path. She made herself stay in the present, no running ahead, no movie scenes playing in her head. This time, it wasn't hard at all. She was incredibly happy to splash around in the feelings she was having, to stay right in the warm happy bath of them.

She walked home holding her hand over her heart. Her house was on a street where only locals lived. No amount of money could turn these tiny falling down houses with cement blocks for steps and yards full of rusty grills and broken chairs into charming cottages for rent. But Hawk Ann was comfortable there, knew every sound in the night and every neighbor by name. She sat on her front step, not ready to go in and put an end to the night.

Her right toe was throbbing. Hawk Ann took off her working shoes, hard black Doc Martens that usually helped her get through a long weekend of bartending. Her feet were a mess. Bunions and corns and missing toenails. You'd think she was 75 instead of 45 if you only looked at her feet. But if she wore the right shoes, they usually didn't bother her too much.

Now, her big toe was twice its regular size. What the fuck? Hawk Ann tried to remember if she had stubbed it or dropped something on it. She couldn't remember anything. She hopped inside and got a bucket and filled it with ice cubes and water, went back to the front steps to soak it. Her toe hurt like hell now.

A police car slowly cruised by. Her friend Rocky leaned out the window. Rocky's real name was Rosa but she hadn't used that since ninth grade. "Hey, class act, what's with the bucket?"

"I met someone." Hawk Ann burst out with it.

"No shit." Rocky parked the car and jumped out.

Hawk Ann pulled her toe out of the bucket. It had inexplicably tripled in size, a sausage packed too tight in its casing.

Rocky and Hawk Ann stared at her toe.

"She's amazing," Hawk Ann said.

"That's amazing," Rocky said. "You need a doctor, dude."

"I would give anything to be with her," Hawk Ann said.

"I'm thinking emergency room."

"I'm doing it, man. I'm going for it with her," said Hawk Ann.

"WHOA, I think it's going to blow," said Rocky. "Come on, I'll give you a ride to the hospital. We'll turn the siren on and everything. You love that."

"I'll be all right," Hawk Ann protested weakly. She knew she wouldn't be all right.

"Right now," said Rocky.

The pain in Hawk Ann's toe intensified, like a torturer was holding a metal pincer on it and tightening the pressure. When she tried to walk, the pain stabbed up her leg all the way to her knee. Rocky held her up and Hawk Ann leaned heavily on her, trying

not to cry. Every time Rocky braked on the ride to the hospital, Hawk Ann held her hand over her mouth so she wouldn't scream.

The emergency room doctor said, "My goodness gracious, what have we here." He fussed like a little old lady around her, propping her leg up and tucking blankets under it. He gave Hawk Ann an injection for the pain, but it didn't go away, just dulled it down a notch. A technician came in with an X-ray machine and took pictures. The doctor poked and prodded at her toe, muttered to himself, shook his head repeatedly. He gave her medicine for swelling, more painkillers, then he called in another doctor to look at it. Now two doctors were making frowning faces at it.

Hawk Ann was alone. Rocky had left after the first few hours to go back to work, saying she'd swing by later on to take her home.

Hawk Ann wondered if Fairfax was sleeping by now. Maybe she was dreaming of Hawk Ann. Maybe she would rush to the emergency room, come to her rescue because they were already tied together in a deep psychic way. Even in her delirious state, Hawk Ann stopped herself, begged herself to take one step at a time, stay in this place, don't go running down the lane into fantasy land.

Her toe was monstrous now. The doctors kept appearing and disappearing. The nurses injected new drugs into her IV. The pain

was there but it was underneath the surface. Hawk Ann watched the pain, saw how it became an orange and purple pulsing thing, how it was part of her and separate from her at the same time. People talked to her, asked her things, and she couldn't answer them. She felt like she was trapped in a bad dream, the kind she used to have when she was a kid, where she was stuck and she couldn't scream, couldn't move. She lost track of night and day.

Rocky appeared out of the haze. Hawk Ann watched her mouth moving but she couldn't hear what Rocky said. She loved the look on Rocky's face right now. She tries to be so tough, but she's so soft and sweet inside. She's scared for me.

It reminded her of when Rocky would show up at Hawk Ann's house when they were kids, that awful house full of her 10 half-brothers and sisters running amuck. You never knew what you'd find going on there. Like the summer the boys kept trying to fly off the roof. Three of them ended up with broken legs. The girls chased each other with hair brushes, frying pans, the hose—whatever it took to make each other scream and hurt. Hawk Ann was never without her baseball bat. She pinned the other kids against the wall with it and swung her way out of whatever came at her. It was an exhausting place to live and Hawk Ann hated it.

But Rocky's house was always the same. It always smelled of food cooking and it was full of happy sounds, like a baseball game

on the radio or a TV laugh track in the background. Rocky had one mother and father, not the parade of men that came in and out of Hawk Ann's house. She had one brother and one sister, not a gang of kids who didn't even know who their fathers were. She had a normal mother, not one who named all her children for animals and birds like some kind of crazy person. She had a real mother, not like Hawk Ann's mother who acted like talking about being a great mother would make it true.

Hawk Ann could still hear her mother's gravelly voice, "I'm a natural mother. I love having babies, that's why I keep doing it. I can't help myself. I pop them out like nobody's business. It's what I was put on Earth to do." That's the kind of stupid shit Hawk Ann's mother proudly announced to strangers, to her welfare caseworker, to anyone who would stand still long enough to listen to her.

Half the time, the neighbors fed the kids, not Hawk Ann's mother. Rocky's mom loved Hawk Ann, gave her clothes and shoes and games, let her stay over any time, paid attention to her. Rocky was more of her sister than any of her real half-sisters. After Hawk Ann's mother died, hit by a car while wondering drunk on the highway in her nightgown in the middle of the night, her children scattered all over the Eastern shore and most of them didn't even keep in touch with each other.

Suddenly Rocky and her mom were standing over Hawk Ann. Their faces were so serious. Somebody must have died. Hawk Ann's thoughts anchored to that post, and she struggled to straighten up and listen.

"They want to amputate your leg," Rocky said. "Your whole leg, Hawk Ann. I don't know what to do."

Hawk Ann heard the words but they didn't mean anything. She was excited to see Rocky's mom. She had so much to tell her.

I met someone! She's amazing. Her name is Fairfax and I'm in love. Finally, for the first time in my life, I am in love. She's funny and beautiful and she gets me. I can't wait for you to meet her. I want to have you over to dinner to meet her. We'll have crabs and spaghetti, we'll have monkey bread, we'll have a barbecue, we'll have Easter eggs, we'll have clam chowder, we'll have chocolate cake with chocolate frosting, we'll have macaroni and cheese, we'll have beach fries, we'll have onion dip, we'll have everything single thing we love to eat.

It was nine months before Hawk Ann was out of the hospital and done with rehab. She was alive, that was the main thing. She had survived an incredible infection, a massive attack on her body from an unknown cause. Her leg didn't survive, but she did. That was the main thing. Everyone agreed.

She didn't remember much about the summer before she got sick. She didn't remember the night she got sick. And no one had the heart to tell her. It was only a woman she met in a bar one night. Nothing to mourn, nothing to see here, folks. Move along.

Virgin Wild

after Mary

Raymond Luczak

My dear, I used to be a wild child.
I tugged my sister's hair
just when she was about to drink
water. I once tried to drown her
in the Dead Sea. That was so funny.
When I was alone up on the rocks,
I imagined myself like a bird
swooping across the barren fields
and past the huts where we slept
up into the spreading night of stars,
the carrier of stories yet to be.
One night I was sleepy-eyed
when my dogs barked down the trail.
The stranger came up with a smile.
The color of sun-dried pomegranates,
his skin was lighter than mine.
He tried to speak my language,
but his eyes shone brighter than stars
across from mine across the fire.
He tried to teach me a new word
in Sanskrit: "Kandarpa." I whispered back.
As he bored himself into me, I *knew*.
I had woven a new story for the stars.
He left early that dawn without a name.

My father paid my bachelor neighbor Joseph
to marry me. Everyone knew why.
They didn't believe me when I said
that an angel had appeared before me
in the night as the stars gathered around.
Their disbelief changed when my son
came of age. My dear, it's so easy to lie
when history has obliterated all evidence.
Who can prove what anyone saw?

Wild Muse

Robert Vivian

Please peel me open to inner music once more and say/speak/sing/rock it in tumbling outpouring, to lash out with love and astonishment the headlong carrying away with words so please carry me away, away out of myself, every last stitch and sinew like plucked violin strings in E major, C minor and dear wild M, wild branches of moan, wild bird whistle and trumpet flower for my throat is aching and dry, empty and raw for the pathway of your spirit to sing again or wail and so willing this morning to be thy humble instrument and servant, hardworking towel boy for the verb to be and I will shine your shoes, wild M, verily with my own foam-flecked spittle though I know you are barefoot and coming just now from the woods after hunting mushrooms and strawberries and wild flowers and what is a man like me but waiting vessel, open wound, accordion player with a monkey on his back and battered tin cup held out from monkey's hand for spare change, spare change, do you have an extra nickel or dime, mister and miss, regal mama and I will sing for my

breakfast bar, I will sing for my vodka and sing to be saved from myself who is bound to earth but looking forever skyward/celestial/the holy roaming stars and my singing among their wild turning for I taste the starlight you gave me precious M and it tastes like nothing within the boundaries of my raked-over buds—the taste of vastness and distance inconceivable, unspeakable, outside the compass points even of gobsmack, the threadbare center of a drop-away abyss, the taste of the moon and its screeching chalkboard, taste of the ocean, the mystic salt and spray and a fire that burns up my tongue like a lit fuse and every interstellar color as I swallow the world again and again praising it, oh, sing me until I burst into otherworldly first flower, dandelion spore drifting in a meadow and the blurring bruise of a hummingbird's wings like small dynamos of winged electricity before sucking the nectar out of every flower with a passion that would drain even the hard-staring countenance of stones to fill the rivers again with rainbow-bending water speaking our names as if for the very first time, wild M, wild mustang, wild, wild, wild please take up your torch inside me and wave it around until I fall to my knees in a heap of cascading sparks and poem, your sounds flooding through me, the sighs, the wails and cries of ecstatic release, the whispers in what broken tenderness this is and must be.

En Plein Air

Katherine Durham Oldmixon

a quiver
of camel hair brushes, dried cakes
of water color, wrinkled
paper towels, salt-sea sponges,

palette
knives will be my instruments.

Hours on the blue
of breath, of morning,
of rendering blood,

the twenty-four shades
of natural light.

From my window I compose
slashing grass, peas
on bamboo stakes, bare roots
in the red-dirt heart of winter gardens.

I erase neighbors'
sharp rooftops, old hedges,
sliding glass doors.

I learn ways to plan

around white rag
cotton, to leave spittle

bright on lips

Soon, I forget words.

Neurosity XXXIII

dear wet streetlights and intimate things,

Jax NTP

i want to chart all the metrical curves of your tongue,
be fluent in the typography of your scars, i want
to travel deep into the oval loneliness of your childhood,
learn the inconvenience of dalliance, hinges, and loss,
i want to be limned in the topography of your malleus,
incus, and stapes, befriend your goosebumps,
memorize the seasons of your body language,
dip swiftly into the fish hook of your eye,
into the afternoon of your spur thighs, i want
you to know, i'm writing all my wrongs
in the muscles of wet dirt, but the sparsity
of ink and bravery is, also, inconvenient.

your one and only,
nearsighted loner

Muva (The Anklets) | Priyadarshini Komala

If I Could Have Two Minutes of Your Attention

Jennifer Berney

If you could have chosen anyone as your father, you might have chosen him. Mr. Wood is a handsome man with salt-and-pepper hair who teaches U.S. History and openly votes for Democrats. Every Monday, he reads aloud the best sentences from last week's essays. One Monday, he reads one of yours and you are so flustered with pride that you can only look at your fingers. You create a small and satisfying pain by pressing the tip of your thumb away from the nail. The essay is about Manifest Destiny and the sentence is one that you rewrote a dozen times. But after Mr. Wood reads it, he becomes openly plaintive about the quality of your paper as a whole. He'd like it, he announces, if you'd pay as much attention to thesis as you do to individual sentences. You keep pushing into your thumb, making the pain stronger. The best and worst thirty seconds of your day have shared the same minute.

It's your junior year of high school and you're in love with your best friend, Jenna, who is kind of a softer, prettier version of you. Almost everyone is prettier than you. Last year, in the interest of honesty, your friend Rick Walter informed you of this. You're not hot, he explained, but you could be attractive to someone who knows you well. On a separate occasion he offered to make out with you.

Jenna is dating a girl named Jen who lives in a neighboring town. The three of you—Jenn, Jenna, Jen—make a triangle of Jens, the most ubiquitous name of your generation. Jen is annoying—a nasal-voiced girl with freckles and glasses—and you know that Jenna likes you better; that if you could summon the nerve to tell her you want her, there's a chance that you wouldn't be rejected. It's hard to explain why you hold back—it's not so much that you fear the rejection. It's more that saying what you want just isn't in you. If you told her you loved her and she loved you back, what then? Would you kiss her? Would she kiss you?

Mr. Wood allows students to eat lunch in his classroom. You and others spend much of your high school lives there—the outcasts, the intellectuals, the freaks eat there every day, and even a few stray cheerleaders drop in on occasion. Mr. Wood grades papers from a small adjoining office and one day, while you are sitting with Jenna and Rick, you overhear him talking with two

boys in your class, one with acne, the other with dandruff—boys who need encouragement. He says: I want you to research Nat Turner and write a report on what you find.

He is giving away extra-credit work like presents to favorite sons. Rick and Jenna are talking about safety schools and dream schools, but you can't listen because you are distracted, blistered, confused about why it cuts you to be denied the chance of extra work.

In January, Mr. Wood introduces a new student teacher. His name is Mr. Trilling and though he is short, he looks like money. He is muscular and wears tweed. He reminds you of Alex P. Keaton. He co-teaches your history class two days a week and at lunch he sits with students. He tells stories about driving cross-country and camping in national parks, two things you wish you could do. One week, you nail your history essay and Mr. Wood reads all three pages to the class. At the end, Mr. Trilling wonders aloud why he gave it an A and not an A+.

You and Jenna decide that you adore him. This is not unusual; you and Jenna adore lots of things collectively—things like orange-flavored chocolate, old episodes of the Muppet Show, tumbleweed, and any adult who treats high school students as adults. You adore Mr. Wood, Mr. Leed the ceramics teacher, and

Ms. Lane, the English teacher who plays in a rock band. You've now added Mr. Trilling to your collection.

You and Jenna wonder about Mr. Trilling's girlfriend, whom he mentions in nearly every conversation—a strategy, it seems, designed to prevent any high school girl from considering him a possibility. He tells you and Jenna that he's bringing her to the school play on opening night, and at intermission you hover together at the edges of the corridor trying to spy her. And there she is, in a fitted wool jacket, awkwardly holding his hand. She is not what you expected: short, like Mr. Trilling, but without the look of money. Her hair looks like straw and one of her front teeth is chipped. Couldn't he do better?

Summer arrives in May, but school drags through most of June. Dusk is long, and on Fridays you and Jenna walk to the top of the golf course and hold hands—platonically. She broke up with her girlfriend but had another within two days. She likes this one better. You don't.

On Mr. Trilling's last day, you and Jenna give him a handmade card, a picture of Kermit on it, because that's the way you see him: quiet and sweet and occasionally hilarious. Inside, you write your phone numbers and offer to take him out for ice cream this summer. You don't expect him to call but it would be novel if he did.

In November you visit Jenna at her small New England liberal arts college. The foliage is already on the ground, arranged in neat piles except for a few stray orange leaves. On Saturday night, you find yourself sitting on the floor of a dormitory corridor having a conversation with a sophomore male who's skinny but not unattractive, who has developed an intellectually condescending way of talking to women, which probably works for him. He succeeds at making you feel a little stupid, but you don't really care. Jenna has a college girlfriend who's not interested in hanging out with high school friends, so you sleep alone in Jenna's bed that night, knowing the scent of her through her lonesome sheets.

Back in your normal life, you've replaced two of your high school classes with evening courses at a nearby college. Your attendance is still required at the high school, which means that your days are filled with study halls and empty space. After dark, you drink a lot of coffee and roam the town on the 71 bus.

One evening, your phone rings. It's Mr. Trilling. You think this is weird. It's not summer anymore and he is long gone from your world. He wants to know how you are. He thinks you should get together sometime. You tell him, sure, yeah, okay, maybe when Jenna comes back for Thanksgiving you can all…do something. You will call him, you say. What's his number? You write it down, though you don't plan to use it.

Why does a former student teacher call in November when you gave him your phone number in June? You're pretty sure you know. But you're not sure. You call Jenna. She's not there. You leave a message with her roommate.

You will be surprised to learn that Mr. Wood is in the loop. Rick reports to you that, in a conversation about senior gifts, Mr. Wood casually suggested that yours should be Mr. Trilling wrapped in a bow. When Rick asked why, Mr. Wood replied nonchalantly: because she has a crush on him. Now you are stuck with the image of Mr. Trilling emerging shirtless from a cake, wearing a bow tie. You're pretty sure you never asked for this.

At lunch, Mr. Wood won't let it drop. You're a mature young lady, he tells you. Have you talked to Nathan lately?

Who? you ask him. He puts on his befuddled professor look.

Mr. Trilling, he says, and adds: You're blushing.

What you're doing, actually, is trying not to cry. Mr. Wood's windows overlook the school library and you're looking out at the stacks and stacks of books—hopeless, stupid books that no one ever uses. The librarian sits behind her desk, un-busy, cataloguing stillness.

Sometimes, as you undress for the shower, you take stock of your body, front, back and remind yourself: this is a body that no one else has seen. It feels like a truth that will never be unbroken.

When Jenna finally calls you back, it's two weeks later and the Mr. Trilling situation has run its course. Your silence, once again, has served you. But you tell her about the phone call and explain that you had called her because you were worried it was weird. She says it's too bad she wasn't there to answer, because she could have assured you that it wasn't; it was fine. Mr. Trilling is fine.

You don't bother to correct her. You've given up. Tumbleweed's okay, you guess, but you can't remember why it once seemed so important to actively adore it.

In your adult life, you will remember Mr. Trilling's brief phone call on rare occasions. You won't fault him, not really. You will see him as a new teacher who hadn't yet learned that when teenage girls seek attention, it's because they believe in the boundaries, not because they want those boundaries broken. In fact, when you do remember him, your affection will cancel out your dread.

In the end, it's Mr. Wood you will hold a grudge against.

But still, if you saw him today, if you had two minutes of his attention, you'd be seventeen again, seeking his approval, waiting for him to select you, to call you to his desk and offer extra-credit work.

mixed tape

Jill Tydor

Track 1: "Ray of Light"

When they were young, they strung up two soup cans like they did in the movies. And she would whisper secrets into her end. And he would make up stories that grew in volume and ridicule. But all he ever heard was the soft rumble of her voice like rain on the rooftop. And all she ever could decipher was something about a blue goose named Dan. Later, they would purchase two flashlights and begin a nightly correspondence with rudimentary Morse code. She would nestle in bed and watch his messages beamed across her ceiling like falling stars shooting through the blackest parts of space. And he would wait by his window, letting her clicks write words made of light across his naked face.

Track 2: "The Space Between"

When they grew older, he would meet her in the park at the end of the block. And under a watery moon they would make plans for the future. They would go to a school with ivy that

covered brick buildings like a downy newborn. And study romantic things like philosophy and art history. She would let her hair grow long and loose, so that it would envelope her like a curtain while she read, a little private sanctuary of words and silence. He would write papers on an typewriter found at a library rummage sale for five dollars, meteing out each letter with a heavy hand, letting the rhythm of metallic key strokes fill the space between them.

Track 3: "Going to the Chapel"

When he asked her to marry him, she picked up his hand and held it tight to her chest, letting it grow warm against her pink cotton blouse. She would find a dress made of baby blue lace, he a brown suit. And as they walked up the steps of the courthouse, he could hear her heels clicking against stone, echoing with each step. They would make promises of fidelity, longevity, honesty and passion. She would look into his eyes and remember the boy, the beacon of light. He would slip the ring on to her little finger thinking of the girl whispering to him in the dark.

Track 4: "Life in Technicolor"

When she felt the first kick, she decided to take up knitting. She would spend hours under the glow of the yellow lamp

winding strands of indigo, vermillion and coral-colored yarn back and forth against the tinny needles. He would spend hours in the garage constructing boxes filled with powdery sand or tiny bicycles balanced precariously on small, uneven rubber wheels. At dinner, they would conjure pithy, poetic names from the peas and potatoes, and share slight smiles at the thought of how much their world would change.

Track 5: "Clean Getaway"

When baby girl was four, they took a trip to the Grand Canyon and watched the great cliffs leech all the color from the sun. They would camp out under the stars, telling stories with no distinct beginning or end. She would run her hands through baby girl's blonde hair, leaving a trail of curls upon the red woolen blanket. He would carve pieces of wood found by the fire into bears and horses and fish suspended in motion. And in the hot summer sun, they would strip off all their clothes and wade into the cool, dark blue lake, sending ripples of excitement and wonder further down stream.

Track 6: "Run Devil Run"

When he hit her for the first time, she took two steps backward until her spine felt flush against the wall. He would

reach for her hand in apology. She would try to forget everything in the morning. A purple bruise would blossom across her right cheek like the cherry trees in spring, which she tried to hide with the translucent face powder she kept for special occasions. He would bring a bouquet of budded tulips home in the evening, but the flowers remained tightly bound until they eventually died two weeks later. She withdrew into herself until they would navigate around each other like ships on a black sea looking for light, afraid of jagged rocks.

Track 7: "Into the Mystic"

When things didn't change, she finally left him, clutching baby girl against her chest and dragging a battered green suitcase across the gravel driveway behind her. He would stand in the doorway of their first home promising to change, begging for another chance. She would sit behind the steering wheel of her car for a moment, trying to suppress the tears, before maneuvering into drive and heading west, putting miles and miles between them until it was time to rest. She would wake before dawn and sit on the hood of her car in the darkness and wait for the sun, a sign that things would be different.

Track 8: “Rhythm of the Saints”

When baby girl was ten, she asked about love. Her mother took a deep sigh, looked at her small, pale face and smiled a little. She then told the story of a blue goose named Dan. And the boy across the street. The beacon of light. She talked about the promises and the hopes and the plans they had made for the future. And the adventures they had shared. And the colors they had seen. And the way they had laughed, but also how much she had cried. And how the boy and the girl in the window were gone. But that the love was real and true.

X and Y

Gina Forberg

There is this friction
when two consonants collide,
an "XX" or "XY."

But what is a boy? A girl?
Y swimming toward X?
X running from Y?

We both shower.
We drive.
We eat pancakes.

My mother, no biologist,
knew the difference
between a boy and a girl.

She knew she wanted
me to wear skirts and
Mary Janes instead
of jeans and sneakers.

When I left the house
one night to go to a party
in Levi's and black
Converse she looked

at me and said, “Sometimes
I wonder about you.”

And now thirty years
later, people are still
wondering about me,
a grown woman
with a husband, teenage son,
manicured lawn
in the suburbs.

There is no alphabet,
no letters to define my life.
I am a braided helix,
a silky strand of hair,
blowing, splitting
in the wind waiting
for the slightest breeze
to come undone.

Opium Dreams | Savannah Schroll Guz

Bang

Bennett Allen

I remember the afternoon Aunt Laurie shot the coyote.
She shot it with a handgun.
I don't know what kind.
I don't know much about guns.

That morning she breast-fed her newborn son Ezekiel in front of me
    at breakfast.
First breast I ever saw.
I had trouble finishing my Cocoa Puffs.
My mother didn't allow me to eat sweet cereal.

Now Ezekiel can drive.
I don't know what he eats for breakfast these days.
Maybe he still breast-feeds.
Maybe he eats granola.

Cut to the afternoon.
Aunt Laurie and I are swimming.
She has an above-ground pool.
I prefer in-ground pools.

I hear a bark and turn around.
The beach ball she has thrown to me bounces off my head.
I remember this.
The coyote is small but moves quickly.

She shoots it.
I have never before seen a gun or heard a gunshot.
The coyote falls at once and blood seeps into the grass.
Ezekiel and I both cry.

Now I only see Aunt Laurie at weddings and funerals.
Can't help but wonder if she has a concealed carry license.
I just have coffee for breakfast.
Not particularly interested in breasts.

Upon Seeing Robert Arneson's Trophies

Krista Briana Drummond

There are so many ways it could have happened.
The head distended, paired with a sphere of resin.
Turquoise ink spilt onto forehead, blood curtained
against his temples, revealing hairline & crow's feet.
We do not see this blue until much later.
The thing about sickness is not losing
a person to it. Red clay, hand rolled, pushes his head back,
knocks in his skull—memory collapses.
He tries again. He will bow, will never
look behind, there is nothing to see there.
He had twenty years to sit,
feel his skull buckle. Somewhat afraid, he must have been,
not knowing when he'd die.
Twenty years of tiny trophies, sculptured to show his decline.
When my father comes back to me, he will be a ghost
most definitely something almost. When he comes back
his spine will not be blossomed as coral.
There will be no trophy, just a man looking forward.
There will be no bust oozed with clay,
no stomach swollen, just a man.

Moons

Adam Gianforcaro

JR took the single step down to the porch. He leaned against its railing and stared into the littered yard of tin cans and straw-like grass. He pulled a cigarette from behind his ear. The screen door behind him opened with the tear in the mesh flapping like a sail in irons. Dean stepped out. JR lit another cigarette off the tip of his and extended it.

"I'm sorry, you know," JR said.

"Okay," Dean said, taking the cigarette from JR, staring at the blur of the cherry like brake lights out of focus. It flickered and sizzled when he inhaled, illuminated the small space around him.

JR looked into the sky. He moved his head up and down, going left to right slowly. He recrossed his legs at the ankles wondering when he had uncrossed them.

"Have you noticed that? The other moon?" JR asked Dean.

"Yeah," Dean said, not completely taken aback by it and keeping his voice steady. He didn't want to give JR the satisfaction.

The stars were pinpricks in the dark, the moons glowing orbs of contemporary art in a museum closed for the night. Not that there were any museums nearby save for the railroad landmark by the gas station. If that counted.

"What is it?" JR asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Is it actually another moon?"

"I guess so," Dean said.

The cigarette was helping a little. Helping JR calm down, decompress. Helping Dean do the same.

JR felt guilty, but there was no stopping that. It's the way anxiety sticks to his throat like mucus, electricity in his fingers, rage in the pit of his stomach. Then it all gets regurgitated, boils, and his limbs snap and clench. Grab at limbs, necks. Yellow and purple like an Easter egg. On Dean's arms this time.

"It's all over the news," Dean said. But their small cabin didn't have a television. It didn't have a computer. Neither man owned a smartphone. Neither had a library card and they seldom traveled out of town.

"And how do you know that?" JR said.

"Just do. Saw it."

"I bet you did," JR growled. He growled the words with his mouth and eyebrows and with his hot scarlet ears.

Dean's grin said he was not yet defeated. It said, *Try me*. He knew he had the upper hand after JR grabbed him like he did, stumbling back and apologizing, feeling like he always did after an episode like that. Dean didn't need to threaten to leave, to *expose* him. The threat was always there. It was always understood.

"You know damn well where I saw it," Dean said, his courage slowly returning, starting with an attitude, but falling short, landing abruptly into a sadness, and then contempt. "Are you really going to start again? I mean, not like you need to worry anymore."

"I'm glad," JR said. But he wasn't, and Dean knew this. There was history with Red and JR, with Red and Dean, with the three of them together and respectively. That one drunken night the three of them in one bed. Both of them were thinking it.

Dean thought back to when he saw the news segment. Yesterday. Maybe the day before. Early afternoon while JR was at work, smoothing concrete in his reflective vest and white hardhat.

"You should at least go see him before"—Dean searched for the words—"he passes."

"Not a chance," JR said, flicking his cigarette, his two fingers now drumming on the railing. "And I'm not letting you either, so don't even think about it."

"Who says I haven't already."

JR breathed deeply, brushed sweat from his forehead. He tried to calm his instinct to attack. Time, it passed heavily.

JR scanned the sky again and forced himself to speak in a controlled tone. He said, "So, what are they calling it?"

"Um, lung cancer? What do you mean what are they calling it?"

"No," he said, jutting his head forward.

Dean looked away from where JR wanted him to look, knowing what was there. He'd seen it before, of course, but not in person. This was the yesterday, the day before. After Red's coughing fit and his head nod toward the TV, as JR had just nodded toward the moons. That's what was on the TV. The news. The moons. On Red's television, crisp and flat. Although, Red could fit that description as well—his belly sunken like a breakfast bowl. Dean remembered how he rubbed his concave skin and kissed his saliva-dried lips. How he sang "Comfortably Numb" when the top story segued into local news.

It could have been the extra moon that stopped JR from questioning the subject more—of Dean stepping out—or it very well could have been anything else.

"So," JR said slowly. "What are they calling it?"

"I don't know," Dean said. *But the anchor must have identified it, named it*, he thought. "Moon Two maybe."

The air was warm and cool at the same time. Thoughts seemed tangible in the air and dust settled on everything. Gray and brown. The ruralness of earth tones. He wondered if that was what they were really calling it. Moon Two. The newscasters in their shirts and ties, their white teeth and fresh breath. Scientists in lab coats, behind podiums.

JR licked his cottony lips. Still the taste of beer and tobacco in his patchy stubble. "Do you think we really landed on the moon?" he asked.

"What do you mean landed on it?" Dean was confused.

"You know, landed on it."

"You mean Moon Two?"

"One," JR said.

"Probably. I guess so." Several minutes passed amongst the hollow screams of cicadas. Dean's fingers drew cursive letters on the railing. He continued: "But, that was fake, right. That's what…he…it was in California or something."

"I don't know," JR said. "We probably landed on it at some point. Moon One, I mean."

"Yeah," Dean said. But there was something else. He had this conversation before. Should he hold it back? Not at this point, he thought, so he said, "Red thought it was fake."

More cicadas it seem like. Crickets squealed. A brief breeze whistled past them. And then there was a silence. JR eventually turned without word and stepped inside the cabin. Inside, he rustled through the mini-fridge with clicks and clanks, and then returned outside with a fresh beer.

After some time, his arms against the railing again, JR asked, "Do you think he's happy?"

"Who? Red?" Dean immediately became heavy chested. He turned pale under the moons' illuminations. It was that name again. And it kept coming it up, almost organically, as if there was nothing else to talk about. As if the second moon was an illusion.

JR opened his eyes wide and snapped them to a squint, as if he didn't know the reaction he should have over such a simple question. Over that name. A nickname he coined. Red being in reference to the red shapes on the cigarette boxes, red now being the blood he coughed.

JR remembered their time together at Platt's Concrete. Fifteen years on the job together, getting drinks, laughing. He remembered Red's outspoken rhetoric, how he could offend just about anyone. And that's why he liked him. But then all the stuff with Dean. How he confessed his love after his diagnosis. "After that time, the three of us, you know, Dean and I…"

Red said he needed to speak his peace. That he knew about JR and Dean. That he needed forgiveness. That he was a dying man. Said he couldn't live the time left allotted to him without having Dean there, but he wanted to get JR's blessing. "I'm just borrowing. Borrowing him. Borrowing time. Six months. That's what I'm told."

Then, the falling out. The questions. The confessions. The fight. But somewhere inside him, JR felt remorse. Red *was* a dying man. His best friend at one time. Before they knew each other like they knew each other now. But neither of them was the apologizing type, although JR held *sorry* somewhere inside him. Uncertainty covered it like fitted bedding.

JR rubbed his eyes with the heels of his palms and stared back into the sky.

"No. The moon," JR said, zoning back into reality. "Do you think it's—I don't know—happy?"

"The moon?"

"Yes. Hypothetically."

Dean turned his head away from JR, to the vacant and littered yard. "I still don't know what the hell you're talking about."

"What if the moon liked being alone?" JR said. "What if it's sadder now?"

Sadder, Dean thought, and went into a mental rerun of his last time with Red, how it could actually be the last time. How their goodbyes had to remain secret. Because the two men contained dry-lipped kisses and wet-faced tears.

Dean's face became hot. "Are you serious?" he said. "Is this some parallel you're trying to come up with for Red? Listen, JR. It's just a goddamn moon. In the black nothing of space. It doesn't mean anything. It's a rock."

"Rocks," he said. "There's two of them."

Two orbs in the sky. Two vacant orbs sunken in Red's face. Stars and moons. Clogged pores around glazed-over eyes.

JR was trying to bring this full circle, come up with something enlightening to have Dean contemplate. A catalyst for forgiveness. A promise to quit his outbursts, if that's what he was going for. Was it really that? *There's no borrowing love*, he thought. It was just bad timing was all.

The conversation could have stopped there, almost naturally, but the presence of the second moon brought with it a handful of questions with indecipherable answers. JR pressed the pause button on their uncertainty and went inside to grab another Lite. When he came back out, he was too curious not to press on: "So, you think this moon has been around since Moon One?"

Dean moaned, but seemed to think about it for a second more with some interest. "If not, gravity would be different. We'd all be drowning."

"So, this is just the first time we're seeing it?" JR asked.

Dean didn't answer.

"How long you think scientists have known?"

A silence.

"Are you ignoring me now? You apparently know more about it than me. So why couldn't we see it until now?"

"I don't know, JR. Can you stop with these questions? It's a moon for godsake. Just leave it be."

"What the fuck is your issue?"

"My issue? My issue, JR? You think you can just grab me like I'm a piece of meat? And then ask me about the goddamn sky? With our best friend dying just down the road? Not right now," Dean said. *The phone call could come any minute, and he's concerned about space.*

Dean turned around. The door creaked and the screen's rip fluttered softly.

JR wanted to chase him inside but felt like he couldn't move his legs anymore. He just stared at the moon, Moon Two, for a long time, trying to find shapes in its shadows of canyons and craters—a man on the moon—but he couldn't see anything of the

sort. He took his last cigarette out and threw the pack on the dead lawn. He quickly sucked half of it down, and there was a rush of energy around him. A lightheadedness. And then he thought he saw it, could have sworn there was just another man standing next to him, listening. Opposite the side Dean was standing. Just like there was another moon staring down at him. The man could have been Red. A late form of Red. It could have been himself. A JR from the future. But it could have been nothing, just wind and dust. Smoke and mirrors. Debris. Moons.

The bedroom light turned on and formed a glow on the front side of the property. JR squinted into the sky until the light shut off. Then he felt himself moving almost unconsciously. He stepped off the porch and settled down on the dead lawn. He lay like that for a long time until the sun welcomed the morning, hovering high. Until the sun muted the moons. Until they were both invisible.

Shortly past daybreak, he woke without remembering if or when he fell asleep. His breath was thick and heavy. It coated his teeth. JR struggled to get up as if gravity was heavier. He dragged himself inside. Their bedroom door was closed and he could hear Dean's breathing behind it. JR chose the couch to rest, where it seemed gravity had pressed the cushions into solid blocks.

Jeju Sky | Kaitlin Lawler

Leaf Leap | Kaitlin Lawler

Geisha through Glass | Kaitlin Lawler

After Ever

Lisa Caloro

When you pulled the dead girl from the river,
Wiped the muck from her sightless eyes,
Slicked the hair back from her forehead,
She stirred slightly, aware of a power in your hands
She might call tenderness had she ever known it.

For years she waited for her killers to be erased,
They hung so long from the rope
Of her pain, hope threadbare as the dress
Clinging to her body like seaweed.

You are not a princess, you said, and she shivered
Because this new life is as real as your fingers
Unhooking her, the water rushing clear
From her mouth.

Reaching Out (#004) | Adel Souto

Texas History

Roy Bentley

On the Texas side of the river in 1972,
there were Mexican children everywhere.
And for as long as they granted us leave,
the air force, we were men among them.
The kids were the streets of San Antonio,
in Bexar County, the city telling itself lies
in two languages: one that America cares,
the other, that war is how we show a love
of country. We were not in our Class As;
we were in civvies in search of a woman
who wore tolerance for men like tie-dye.
In honor of stupidity and the far-off war,
my story walked next to theirs, the many
who spoke Spanish and a halting English
salted with loud laughter and overlooking,
faces bent enough to be hard to make out
in movie theaters with their dim lighting:
families of women with several children,
their fathers elsewhere. Working. Gone.
Sometimes the story is someone else's.
Sometimes it's the way of small bodies
restless and turning in their wild mercy
to declare how this world is without us.
That year, though I couldn't know it yet,
and in honor of all that we leave behind

unreplaced, I learned the Spanish word *injusticia*. Sometimes it's a smiling child whose language skills reduce to pointing and asking why you're the color you are. Sometimes it's the story of how you felt in a Texas audience of brown kid-faces that anoints you with the oils of failure.

Pahokee

Vassilia Binensztok

Poor boy, sitting on foster mom's porch.
Gap-toothed. Staring
At condemned homes, through
Vacant windows, empty lots. The people
Who hardly come out, peek out
Yet barely raise an eye.

I look at him, sitting in the bowed out
Plastic chair, on the brown porch.
His ear is full of thick wax,
Some of it crumbling off on to his shirt.
I feel a sudden rush of contempt for him,
For the crusty build-up in the corners
Of his nose and mouth.
And then a wash of shame.

I look out too, at the boarded up
Homes and broken windows,
The hollow eyes. We look together.
The foster mother asked me to talk to him.
He was suspended from school today
For stealing snacks from the other kids,
Raiding backpacks. They found him barricaded
In the bathroom stall, eating pickled eggs
And honey buns.

I'm supposed to scold the dirty boy,
But I stay quiet, sensing.
She does not know I was once the girl
With the unwashed clothes, and filthy hair,
Raiding backpacks, hiding in bathrooms.

Sitting on the flimsy porch together, we stare
Silently through alleys, towards the sugar fields,
The white birds that fill the trees and then
The sky as it goes black. We remain
Unnoticed. No one knows where we are.
No one knows the white birds are oblivious
To the honey buns, and the earwax,
And the dirt on our faces.

The Ending

Luce Godfrey

Illustration by Steve Garber

"*How can we love except in this finitude?*"—Jacques Derrida

"*If it's only a symbol, then to hell with it.*"—Flannery O'Connor

This is a story about having and holding and it begins, like all good love stories, out at sea.

Tens of thousands of years ago, the Laurentide ice sheet moved south over the Atlantic, bringing with it the clay from other almost-lands. Scouring the bellies of deep bedrock, the glacial drift and gathering muds settled, layer over immanent layer, and found their limit at what the Wampanoag called "In the Midst of the Sea" and the first Europeans called no-man's-lands; what today its hundred-thousand summer residents call "the Vineyard" or the 16,000-some-odd that live here year-round call simply, "the Island." Geologists tell us how fast the land pulled itself together, the moraine gathering up around the snout of the glacier, and the way today, from July ferries, the island seems to throw itself together as you step up onto the deck and look east.

The mornings here on the island come before all the other mornings in the country, and it is in these short pitches of the days when the grit of all of the migrants' souls here, wave after wave for thousands of years, crowds out the history. Generations who know early dark skies trade in sacrifice or courage; their talk is of salt, meat, fire, and so it is hard to not confuse their fossils with truths, to not see time and place calcified in these streets, this rock, and it is easy to miss alluvial accretions or the handshakes of settlers and mistake it all for nature or a god.

Many of the people first on the island lived on the easternmost point—Chappaquiddick—and were called the People of the

Dawn. They were the ones who felt the first rupture of contract and then watched it fade to repetition as industries begot industries; as whalers' women left wailing and wrenching and howling in the shapes of the houses, the bones of the buildings. Grief here has born its own formalism, its own limits and lines. Women in stone-breasted vigil climb each night high above the gables and, one by one, they turn and face the sea.

This story is a fable because once ships reach the land, no one dies a natural death here.

There is a lusty rottenness to beaches in the fall. Hot summer sea blooms and slicks of other cities' oils pool, decay, are born again and sink, impure and heavy, into new silt. The smell is dirty and metallic like been-dead ocean floors boiling up and burrowing into the surf, or like a woman's orgasm at birth. It is smell, but it has a taste or it is a taste that you can smell. It is hard to cleave these parts of desire: to run to or to run from. It is hard to tell the tongue from the skin, the sex from the death, the rot from the want, the having from the taking, the land from the sea.

There is an urgency, a cover-of-night suddenness, in our moving here just before winter. One day we are in the cotton wool of life, inside the noise and graywater of news and

supermarket and block party, and the next we are barreling down a freeway through the tunnel of our headlights toward the roil of any ocean. We lean out, palms and soles holding in abeyance some din and matter that seems to not have shape, only reach. The country passes us by in tableau: a cow caught in reverence of a hillside, the morning-lay of a Virginia valley, night plains of parking lots and figures moving in twos across these carscapes like moonscapes.

It is late when we arrive two days later on the island and so I do not notice all of the houses hovering in the air. The next night, we pass by one of the houses lifted into a sea-dark sky by wood pilings that hold it high, as if on the pilings' palms, as if for an offering. For weeks, I am shaken each time we walk by and look through the front door out through to the moon out back. I tell my husband's sister, as she sets the table, that the house is being raised. "Razed?" she asks. "Raised," I tell her, and we repeat this pantomime for the rest of the night, making each other laugh. We pass it back and forth at holidays and weddings; it is greeting and interlude, our own dance, our own private joke that lasts, I think, because these razor-edges of difference and proximity strike us both as true and terrible. "What misunderstandings lay beneath what we raise and what we raze? What do we try and save that we

cannot yet even see?" we mime to each other across tables and across time.

The sister in the family who bought this house now on pilings was engaged, I find, but there is no record of a marriage. Her family bought it from an old sea captain and she too grows old in this home, selling jams and jellies of Aquinnah cranberries and beach plums that she harvests from bogs in the east and along the dunes in the south. This house has no widow's walk, but the back windows stretch out over the marshes between Dunham Pond and the harbor and I wonder how long she watched the horizon for boats returning, or if she did at all.

The first night we walk by her house, I carefully watch our dogs. We have passed house after empty house, shuttered for the winter, and I listen for a growl and look for hairs-on-end. Nose-to-earth, though, these strange creatures, these holy rollers at our feet move—tracing, rooting, hounding—through the emptiness. They find and follow lines that shape the land and this night. I can barely even make them out: at the edge of the properties, underneath the hedges, between the long rows of ornamental trees. I watch the dogs and misunderstand them; I do not know what they do and so I miss out on the alchemy, on the conversions.

We walk back home, past the Mayhew parsonage and the lives caught in amber-relief against the light from night-windows: an old woman inside her papered-study chasing an idea across the blue body of her screen; a father at the foot of the stairs stopping as he reaches to turn out porch lights, listening to the gale outside, feeling for the first time the new shape of his life inside; a couple who faces each other through the living room wall, both frozen, one waiting for an answer about the day-to-day of laundry or groceries and the other, still, listening to the night-sounds of the house as the day ends. But mostly we walk through an empty town and past house after empty house, a scale too big to see.

I think all winter of John Locke and property and theft. On walks we begin to cut through yards, feel the salt-frozen grass underfoot. Trespassing becomes prayer, although I know this is temporary. My husband is the first and asks, *Can't we just go through the yards?* And I—from far away, from mountain people, from *hardscrabble* and *hobo*, from metal tins of bacon fat and skinning deers and rats' nests, backbone, bread starts, latchkey—I feel his question inside my body. It drives through me, narrows my eyes, increases my appetites.

All winter we slingshot each other further: up the drives, onto the porches, into the foyers, past great rooms, until we sit in

kitchens, perched on countertops, heads in larders, cooking big pots of food, never doing dishes.

It is January now: days face back and up ahead / time pools, then eddies / books are balanced / all around you feel something coming: / "A reckoning," someone says, but you turn and there is no one there.

And then, in the stillness and emptiness of the town, we begin to be able to make out something like plot. We see paths beaten to service doors and the ferry carrying workers' trucks. Cabbage replaces arugula at the grocery, restaurants close and food pantries open, and thermostats crank up in shuttered empty houses while the heating bills draft automatically. In one faraway city, women sit together far from their summer homes talking in threes and fours: *It's just sad,* one says. *Because it's just so easy to compost,* says another. And a third, carrying on the conversation with her husband later that night, concludes, *Or at least to buy food without all that packaging, all that trash.*

Character keeps breaking down, getting in the way, and we feel it most when we try and speak. Most of the characters have left the island by now, anyway, and so we walk from the house each night to stretch our indoor-fat legs and find a new full pantry inside a new empty kitchen. We no longer talk about contracts or consent; we know no language to talk about the scale of capital

underneath this town—that outstrips use, that wastes value—so at night we cut pictures from magazines. First of just dirt and then slowly of hills and rivers, and once we find oceans we cover the walls. Gradually more people show up and I don't know how many but we begin to move together in a way that makes me think: *flock* or *pack* or *murder*. We look at our pictures on the walls and together begin to remember language of desire, of singularity; our talk becomes vulgar, common, without possession, touching back on itself again and again.

We begin to understand these evenings as structure and as feeling and we come each night to now-full houses, finding peace in being together and in being together *against*. We have no assurance that we will win. We are not speculators. We are builders. Around tables all over town we lean over maps like pirates and chart courses for flotsam, towards jetsam. Tonight I look up and over to the window. I peer out listening to these new sounds of love reverberating through this house and try to imagine what we must look like, against this long century of dread, every house now lit against this sea-dark night.

Richard Knight, the builder of the 7.6-million-dollar, 8,803-square-foot house at the end of these United States, or at the first cause of the eastern seaboard, tells the *Martha's Vineyard Gazette*

that in 2007, "when we built it and when we sited it, it felt safe and comfortable, and not at all vulnerable." Months later, a breach in a Chappaquiddick barrier beach brought the Atlantic Ocean to within thirty-seven feet of the front door from its original 220-foot distance. The accelerated rate of erosion prompted the homeowner and partner at the world's largest private equity firm, Richard Schifter, to declare that the shrinking striking distance of the ocean was "clearly posing a threat to us."

The main house, guesthouse, garage, pool, basketball court, driveway, and flagpole were scheduled for relocation onto an adjacent 4.5-million-dollar parcel of land. The Schifter family signed contracts with engineering firms and geological consultants to wheel the house to its new spot, 325 feet away from the coastal bank. The *Boston Globe*, reporting that the sea some days swallows up more than a foot of this old Algonquin land, outlines the scope of the project: 2,500 round-trips over island country roads by truck, 40,000 cubic yards of excavated soil.

The less-than-forty feet between the front door and the open maw of the sea, the *Globe* reports, makes this not a story about "excess consumption" or "personal taste," but about the *environment*. The principals tell the public that what they can't move of the original property will be rebuilt with a "careful recycling of materials whenever possible." The horticulturalist hired to plant

ninety-four trees and 5,000 blue-stems, and to sow West Tisbury grass seeds throughout the 30,000 square feet of property, agrees. Never has she been a part of a project with such integrity or such commitment to *restore* and to *stabilize* the land, she says, and the room nods. Praising each other's cooperative efforts, the horticulturalist and the commissioners speak in rounds—the homeowner really is going above and beyond! he is the *nicest* guy! the island's most substantial restoration project really is going well!—or incantations. This consensus is powerful, magical to watch. One commissioner has interrupted the list of materials in the stabilizing hydra-mulch and hydra-straw to be used to shore up Schifter's land: "It's a really unstable…it's a very unstable…Our concern is this site is very unstable…" But her sentence trails off. The meeting returns to our epoch's secreted project of stitching the interests of the public servants to the private interests of the sovereign together along their seams until, finishing her testimony to the Edgartown Conservation Commission, Schifter's horticulturalist slips. "Our concern is your concern," she assures the board as everyone continues nodding, not hearing the slip, not hearing what they all have revealed.

The editorial board of the *Gazette* recently changed hands from newspapermen of the last century to the billionaire private equity pioneer Jerome Kohlberg. Adding to the portrait of Schifter as a

good citizen of the island, a good steward of the land, the paper writes that these people "deserve credit, not vilification" for what they are doing—all, the paper emphasizes, "on their own dime."

But there are flies in the ointment. A man with the screen name "flounder bob, chilmark"—no stranger to the comments section of the *Vineyard Gazette*—as usual picks up the absurd threads running through stories. Telling his readers that there is man on one side and nature on the other, he ends, all caps, sampling Sonny and Cher: *WHO WILL WIN—STAY TUNED AND THE BEAT GOES ON….*

At the library on North Water Street, an amateur filmmaker has recently screened her new film about the Schifter house and its neighbor, the Wacks house. "One tracking shot of long bare roots extending down a 20-foot cliffside drew murmurs from the audience," the *Gazette* reports. After the screening the filmmaker says that erosion "not only changes the land, it changes the sea," and concludes that regardless, "I just feel like we have to do something…I just feel like we have to wake up."

Man, though, is nowhere in the photographs of this house. Most are shot from the sky; the house and sea look flat, still. One image is taken from the driveway and looks out past a Caterpillar's frozen yellow metal limbs, past the coir mounds, out past the ocean toward something outside the frame. A sliver of the house's

west wing is visible in the shot but it is the man's absence that is the subject of this photograph, of all the photographs of the house.

The reproduction of absence in this image is stilted and flat, like the house. What is missing is discrete, singular, autonomous, and so the eye scans for a shadow of an arm, a briefcase, a sign of man at the site where he has come to lay his head. His absence for some proves his guilt: *Villain*, some say. *Greedy*, say the liberals. There might be a temptation to imagine a shadow in caricature now: monacle, top hat, coattails. But maybe it is in the absence that a key can be found, a claim. Maybe the hole here is enough of a crack to open something more than theory, to imagine even what that might be.

Staring at the photo, it is hard for me not to picture him out beyond the machines, at the edge of the tide. He has his fishwater-blue dress sleeves rolled up and his pant cuffs are soaked and stiff with what looks like years of sand and salt. But it is his eyes—stretched wide, watching for the moon rising at his back—that stop me. I watch them closely while he races to dig shoe-fulls of sand from the shore to carry back to his land. He has labored this way since the breach. One minute he was inside—inside the dishes and inside the glasses. And the next: tearing past his

family—dropping glass, jacket, watch, wallet—he finds himself here, at the end.

Standing in front of the house, though, it is impossible to imagine him**.** The mansion is ugly and empty, like all private wealth up close. At the end of this small island, we stand huddled together at the fence surrounding the property. I strain to see in the windows, to make out loomed tableaus of dailiness: a soup pot being stirred, clothes pulled from the dryer, a woman pulling her bra off as she starts to make dinner, a man splayed out on the rug, one child trapezeing each limb, his eyes closed, listening to the sounds of this life inside his house. I cannot make out any stories, though. There is not nothing here but there is surely nothing of life in this house. I cannot see the something yet but am caught by its sublime force that is like a storm, like a levy-break.

It is stunning and absurd. "Breathtaking," the papers say over and over. "Just shocking," says one man in town.

But there is more and, all at once: violence. The presence of the house and the absence of the man suddenly light from within the violence that has propped this all up. The two cleaving together become form and concuss, plunging breath from all cavities, taking language. There is an involuntary suctioning, a turning inside-out of air that howls past *villain, felon, greed,* to *empire, exploitation, dispossession.* Absence reveals itself as presence and next

to the favela/derivatives and next to the slums/futures. How close do we bring things together to see them? How strong are the pulls of the tide. To have is to take, the parables say. The shoreline does not change only the land, but also the sea.

A slave owner once said the owner's footsteps are the soil's greatest fertilizer. What evils are not local, what starvation not organic. What do we believe we must sustain. Mothers look in the eyes of their baby boys and practice saying the names: Emmitt, Trayvon. Oscar. Michael. Eric. *There are so many of us,* a mother says, surviving her little boy shot in daylight. *They are manufacturing us in droves,* says another black woman from inside a prison cell. *It is men, not Man, that live upon the earth*, says another woman escaping the gas chambers. What shoals of territory beneath land, what metric drift of land, what empirical claims of diluvial deposits. The Wampanoag elders say there will be no artifacts in the Chappaquiddick earth here under the Schifter home because *you don't leave trash in your church*, one tribal historian tells the newspaper. What thin place between the sacred and profane? What life at the edge?

From the fence I close my eyes and listen to the waves' thunder-strikes on this antinomian ocean. Each one is more sure than the last; in each there is a reckoning. The air and breath and

language return hard and fast and ancient: *malum, malum, malum, malum, malum, malum en se.*

Jerry Wacks, Mr. Schifter's neighbor, brings a proposal before the Conservation Commission the next November. A contractor he has hired stands in front of the commissioners and lays out a stack of burlap bags and explains that the family requests to fill them with local sand from the Wasque beaches. To "buy a little more time," he tells us. Two-thirds of the two-acre estate has already been taken by the breach, the contractor says, and depending on Norton Point and how fast the tides shift, the short fifty-seven feet between the water and door is not long for this world.

The commission, charged with administering and enforcing Massachusetts' Wetlands Protection Act, is now only half-listening. The night is growing old and they have already heard homeowner requests on view easements, grandfathered piers, peat bogs, and the horticulturalist on blue-stems and shrubbery and biodegradable hazards. The chairman, ripped from the pages of an ancient fable of trees and brambles, is finishing community service for larceny and embezzlement charges and the financial mishandling of $600,000. In fishermen's cable-knits and richly worn loafers, with wire-rimmed glasses and the dark soft ears of old men, he begins to swivel in his bucket chair. The talk turns to

weekends and weather. One commissioner, to try and wrap this thing up, leans over and shows the chairman a text from his wife who's down already at The Wharf waiting for him for dinner.

Wacks is not here tonight but he has heard the critics, shakes his head at it all, cannot believe it at all, cannot let himself think about it all. He is sad at the tone the criticism has taken, explains the *Globe*. Wacks, an old man now, lives with his wife down at the breach. He has told a reporter that when they built his home, "there was nothing illegal or wrong about it," and the reader pictures him insisting it to himself until he has gone mad.

The commissioners, with their commissioners' tools and commissioners' questions and commissioners' metrics, might read Wacks's quote in the paper and might picture—all in their slippers still, all alone with last night's sleep still in their eyes, all in the quiet and still of first-morning—what their work will look like through the long unforgiving tunnel of time. Here, tonight, though, as the meeting draws to a close, the secretary records the business of the day: sustainable mulch, organic wood, local sand.

I leave the meeting and walk by The Wharf, passing all the empty mansions that were once the homes of whaling captains, now the homes of new industry. I get home and look up "New England and empty land" and read all night, following links and stories, tracing legal sediments. It is an old story a colonial

Illustration by Steve Garber

governor tells: if there is land that is not being improved or enclosed, and if there is enough left for over the Natives, then "we may lawfully take the rest."

We return to the island the next year and I've almost forgotten the house. A big group of us drives out to Wasque Point and then I see it again. We walk toward the path to the point, but the path is gone and there are warning signs everywhere: *Don't go in water! Do not walk near cliffs!! Danger!!!!* The cliffs are undercut but the men push ahead to the edge, dog-hobble vines at their feet. I stay back and will the earth solid.

The island this time of year is covered in bearberry, chokeberry, rockrose, arrow-wood, goat's rue. Old recipes here begin, "First, you take a rabbit," or a duck, or a goose, or a fat

slob of a fish. The year fattens up from beach plums, beach peas, old-men-frowning bluefish, stripers, to quahogs, longnecks, beds of the salty flesh of long fanned mussels with their silvery insides. The Indians here called it the end because it was a place of sustenance, of food.

There is an old story that frogs grow in bellies of children who do not share their food. They croak and growl to mark the greedy. This is a story in all union towns. Fables in these towns are never timeless; they have no truck with universal truths. They are all the sharp spears of campaigns.

Martha's Vineyard is not different from the rest of the country. Both, like the cliffs, are undercut. Seas break higher; inland rivers swell. Guttling currents open up centers of towns. "You may be standing on nothing more than a thin layer of ground," the Trustees at Chappaquiddick warn.

I return to Locke again to find how we got here—to finance capital, to private equity, to the house on these cliffs. He tells the first part of the story that begins that God gave the earth to all men in common and there are rivers we drink from, there are acorns we gather. He works hard to get to fences and strains to wring property from the common store, but property is necessary, he tells us, for our flourishing. It allows a man to work the land with what he already owns: his body, his labor. As much as he can

use "before it spoils," Locke says, is fair game. "Whatever is beyond this" portion is more than his share and "belongs to others." And what of capital. And what of the banks of Indochine. And what of the indefensible flesh pots of empire. The migrant ghosts at every border. What, too, of the second part of the story? How will we tell the story of the end of capital?

Woody Filley, a man who lives on Chappaquiddick, asks do we let a man protect his property or are we going to say, "At a certain point, when the sea taketh, the sea taketh." If it is not perfect knowledge of the land we need but a material literacy of the sea, then how do we read the origin and fetch of the waves? What high-seas revolution bursts now on our shores? Pirates come from the same dispossessed commons but always tell the story of the power and waste. Where would we find ourselves to understand the sea as Moloch, as watery law, as accumulation for redistribution. What if instead of morals we had metrics.

The cliffs do not give way and the men return, unhobbled, to the Trustees' signs. It is cold and getting late and we start to turn back together toward the car. My back to the ocean, I feel something shift. Strong and awake, I think of poets and rifles and archipelagos. It is no wonder, I feel at once, that those at sea write of rhizomes and revolutions. Like how the Caribbean roots itself in difference, in vocations of refusal and strike. I leave the group

and walk down toward the surf, stand in the tide, and turn toward the house. I stop. This is the place, where I am standing now, that the first photograph of this house I saw in the papers was taken. Shooting from the sea, the camera looked up past the gnawed cliffs towards the ridges on the six gabled roofs of the main house.

This place where I stand now, where the camera was set—this is where I realize I have pictured the man all along. My heart races and my feet sink into the sand, pressing out color and sound in tight circles around my shoes. Saltwater breaks at the backs of my thighs. It stings at first but then I cannot feel the outside, only the hot blood and edges like needles, like pins. Suddenly I am struck that there is nothing outside of me, that I feel the ocean inside because it is only inside, boiling and ice, *everything is matter and alive and holy, nothing is discrete, we are only ever the sea and desire and flesh.* I am alive in my skin, to the end of my limbs.

The man is standing beside me now and I look over to him. He is different than I imagined; he looks smaller, stronger, feral. I can see him and can now see that he is not shoe-filling the sand to shore up his home. His eyes are not wide with fear. I look closer and see: his eyes are wide with hunger, with rage. His body shakes for what it has been made to do, for what it has done, for what it has stood for. I watch as he tears into the cliffs, then I turn to face

them by his side, and with the sea we will soon devour them entirely.

There are ghosts out at sea. Here on land, there are none; here, there are only mansions. But this is deep magic. This magic is the mansion here and it is the ghosts there. Standing here, learning to read the shore, there is an off chance we go mad enough to see this: the taking of the having, the owing of the holding. Here, at the ending, there is an off chance we go mad enough to wade out in the sea and begin to eat the houses of the rich.

Solitude (#060) | Adel Souto

Thanksgiving Break 2009

Sarah Sala

An armed robber holds up the Meijer gas station Saturday,
demands cigarettes and money.
Hours later, hits the Rite-Aid for more cash.
By Monday he's unstoppable—
knocking over Huntington Bank in broad daylight,
barefaced and brandishing a grin for security cameras.
Radios belch live coverage of the *Funny Filcher*
robbing a CVS-Pharmacy Tuesday morning, as Mom
waits for my plane to land. One overexcited
resident blurts, *Adrian is the new Manhattan*!
My sister's high school issues a lockdown.
The gunman holds up a clerk at Wal-Mart.
On the move, he revisits the Meijer gas station,
carjacking a pickup truck. Gun leveled
at the woman's face, he hisses, *I'll shoot you*
and your baby. We're all rooting for him.

The Palm, the Pine, the Cypress

Robert James Russell

Later, after his forty-ninth birthday party, Jerome, sitting alone in his lounge drunk on Sambuca, was flush with nostalgia, and so he booted up the wedge-shaped laptop his daughter Mallory had just bought him—to keep him busy in an otherwise lonely house—and opened the program she had downloaded that let him visit any street in the world.

He was thinking then of Freddy Blaszak, his dear friend from childhood who died in a car crash when he was off at college. Freddy lived down the street, so Jerome entered an approximate address into the program and was transported to 9th Avenue in Queens, maneuvering down the narrow street, slowly moving past the earth-toned homes, the posted-at-interval pine and pin oak planted in the thin strips of grass between sidewalk and street, and stopped at his childhood home. It looked different on the computer screen, more modern, and the homes flanking it, too, seemed newer, but the skies were still that same slate color, still so inert.

Exploring the neighborhood, Jerome realized that across the street and up some, what used to be a Greek Orthodox Church was now a vacant lot with a large sign posting it all for sale. He wondered if it—now, in the present, after the picture was taken—had already been built up into something new. He scrolled back to his old house, the short stoop with the painted-white iron railing leading up, the sunken drive leading to—what once was, at least—a garage so packed full of used furniture his Pop had scavenged from yard sales that they had to keep their car, an ancient Buick he imagined had been birthed out of a single block of steel, parked out along the street.

He thought of Freddy again—of how, on Easter Feast Day, the Greeks would parade down 9th Avenue led by the priests wearing their black cassocks and kalimavkions with the black veils. Jerome remembered, too, how mysterious they all were—the women especially, who'd be holding palm fronds folded into crucifixes or the unmistakable blue and white Greek flags and wearing headscarves and colorful dresses, women who seemed otherworldly compared to the girls they knew: exotic women, women with dark curled hair and olive skin, women with wide hips and large breasts that they were sure tasted like some wonderful Mediterranean fruit. They would be over at Freddy's, sitting on his porch, watching the parade pass by—this yearly

tradition—and once, when they were thirteen, Freddy got the idea to throw a rock—a small one—at one of the priests in the front, a grey-bearded man of indiscriminate age.

Sitting in the lounge all these years later, Jerome thought he had tried to stop him from doing it, but now, memory faded and foggy, he wondered if that might be the morals of middle-age taking over, rewriting his youth. Jerome sipped the Sambuca, touched a three-inch scar along his neck. When the rock hit the priest, however, he didn't balk or stop the parade, he simply glanced at the boys with steeled eyes, lips thin and pink and pressed firmly together—Freddy standing on the porch, mouth open, waiting for something to happen, Jerome sitting near his feet—pardoning them silently for what they could never say aloud.

Pharaoh's Horses (from the series, "Parallels)
Sarah Elise Abramson

Bios

Photographer **Sarah Elise Abramson**'s aesthetic is at the intersection of the poetic and unsettling, the creepy and beautiful, the subversive and classically Romantic. She is an omnivorous and voracious collector and documenter of found images and objects, as well as the engineer of invented, quasi-mystical visual narratives. Her haunting, mysterious images plumb the depths of allegory in their sun-spattered views, with the ticklish allure of glimpsing something private. Since adolescence she has rarely been without a camera in her hand, and still prefers what she calls "the physicality" of the 35mm and polaroid films she learned on. Even as her style and technique unceasingly evolve and expand, her early impulses to photograph the wonders of nature, the people she knows, and life's randomly surreal surprises still drive her.

Bennett Allen lives in New York City.

Kathy Anderson won the 2015 Autumn House Press Fiction Prize with her short story collection, *Bull: Stories*, which will be published in early 2016. She was a finalist for the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction and the New Rivers Press Many Voices Project. Her short stories have appeared in Kenyon Review Online, Tahoma Literary Review, Barcelona Review, and Apple Valley Review, among others. Awards include a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship in prose and two Pushcart Prize nominations. She is also a playwright and Dramatists Guild member, with plays produced and staged nationally and internationally.

Roy Bentley has received fellowships from the NEA, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, and the Ohio Arts Council. Poems have appeared in The Southern Review, Shenandoah, Pleiades, Blackbird, North American Review, Prairie Schooner and elsewhere. Books include *Boy in a Boat* (University of Alabama), *Any One Man* (Bottom Dog), *The Trouble with a Short Horse in Montana* (White Pine), and *Starlight Taxi* (Lynx House). He's taught creative writing and composition at universities and colleges throughout the Midwest and in Florida. These days, he teaches for Georgian Court University in New Jersey and lives near the Jersey Shore.

Jennifer Berney is a queer mama, writer, and teacher. She is a contributing blogger at Brain, Child, and her work has also appeared in The Manifest Station and Brevity, among other places. She lives in Olympia, Washington with her partner and two sons. She is currently working on a memoir that chronicles her years-long quest to conceive a child.

Vassilia Binensztok is a writer, lover, thinker, and artist who moonlights as a therapist and psychology professor. Her inspiration comes from the turmoil she experienced growing up in an abusive home, being orphaned, her observations, and existential philosophies. Her goal is to be her truest self, uncover life's mysteries, and inspire others to do the same. Vassilia studied creative writing at Dartmouth College and her writing can be found in Hanging Loose and The Beatnik News.

Dmitry Borshch was born in Dnepropetrovsk, studied in Moscow, today lives in New York. His drawings and sculptures have been exhibited at the National Arts Club (New York), Brecht Forum (New York), ISE Cultural Foundation (New York), and the State Russian Museum (Saint Petersburg).

Lisa Caloro received her MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poem "Camouflage" was chosen as a finalist for the Milton Kessler Memorial Prize in Poetry. She has been published in Harpur Palate, Mohonk Mountain's Vanguard Voices of the Hudson Valley, and Green Door Magazine. She teaches creative writing, poetry, neo-hippie studies and composition at SUNY Sullivan in the Catskills. She hates shoes, says lots of curse words, has poor balance, and loves bartending almost as much as teaching. She has two young children who don't spend time in bars but hear a lot of bad words anyway!

Krista Briana Drummond is a 2015 graduate from Sarah Lawrence College with an MFA in Creative Writing Poetry. She earned her BA from The Ohio State University in 2012. The themes of mythology, nature and loss are threaded throughout her work. She is from Sugar Grove, Ohio.

Gina Forberg is an elementary school teacher and poet. She has studied at The Writers' Studio in New York City and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Manhattanville College. She was a 2008 participate at The Squaw Valley Community of Writers and a 2011 Fellow for The Connecticut Writers' Project at Fairfield University where she teaches summer poetry workshops for middle and high school students. She was short-listed for the Margaret

Reid Poetry Prize for traditional verse and has published in The New Delta Review, Anderbo Magazine, Slant Magazine and other literary journals. She lives in Fairfield, Connecticut with her family.

Steve Garber has been drawing most of his life. He believes anyone can draw if they put in the time and give it their best effort. He holds an LLE (Limited Licensed Electrician) license and is HVAC certified. He lives in Tennessee.

Adam Gianforcaro is the author of the poetry collection *Morning Time in the Household, Looking Out* and children's picture book *Uma the Umbrella*. His poems and prose can be found in The Brasilia Review, Hippocampus Magazine, Kentucky Review, The Los Angeles Review, Sundog Lit, and others. He lives in Delaware.

Luce Godfrey is an educator, organizer, and writer in a southern Boom Town. Trained by the academy as a political theorist and by people's movements as an organizer and educator, she has taught in universities, prisons, on day laborer corners, and in makeshift classrooms around the country. She is currently working on a collection of poetry, *Swamp Songs*, that tries to imagine a formalism wily enough to handle radical democracy.

Savannah Schroll Guz is a mixed-media artist, illustrator, and copyeditor based in Weirton, West Virginia, just outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her work has appeared in galleries in Washington, DC; New York City; Minneapolis; Pittsburgh; York, Pennsylvania; Hudson, New York; Rochester, New York; and is now carried by ZaPow! Gallery in Asheville, North Carolina. Her installation "The Escape Artist," about the corset's impact on the female form, will appear at Pittsburgh's Future Tenant art space in December 2015. More about her current projects and series can be found at: www.savannahschrollguz.com

Priyadarshini Komala is a painter based in Washington, D.C. Her work portrays Indian identity, nature, self-reflection and womanhood. She uses her Computer Science to understand the role of women in science and the existing gender gaps in the tech-world. Her upcoming works have women in science and technology as their subject. She has shown her work at several art galleries in Washington, DC including the prestigious District of Columbia Arts Center and has published many paintings in distinguished magazines.

Ms. Komala has a Bachelor's degree with a major in Computer Science and minor in Studio Art from The American University in Washington, DC.

Kaitlin Lawler is an ex-expat readjusting to Seattle after 2+ years teaching in Seoul. Her need to travel is a chronic condition soothed by walks in new places and breaths of different air, but home is wherever she is with her brilliant fiancé and their less-brilliant cat, Eliot. Sometimes, she writes, and other times, she can be found singing embarrassing songs in classrooms. She always feels better after buying a new houseplant, and she finds it difficult to live without rain, music, and Mexican food.

Raymond Luczak is the author and editor of 17 books. Titles include *How to Kill Poetry* (Sibling Rivalry Press), *Mute* (A Midsummer Night's Press), and *From Heart into Art: Interviews with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Artists and Their Allies* (Handtype Press). His novel *Men with Their Hands* (Queer Mojo) won first place in the Project: QueerLit Contest 2006. His latest book is *QDA: A Queer Disability Anthology* (Squares & Rebels), which comes out in November 2015. He lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Jax NTP holds an MFA in Creative Writing from CSU Long Beach. They currently teach critical thinking & composition courses at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, CA. They are the Assistant Poetry Editor & Fiction Reader of The Offing Magazine, the former Editor-in-Chief of RipRap Literary Journal, Gender Editor of Watermark Journal, and Associate Editor of The Fat City Review. Their work has been featured in numerous publications such as 3:AM Magazine & Cordite Poetry Review. Jax has an affinity for jellyfish and polaris, and a fetish for miniature succulent terrariums.

Katherine Durham Oldmixon's recent poems can be found in Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, Solstice Literary Magazine, The Bellevue Review, The Normal School, *Improbable Worlds: An Anthology of Texas and Louisiana Poets* (Mutabilis Press, 2011), *Lifting the Sky: Southwestern Haiku and Haiga* (Dos Gatos Press, 2013), and in her chapbook *Water Signs*, finalist for the New Women's Voices Award (Finishing Line Press, 2009). Co-director of the Poetry at Round Top festival and a senior poetry editor for Tupelo Quarterly, Katherine is professor and chair of English at historic Huston-Tillotson University. She lives in Austin, TX with her husband Arturo Lomas Garza.

Robert James Russell is the author of the novel *Mesilla* (Dock Street Press), and the chapbook *Don't Ask Me to Spell It Out* (WhiskeyPaper Press). He is a founding editor of the literary journals Midwestern Gothic and CHEAP POP. You can find him online at robertjamesrussell.com.

Sarah Sala earned her MFA in Poetry from New York University and currently teaches College Writing in New Jersey. Yusef Komunyakaa once told her she should write a poem about ice fishing, which she still ponders from time to time. Her honors include: an Academy of American Poets Prize, the Marjorie Rapport Award for poetry, an Avery Hopwood Award for nonfiction, and a Roy W. Cowden Memorial Fellowship. Her poems appear in Lambda Literary, Atlas Review, and Poetry Ireland Review, and you can visit her at SarahSala.com.

Adel Souto is a Cuban-born artist, writer, and musician, currently living in Brooklyn. He has written pieces for numerous magazines, fanzines and websites. He has released several books, including a "best of," a book on the subject of silence, and even translated works of Spanish poets. His art has shown in galleries throughout the US, as well as in Europe, and South America. His music videos have screened at NYC's Anthology Film Archives, and he has lectured on occult influences in photography at NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture. He is also heavily involved with his musical outfit, 156.

Jill Tydor grew up on the muddy banks of the Mississippi River catching tadpoles and stories that drifted downstream. She got her MFA in Creative Writing from California College of the Arts and has been read or heard in conjunction with Quiet Lightning's Sparkle + Blink, BangOut Reading Series, Samizdat Literary Journal, Under the Influence and Small Press Distribution's Endless Summer.

Robert Vivian is the author of *The Tall Grass Trilogy*, *Water And Abandon*, and two books of meditative essays, *Cold Snap As Yearning* and *The Least Cricket Of Evening*. A book of prose poems called *Mystery My Country* will be published in 2016; he has co-written the book *Traversings* with the poet Richard Jackson that will also be published next year.

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