

Outbreath

Tufts Literary Magazine

We Create.

Spring 2011

XXV

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Editors' Note

Outbreath has always been dedicated to publishing the literary voices of Tufts. In this issue, we have featured sensual prose, drug-addicted poetry, quirky, depressing, and earnest works, odes to mammals, odes to friends, and general intellectual tomfoolery. We appreciate the dedication and diversity of our submission pool.

We are also grateful to all of the artists and photographers who contributed their work to bring color and depth to the design of this issue.

The magazine has evolved incredibly over the years and we know that it will continue to grow in the future. Our staff this year has been fantastic, funny, and supportive through all our ups and downs. Even though the year is ending, the energy of this group will carry the magazine for many years to come.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Outbreath. It represents the collaboration of passionate personalities and creative individuals—without them, you'd all be doing the Daily Jumble right now.

Keep on keepin' on.

-The Editors

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Diminishing Laundry

by Denali Hussin

I.
Canary yellow overalls with
nary a spot on them
can fly off my clothesline as quickly as if they'd never existed in the first place.

II.
Quixotic sundresses like golden macaws
quit their dancing and lie like
drained ticks on the basement floor; the dryer is full.

III.
The irony of it all is that the
iron in my closet has lain there, virginal, as my
knees poke out from below wrinkled hemlines, absurd.

IV.
All my scarves, and mittens, and ear warmers, and confederate-colored
caps, pile like fleecy unwashed puppies on a shelf,
capitalizing on the fact that I never wash accessories.

V.
Like snakeless skins my inside out tights,
Berry colored and thin shelled, lay amongst the
Library catalogue of dustmice beneath my bed.

VI.
As soon as I turn my back the basket gapes like a baby bird and when I
turn back again it is full and belching dirty underwear and now it's time for another load.
asterisk pound sign ampersand ampersand exclamation point

VII.
Come sort your fucking socks from my fucking socks I swear the machine
ate one of each pair just to make my life
complicated.

VIII.
The fastener on my only clean black bra is
fast losing its staying power, and in perhaps
ten days or less it will fail, and my breasts will leap free
and make their escape.

Reaching

by Jake Seiden

Silence, stillness, until He giggled.
I turned, unfairly rebuffed, but He
Had gone, leaving me, again, alone
On that twisted, solitary road.



Yesterday, long after you had gone,
I followed the winding road far past
The edge of our homely town. Like a
Vine twisting up a sapling's short, barked
Side, I wrapped my slogging steps round
And round, along that road until I
Reached the cliff, its end. Looking up
I could see the sun; reaching towards it,
Elbows locked, painfully, I almost
Could grab its great and golden fingers—
But a wind swept in, whistling, wild,
To bat at my grasping hands and bow
Them back towards the ground. I drew a breath
Up my nose and tried to hold it in;
Impugned, angry, it stabbed at my lungs,
Raged till I bled tears and let it go.

Thus, at the end of that road – Restraint –
I threw my face towards the sky and
Howled His Name – the Devil came quickly,
(As always He had) with a hard crack
And terribleness, an explosion
Unlike any I'd witnessed before.
Regret, at first, until a slim hope
Emerged – out from the shaken landscape
Of my mind – brought like gold to the top
Of a lucky strainer. I laughed.
The Devil frowned, a question,
And I showed him a smirk. "Speak of the
Devil and He shall appear." I did,
And He had; so how could God, or the
Angels, or you, resist my calling?
I stepped nearer the cliff's edge, lengthened
My mighty throat, and roared out your name!

Being Ben Klein

by Andrew Reisman

Ben Klein was one of the least fortunate people I ever knew. Adopted by, from what I could tell, extremely loving parents (for how else could you explain their willingness to adopt him at all?) or extremely abusive parents (his constant nervous stutter and introversion, in retrospect, reeked of a too-firm hand behind closed doors), he was the undisputed lowest member of the high school hierarchy. A persistent presence in the student center, Ben had a peculiar odor to him that was strongly reminiscent of the stench a dog has ten days after it dies from eating dozens of rotten eggs. His face, a curious collection of sullen eyes, an oversized nose, and a be-ratstached mouth, was uniquely qualified in its ability to turn away members of the opposite sex.

Ben Klein was, by all accounts, a walking injustice and we, as pretty rich high school students on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, were obliged by custom not to pity him or offer aid in anyway, but to be disgusted by and fear him. I was an aspiring socialite in this circle, and so in my youthful wisdom I decided that the best way to ingratiate myself with the coolness hierarchy was to take potshots at those on the bottom of the totem behind their backs. "Hey g-g-g-g-guys, wha-wha-wha-I mean, umm, I mean, umm, what's up?" I would say in a stuttering parody, often eliciting cheap laughs from my fellow pilgrims on the path, the one that trailed unimaginably "upward" towards total recognition by the student body of how cool of a dude I was. As my fellow tormentors and I laughed at him within earshot, I felt I was clever.

God, I was so damn clever.

Besides, it's not as if I could just ignore Ben; the kid was in my English class as well as my Film class. This meant that, for two fifths of the day, I had to listen to him struggle through what I'm sure might have been well-thought out points. Due to his unfortunate speech impediment, however, I often lost interest before he could get past the first three words.

Film was the one medium where Ben chose to express himself, believe it or not. If I were him I'd have picked something a little less visual, but at least he was smart enough not to star in his own films, opting instead for brief, gloriously speechless Hitchcock

cameos. Halfway through his junior year of high school, my senior year, his incident happened. It was during one of January's customary dustings, heavy enough to bring children and childish teens to their classroom windows with shouts of "snow!" but light enough to be completely useless in canceling school, with enough snow left over in the whole city to make exactly one snowball. I was on my way back from a little local pizza place when I noticed the flashing light turning the falling flakes into a multitude of mirrors. I couldn't tell who was in the ambulance before it drove away, but Ben wasn't in Film or English later in the day.

The following morning in one of the badly moderated school-wide meetings I'd come to expect, the principal announced that poor Ben had had a seizure, but was now out of the hospital. The student body, in their insincere way, wept polite aristocratic tears for the kid. When he came back to school on Monday, he was buried under an avalanche of feel-good high fives and pats on the back. There was a distinct smell of hand sanitizer throughout the school that day. When "What Happens When You Think You Think You're Talking To Someone Else Online But You're Really Talking To Yourself?" (can you believe he actually called it that?) premiered at the school's annual end-of-year film festival it was met with a full house, who were fidgeting in collective discomfort in their seats the whole time. And so it was that the student body, believing they had fulfilled in their lip service their obligation to Ben, went back to completely ignoring him and Ben, in not knowing what he did wrong to have all of his new friends abandon him, went back to his quiet world of isolation. I wish I could tell you that the very next day I offered to eat lunch with him, or volunteered to be in his next film, or even give him the same speech lessons that I had undergone as a young child, but it just wasn't in me. Even now, I let his injustice of an existence perpetuate, and it kills me inside. I could say that the reason I would avoid him on the street would be because I can't stand the sight of someone so oblivious to why the world rejects him, that I might break down and cry if we ever spoke face to face again. I really wish I could. Honestly though, he just smells funny.

Apples

by Lenora Smith

In the coffee queue, the mannish mother barred her from me with coarse hands because I am a thieving teen. She doesn't know I loathe children; they speckle saliva in flecks on the mother's flexing biceps and the strain in her face causes me to growl as I hear the child howl and burp and squall, sprawling across the woman's mountainous shoulder; I was horrified as the toddler twitched and trickled spit, sticking to every surface like sap, dribbling in shrill gurgling giggles that I guzzled, petrified like a flaky horror flick female, frozen to the spot by the sight of the saliva slaving monster come to crunch her bones.

Yet, I think this one here is the best I've met because at home, I have a picture of a little girl sitting on a white fence, fiddling with the sun between her toes, holding an apple. I'm sure she must have bumbled and blubbered as much as every other baby but that quiet photo prodded me. This munchkin's mussed locks must be just the same cotton color, texture as that photographed princess's tresses.

They called my order.

As I walked past, I waveringly waved; she wiggled and grinned. Coddling my cappuccino, I scooted past the pair; hypocritically hoarding her smudged smile and wishing her bundles of apples.

Spirals

by Anne Skelding

autism is

[a cage]

like gilded bars of
silver and gold wrapped in
spirals around my
h e a d

hey you!
you're brilliant,
you're fucking *brilliant*—

—too bad
you're batshit crazy

you've got numbers all jumbled inside your head, and your
words won't come when you want
them, trapped inside yourself,
yeah you,
you see

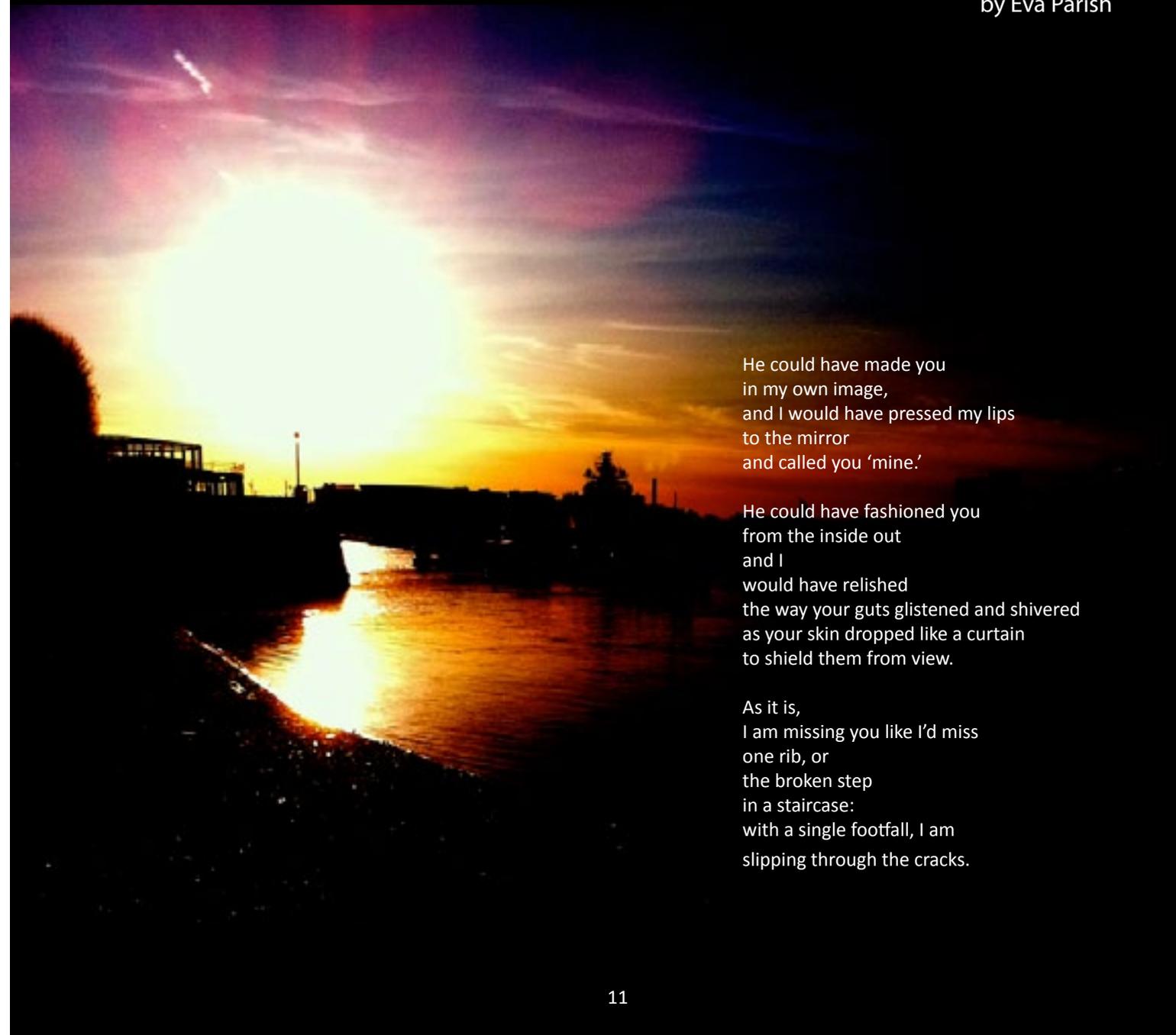
shadows dancing in the snow, and

streetlight through treetops like

the sky's on fire

For Adam

by Eva Parish



He could have made you
in my own image,
and I would have pressed my lips
to the mirror
and called you 'mine.'

He could have fashioned you
from the inside out
and I
would have relished
the way your guts glistened and shivered
as your skin dropped like a curtain
to shield them from view.

As it is,
I am missing you like I'd miss
one rib, or
the broken step
in a staircase:
with a single footfall, I am
slipping through the cracks.

Joanna

by Andrew Padgett

Loafing on the couch with you in my parents' basement with stale goldfish crackers and boxed wine to prove to us our boredom, we watch some movie about Sandra Bullock finding the one and we speculate that our future lovers will surprise and challenge and complete us while the appropriate music ensues.

Thirty years later neither of us has nabbed a man for longer than a quick fun minute and I'm doing nothing on our couch in boxers and a High School Musical t-shirt; our yappy Chihuahua runs in circles. You look at me and start to laugh, and I switch on the Food Network because Sandra Bullock is dead now, the same way our goal to have interesting lives is comfortably dead.

Then later we're actually dead and buried next to each other because real family is whatever, and I turn over laughing in my grave thinking of all the opportunities we screwed up. We break through our coffins and you make fun of my rotting corpse (thanks).
Let's see what's on TV.



Karen

by Lenora Smith

When I passed Karen today,
I didn't stop.

Pushing by her 50-year-old crows feet,
her tight lips, her hunched
figure, draped over her slouching black boots
that she bought when I was 14.
I remember because that week, she cursed me
out of the barn, in her low voice,
full of gravel and day old tequila shots,
for letting her horse panic, rear back,
and step on them.

I used to clean
those damned boots while
the superstar, the living dream, prowled
catlike around her horses,
hissing at her lowly grooms,
whipping out her hangover
and beating us with it.

And this morning, I passed my hero
Me: 5 years taller, 20 pounds heavier,
in civilian's clothes,
without a pair of proper boots to my name;
my stomach roiled. As I trundled by,
shook my hair back and met Karen's eyes—
blue slits that rolled off my features
like rainwater.



My Sister's Skin

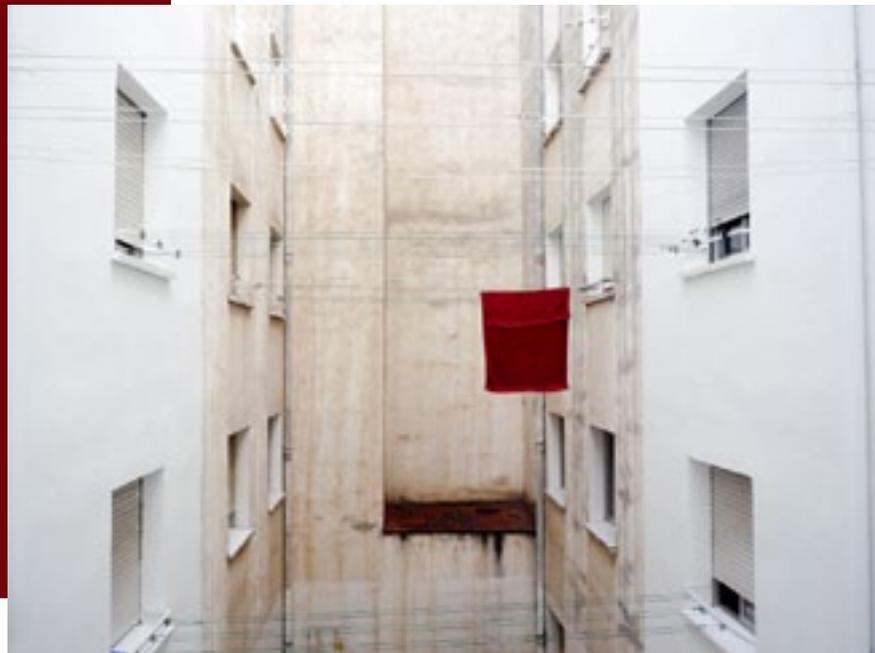
by Rachel Seward

We were little and on nights you weren't there,
I used to crawl into your top bunk, delighted
to finally be able to trace the patterns
of the stars glowing green on the ceiling.
But when I wriggled down inside your sheets
they rubbed strangely on my legs
and I could not sleep.

I grew taller than you.
One by one I stepped into your spaces,
usurped your classrooms, entranced your teachers
who began to think of you as my sister.
I was supremely confident in my right
to succeed you, surpass you in all things.

Could you feel me treading on your heels?
Was that why you kept running?

For once I could not overtake you.
You became more and more unreachable.
You terrified me with your purple hands,
the downy hair, the jutting cheekbones,
the way your jeans began to hang
from your sharp pale hips.
I did not want that skin. I looked away.



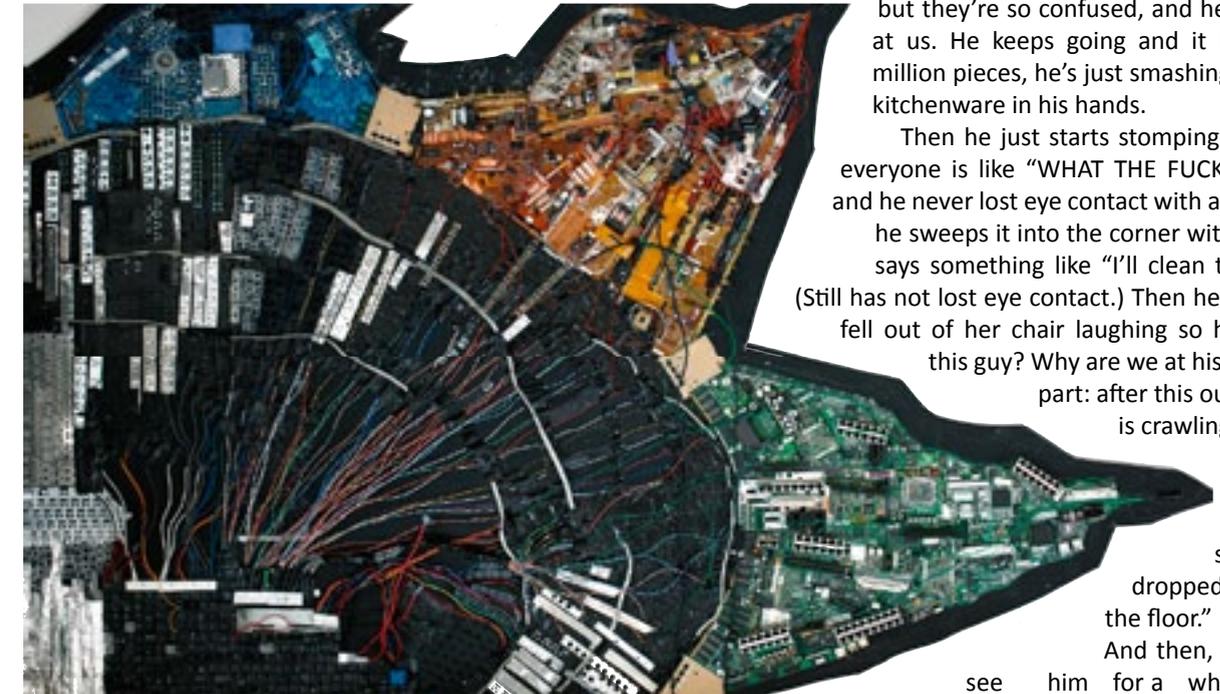
This Actually Happened to Me

by Brandon Archambault

So I peed my pants and still made out with a guy for, like, an hour.

But, like, what the fuck? Why did no one take me home after I peed my pants? The whole entire night I kept being like "Jessie I have to pee I have to pee." But Jessie kept screaming at me "DON'T BREAK THE SEAL STEPH, DON'T BREAK THE SEAL." But when we ran by this kid who just flat out fell over on the ground in front of us, because he was so drunk, I laughed so hard, and then I peed, and then no one took me home. What the hell. Like I'm an infant.

But anyway this all happened at Zach's, at his birthday. It was weird, though, because I didn't really know him, Jessie and me just went over there to drink. But I haven't given you all the deets about this guy. The sex with 68 different girls. And blowjobs



from at least 70... but no one is sure. He calls his dick the anaconda.

Like, I guess I knew him from Bio, he saw me and he was like "Youuuu... we had lab together. With that professor, the crazy bitch one." And I was like yeah, but that was it, he just kind of nodded and went back to his beer and that was it.

But that was later. Before that, we were all standing in his kitchen talking and he walks in and that was the first time I saw him. He's like, "Hey, have you guys seen my huge cock?" and he picks up this cookie jar, it's shaped like a chicken, and he holds it in front of his crotch. He opens it and goes "Do you wanna put your hand in my cock?" Everyone thinks it's hysterical cuz he's so drunk. Then he starts squeezing it so hard it cracks and everyone's all "OH MY GOD you just broke your cock." Everyone is thinking this is hilarious but they're so confused, and he's just staring at us. He keeps going and it breaks into a million pieces, he's just smashing this piece of kitchenware in his hands.

Then he just starts stomping on it so now everyone is like "WHAT THE FUCK is going on" and he never lost eye contact with any of us. Then he sweeps it into the corner with his foot and says something like "I'll clean that up later." (Still has not lost eye contact.) Then he leaves. Jessie fell out of her chair laughing so hard. "Who is this guy? Why are we at his house?" Best part: after this our friend Brian is crawling up the stairs like the girl from The Grudge, saying "Zach dropped his cock on the floor."

And then, like, I did not see him for a while. But then I had to pee so bad, like I told you, so I was

This Actually Happened to Me, continued

by Brandon Archambault

like, I have to go, and got away from Jessie to go. But Zach was in there peeing, but with the door open. I did not want to see his penis, so I turned around and was like “Waah jeez there’s someone in there.” And then he starts to come out so I run back in and he’s all “Hey wanna make out?” But I’m like “I have to PEE.” But he kept asking and wouldn’t let me pee. I LITERALLY was drunkenly shoving him out of the bathroom. Practically chanting “GET OUT. I HAVE TO PEE. GET OUT. I HAVE TO PEE.”

So I had to give up because I had to pee so bad and I couldn’t pee there, obvi. And it’s when I was running out of the bathroom because he wouldn’t let me pee that I ran by that guy, the falling one, and peed myself. I laugh wicked hard when I see people fall anyway but now I was drunk so it was way funnier than it would normally be. So I peed. Everywhere.

Then Zach comes out and I stop laughing and and he’s like “Hey, I still wanna make out with you.” And I’m like “NO” gross so I go back downstairs, and then I go over to Matt and Anna but then I’m like what the fuuuuck and they’re both like “What?” But seriously when I walked in they were getting ready to do it on the couch. Not appropo.

But they don’t care so I’m like, Matt, can you make sure he doesn’t... kidnap me? Can you make sure that he, doesn’t, rape me? But Matt just says “Zach doesn’t rape – you can’t rape the willing.” And I’m “Ok, but seriously, make sure I am ok.” Anna says “I will take care of you honey, ok?” and I was like, “Okaaay,” but like, I did appreciate it. Matt’s such a dick sometimes, I don’t know why I was so upset when he picked Anna instead of me (she’s such a butterface). Rape is not funny. Seriously.

So I go back upstairs and Zach is still up there so we just go to his room. And it was happening (we didn’t have sex or anything) and I was like “Why am I doing this? Why?” He’s like, 24. He’s so old. And he had a beard, and a mustache, and it was scratchy. So that was a first. Also the pee-pants was a first. He doesn’t know I peed my pants when we were making out. I would die if he ever finds out.

I have “For Shame” written on my hand in sharpie. I might just get it tattooed there, because if I don’t I’m going to just keep writing it there till I stop hooking up with these random guys I don’t even know. Like, last time the guy had a girlfriend. That was not ok. But really because of Zach and the peepants. Mostly because I think it’s hilarious.

But really, I don’t know what I think. Awesome, because I peed my pants everywhere and still got to make out with someone. Ashamed, because I keep hooking up with such skeezes... and because I peed my pants. Dirty, because I did not know until tonight that the old man basically rapes girls. And victorious, because I had even more alcohol this time and still didn’t throw up or black out. I don’t know what I think. It’s not like me, I guess. But I don’t want to stop. And I like my life right now.

But I don’t know. I keep telling this story to people, and like, I feel like people are just judging everything about this and I want to shut my personal life off. It’s stupid. People tell me not act like this but I’m having a great time so I don’t care. People need to grow up.

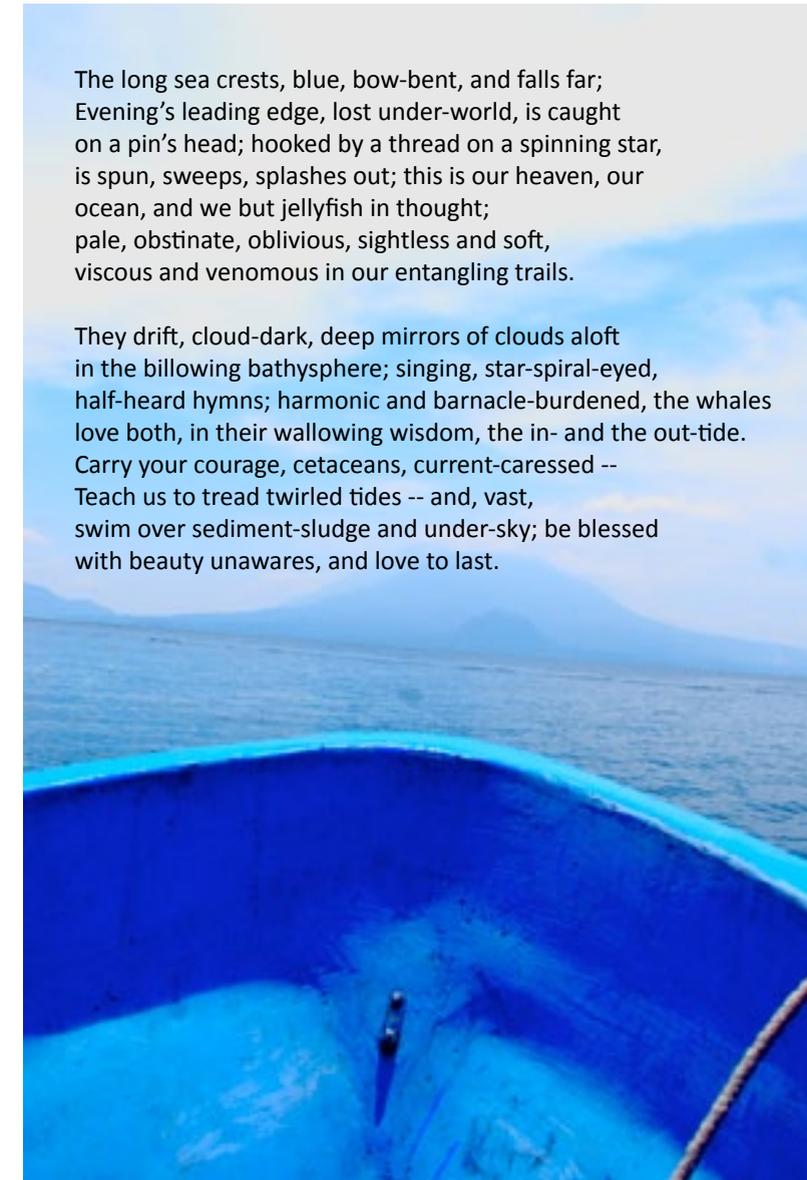
I don’t know, like, it is kind of gross. But thank you for listening and for not judging me. You’re a good friend.

A Love Song to Whales

by Lisa Tannenbaum

The long sea crests, blue, bow-bent, and falls far;
Evening’s leading edge, lost under-world, is caught
on a pin’s head; hooked by a thread on a spinning star,
is spun, sweeps, splashes out; this is our heaven, our
ocean, and we but jellyfish in thought;
pale, obstinate, oblivious, sightless and soft,
viscous and venomous in our entangling trails.

They drift, cloud-dark, deep mirrors of clouds aloft
in the billowing bathysphere; singing, star-spiral-eyed,
half-heard hymns; harmonic and barnacle-burdened, the whales
love both, in their wallowing wisdom, the in- and the out-tide.
Carry your courage, cetaceans, current-caressed --
Teach us to tread twirled tides -- and, vast,
swim over sediment-sludge and under-sky; be blessed
with beauty unawares, and love to last.



Prosopagnosia

by Anne Skelding

means i see your face but i don't know you
i can hear your voice
can pick it out of the crowd
out of the millions billions trillions of sounds and whirls and places
but i do not see your faces
all the sameness in your faces
in the thousand million places
mean nothing at all
you look like every other blondredheadbrunette
with your skin of ivorychocolatecinnamon
and your shortlong hair with its straightcurly styles
and i do not know you
you who never forgets and me who never
remembers
silly faces that mean nothing
because it's your voices that are true



Excerpt from a Memoir Written for Class Last Tuesday

by Molly Wallace

In the midst the spiritual awakening that was my senior year of high school, I made the mistake of consenting to work for Video Express Productions, a local wedding video company. My “Media Production” teacher had suggested that I take the job, as every week businesses sent her desperate emails seeking cheap high school labor, and I had expressed that I needed more shit to put on my resume. My options were Video Express, or these two brothers who made Jews for Jesus promo ads. In youthful ignorance, I assumed weddings would be less scary.

It quickly became apparent that Video Express boasted the utmost of professional environments. My boss, Mark Barjesky, constantly dressed in an attire that consisted of DARE t-shirts, bicycle shorts, and flip flops. The other employees were two more sad students and his wife, Julie, with whom he would have enormous public fights in the lobby/living room. Yes, living room, because the “office building” was actually their old apartment, which meant that my editing booth was in reality a remodeled bathroom (and by remodeled I mean that they took out the toilet and sink but left the bathtub) with a computer in it.

It only took me a few weeks to dread stepping foot through the sliding glass door they called an entryway. Added to the annoyance of those loud fights was the Barjesky’s mild racism, revealed after I was reprimanded for splicing Etta James’ “At Last” over a white couple’s ceremony (“We try to only use that for the more ethnic weddings, Molly”). I was to immediately replace it with Enya. In another trivial note, Mark did not seem to know the difference between “accept” and “except,” “there” and “their,” or “Molly” and “Mollie.”

The work itself was also unbearable, as I had to stare at a computer screen for hours on end, editing videos to make it look like each couple was constantly erupting with joy. This actually took a lot of work, because the first thing I learned on the job was that most brides are only happy for about 10% of their nuptials—the rest of the time they are too busy

worrying over canapés or sucking in their guts to look fit for the camera.

Anyway, the only reason I didn’t quit after a month was my parent’s rule that I could only drive to school on days I had work. So obviously I told them I had work every day, when I actually only worked twice a week. Still, I did not have the confidence to pull off this con without a tangible paycheck.

Perhaps the most ridiculous event that ever occurred at Video Express [God, what a stupid name] was when Mark told me I had a call on the landline, simultaneously scorning me for giving out the company’s number for personal use. I was pretty confused, considering that I didn’t even know the damn number. When I picked up, a little girl was on the line.

“Hello?” I asked.

“Hello?” She replied. “Who is this?”

“What? Who is this?” I exclaimed.

“Can you put my dad back on the phone?”

That’s right. This was Mark’s daughter, who had called and asked for Mommy, not Molly. Except Mark was so idiotic that, A. he would assume that I would give out their number in the age of cell phones, B. he didn’t recognize his own daughter’s voice, and C. he couldn’t tell the phonetic difference between the words Mommy and Molly.

The day I finally quit, I made a few resolutions, first and foremost that I would never ever have my wedding videotaped. Secondly, I would always try to work for a person whose spelling didn’t drive me crazy, and thirdly, that I would never let my life become as stupendously asinine as Mark Barjesky’s. And it would be nice to say I kept these resolves close to my heart forever and ever, except the truth is that I didn’t remember any of these promises—I didn’t remember that I had ever even worked at Video Express until this weekend, after I had wracked my brain trying to think of what the fuck I did senior year other than skip school and go to McDonalds.

She enjoys the way her nails look the day after a manicure. They're perfectly shaped and have this way of capturing the light that creates a utopia within the swath of color, as if some sort of painting upon her. She holds her hands up, like a dancer, fingers apart, poised, but you know they're only ever poised with a manicure, self-conscious.

She enjoys the way her legs look in shorts, with that muscle the size of her hand's width from her knee to her hip, that indentation and the smooth skin. At this moment, she leans forward in her seat, across from you, under the sunlight, emphasizing it by crossing and uncrossing those legs. She rolls her shoulders, enjoying the way her clavicles look attached to them, round and soft.

She grins, enjoying the way you look at her, as if she's made the funniest joke in the world. You know she enjoys her jokes themselves, the fact that she tells them when other girls are afraid. She enjoys the way she laughs, often and without pretense, and the way she dances as if no one is watching when she knows everyone is watching.

Today, as you sip your iced tea, and as she dives into a lengthy story with pronounced and effective punch lines, you know she enjoys the way her aviator sunglasses fit her perfectly and make her look like a rock star. You are hit by an urge to grab her and pull them off, to rub off her blush and dewy foundation with a fierce hand, her subtle eyeliner and tinted lids, scrub her free of that perfume and take off those designer cutoff jeans and plunging silk shirt, those uncomfortable high heels. You imagine it'd be so pretty, this future, some tangible guileless reality. But you enjoy looking at her, this creation, and you smile, satisfied, and this she enjoys, too.

I.

While you smoke out the window and watch the night dance on the television screen, I'm in the kitchen, hiding between the coffee tins, waiting for you to realize you're beautiful.

II.

One day when you were out getting fresh bread and vegetables I looked through your scrapbook and I saw the girl you were before you became the woman you are now. She had a cigarette behind her ear and secrets behind her curls. She was wearing yellow overalls and scaling the map, looking for a corner of the world where fathers don't die and mothers don't die and the walls don't feel sick and tired. How many postcards did it take until she ran out of stamps and took off her nailpolish and became the woman who stops and sighs and watches the way the laundry flirts with the wind?

III.

I want to wash the dishes and let you take a siesta and force your husband to see how his daughter is learning new words while his sighs turn into snores and the game goes into overtime.

But I don't know where the dishes go and you probably wouldn't let me wash them anyway.

IV.

I wish I could knit myself into your skin and see it how it feels to hold a baby girl and see the world get trapped in her eyelashes, to know that there's a part of you growing like a promise inside her fleece pajamas, to feel like you're leaving more than coffee stains and loose change and crumpled napkin poems on the table that we sit at together, me looking at the way you're looking at her, wondering if I wish I knew what it was like to be you, or whether I wish you knew what it was like to wish it.

To You

by Alison Williams

Somehow you've managed to steal my heart along with my sanity and run away deep down in that dark hallway I swore I'd never visit. Are we even remotely compatible? So what if we both wrote papers on the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (totally not weird) and we're both awkward. Ours was a happenchance meeting, talks from the lounge to the quad to your room to that fated night neither of us remember well enough to judge. Thus I ask, what are we? Simply two leaves that happened to cross paths, two streaks, restless and reaching, a blur of red-orange whistling across the sky? Are we undefined, a ray forever destined to glide across a plane, the open white dot on a calculus graph? Are we two sailboats headed in the same direction, sails stirring in the strong wind above the foamy water, or are we destined to float to opposite ends of the gray sea? I'm far past being "swept away," I'm not "falling" for

anyone, this time it's more like you and I are a set of slippery stairs I'm bound to trip over, each foot shakily stepping on the unsteady ground. I'm clumsy anyway, but I'll hope that eventually some clearly lit path will appear before my skeptical feet. I'll take your hand, tiptoe alongside you. I do not wish for stolen kisses in the rain, soft embraces under the twinkling stars out on the grass. I want to be the one whose words move you, a force that will hold you steady, a voice which resounds through you, a spark out of the ordinary, your complement. You don't know it, but you inspire me, your words, your quirks like tiny stars speckling my midnight sky. I don't know what we are and I don't know what we will be and I don't really care at the moment, as for now I'll let the leaves fall where they may, secretly hoping our warm colors touch as they land on the soft green ground.

Casino at Six

by Jenna Schoen



The emptiness was filled with evidence of that which was already forgotten, and there in his rotten beige button-up the sole survivor was lingering near surrender to the solder firing a mechanical cascade of cold cards, whiskey boiling the back of his throat, nails habitually tearing the felt stained with the shadow of chips vanished like the blonde who left vanilla wafting with the cigarette smoke and salty stench whirl pooling around his blood-drained temple which no longer calculated his hand but only glanced and knew his demise as if the numbers and faces were never strangers and sometimes they were his fleeting friends but always they were his enemies, just as they were now when the brightness came and diced through the thick curtains and cruelly illuminated remnants of refuse that only the darkness should bring to light.

Frames

by Laura Moreno

David was lying in my crumpled up white comforter in his yellow boxers, humming “Purple Haze.” It was a sunny summer morning, slanted sunlight in my room. I was working on a Calculus problem set.

“Come here,” he said.

With my head on the left side of his tan, untrimmed chest and my skinny pale arm strewn over his ribcage, I inhaled his sweet gingery smell.

“What’s your story?” David had asked me on the sunny afternoon we met. We were at Borders Café in Harvard Square for my cousin Tony’s twenty-second birthday. David’s first question, like him, was simple and complicated. The rules were clear from day one: I had my story, and he had his.

His story was that he had broken up with Lizzie a week before meeting me on a June afternoon. Mine: I foolishly believed in his melancholy green gaze.

His distant voice interrupted my light nap. “You like old things,” he said.

“What old things?” I asked, propping my head on arm and looking at him.

“Like letters and wax stamps and pictures.” He said.

I said, “Pictures you don’t get to see right away.”

“I like you,” he said.

That is what I miss most, waking up happy, starting my day next to David.

Those mornings were never completely mine. Lizzie would text message him most mornings. I didn’t know what the messages said.

--

Tony and I were renting a house in Church Street, about five minutes away from Harvard Square, which we decided to keep for senior year.

“How’s David?” he asked, as he shredded a Bertucci’s bread roll into messy fragments on his plate. I meticulously sliced my own bread into two halves and looked up at his red

Ray-Ban wayfarer-clad eyes.

“I like him a lot,” I answered, smiling.

“Keep it casual,” he said. I squeezed one of the bread halves in my hand, crumbling it to pieces and frowned at him.

“Why can’t you be happy for me?”

“I’m happy for you, kid, just be careful,” he said, stuffing a piece of bread into his mouth. I looked at Tony, waiting for him to continue.

“He’s over Lizzie,” I said, as I picked at my chipped, red nail polish, “he gets over things quickly.”

“Doesn’t mean he’s not on the rebound,” he said, looking over my shoulder at the waiter who brought our food.

I stared at my plate and twirled my spaghetti around the red and watery tomato sauce. Tony took a bite of pizza and leaned back against on his chair.

“I’m not his rebound,” I finally said, biting my bottom lip and looking at the people passing by.

--

On the first day of fall semester, David arrived at my door to walk me to class.

“I have a surprise for you,” he said, taking out a disposable camera from his pocket. I reached over for the camera and snapped a picture of him standing at the bottom of the stairs, the sun illuminating his black, curly hair and his tan arms. He was wearing a yellow “Beatles” shirt and beige shorts, and he was leaning on to the handrail of my porch, shielding his eyes from the sunlight. I often remember his ironic half-smile in that picture. He never liked smiling for pictures; he said it made the moment seem unnatural.

“Twenty-six pictures to document your life, Hannah” he said as he came up the stairs and placed his arms around my waist.

“Twenty-six pictures to document us,” I answered,

Frames, continued

looking into his green eyes and grazing my hand over the light stubble of his cheek. He took the camera from my hand and stretched his arm out to take a picture of us. I was wearing a light blue dress and my black hair cascaded over my shoulders as we both smiled at the camera, hoping those pictures would last forever.

--

“You’re taller and thinner,” David said to me while we showered together on a September Wednesday morning, “I love your body.”

He smiled at me and moved me out of the way so that he could get under the shower. I stared at the water dripping from his hair and without a word, got out of the shower.

“Hey, why’d you leave?” he asked. I wrapped my white towel around my body and stared at my wet reflection.

“I’m done.” I looked at my reflection frowning back at me and sighed before going to my room to get dressed.

Being with David meant I had to live up to a ghost. I inched my way around the ghost of Lizzie.

--

The leaves had started to turn orange and brown. It was Halloween night. David’s phone was off. I fell back on my couch in my sailor costume.

Tony was dressed as an elf. “What are you doing here?”

“I don’t know,” I said, removing my sailor hat and scratching at my scalp.

“Come to John’s with me.”

I inched back into the corner of the sofa and looked into the mirror on the wall. “The way it works is, guys are like dogs, and if you let them get away with shit, they’re going to keep doing it,” Tony explained.

“I don’t want to lose him,” I answered, looking at my cousin’s reflection.

Tony looked at his watch.

I slumped down and cupped my cheeks between my hands. “Guys are like dogs?”

“I have to go to the party,” Tony said impatiently. “I’m going to bring you a red velvet cupcake tomorrow, Hannah,” he added with a smile.

When I woke up the next day, there was a message from David asking me out to brunch. I accepted, determined to ask him about the night before. We got a table at Au Bon Pain—he uncharacteristically pulled my chair out for me. Seeing his half-smile and holding his hand, I got weak when I should have been strong. He told me I was beautiful, even while I shoved an onion roll into my mouth. I really wanted that cupcake.

--

“I love fall,” I said. We were sitting at a little round café table by the window, and I was staring at the coat-clad people rushing by. I focused on a little boy who was kicking a neat pile of leaves with his brown boots. He reminded me of Oliver Twist. I snapped a picture of him a few seconds before David’s beeping phone made me look away.

“Lizzie’s going on some trip to Africa,” he explained, smiling and reaching over the table to grab my hands, “she just wants to save the world, you know?”

I turned to Oliver Twist. He jumped around, laughing at the burgundy leaves, which danced around him like scattered ballerinas. I wanted to be a kid again, to laugh and jump—to be seven.

“Wow, you guys still talk a lot.” I finally said, taking a gulp of coffee. It burned my tongue. I clenched my fingers around the steaming mug anyway.

“She doesn’t have many friends, Hannah. She needs me.”

I nodded slowly and turned back to the window. Oliver Twist was gone, and the neat pile of leaves was scattered all over the sidewalk. David took my hand, his fingers frigid against mine. He liked his coffee cold, even in the winter.

--

"Why aren't you going out with David tonight?" Tony asked me on a Saturday night in late November. He was sitting on top of the green marble kitchen counter, eating my dumplings from my favorite sketchy Chinese restaurant.

"Hey, that's my food!"

"Sorry," Tony said with his mouth full of dumpling, "so where's David?" he asked again.

I ignored his question and stood over the kitchen sink, scrubbing a week's worth of dirty dishes and pans.

"Whatever. Listen, nobody plays poker on a Saturday night," Tony said before stuffing the last dumpling dripping with soy sauce into his mouth.

"He didn't say poker, he said guys' night out,"

"Oh yeah? Then why am I sitting at home, eating your food?" he said.

"Why are you still eating my food?" I whined, scrubbing the encrusted Frosted Flakes off of a bowl in the sink.

"Do you want to come out with me?" he suggested, leaving his dirty plate on the counter as he jumped off.

"No"

"Why?"

"I need to watch Jersey Shore,"

"Would you be pissed if I told you David is out with Lizzie?" he asked.

"Is he?" I asked.

"It's a hypothetical question," he pressed on.

"It's fine, Tony, I trust him."

"You didn't answer the question," he said, "Anyway, I'm off," Tony said as he on put coat.

"Have fun," I said to him as he shut the front door and I reached for his plate, dirty with my leftovers.

--

David and I walked over the Weeks Bridge, where the orange sun illuminated the Charles' River. The camera that he had given me a few months before had one picture left, and I

had been waiting for the winter sky that surrounded us.

An old man passing by took a picture of us smiling with the sun sinking into the river behind us. That day, David was wearing a black coat and a green, plaid scarf, and I was wearing a big green jacket and white earmuffs, but none of this is visible in the picture. Instead, the picture shows a silhouette.

"Isn't it weird how trees die and are born again, year after year?" He was looking at the naked branches that surrounded us. "Even the river dies, it stops flowing and becomes static."

"The trees don't die. They just shed their leaves to stay alive. In the spring, they sprout new ones. It's the way of life."

"What if they still love their old leaves?"

"That's just not how it works. They have to let them go." David pulled his hand out of mine and the wind suddenly went harsh.

--

By the middle of December, David wouldn't text me for a week at a time. I had gotten used to waiting for evanescent traces of him. That's what I was doing the night before Mark's party—one we had agreed to go to together at the beginning of the month.

"Hannah, stop staring at your phone," Tony said. We were sitting on my couch, watching an old episode of Seinfeld.

"I just have this feeling that he's going to ditch me," I said, turning to Tony.

"He's an idiot," he said.

"Why?"

"Ask him."

"Ask him what?"

My phone buzzed: Hey, I'm not going to be able to meet you for dinner. Lizzie is having a bad day so I'm walking her to the party instead. See you there!

I didn't respond. My throat burned. I snatched up my purse and slammed out of the house without saying goodbye to Tony.

Two hours later, David had cornered me. "I need to be single right now," he said, glancing at Lizzie quickly and then at his red Converse shoes.

"Look at me," I said. David looked up at me with eyes that I couldn't recognize.

"I don't know what's going on, Hannah," he said, putting his hands in his pockets.

"What?"

"It's like, I feel love for you inside, but I don't want to kiss you." He grabbed my hands and held them firmly when they started to shake. I let go and picked at my cuticles.

"Why?" My voice sounded like someone else's—weak and desperate.

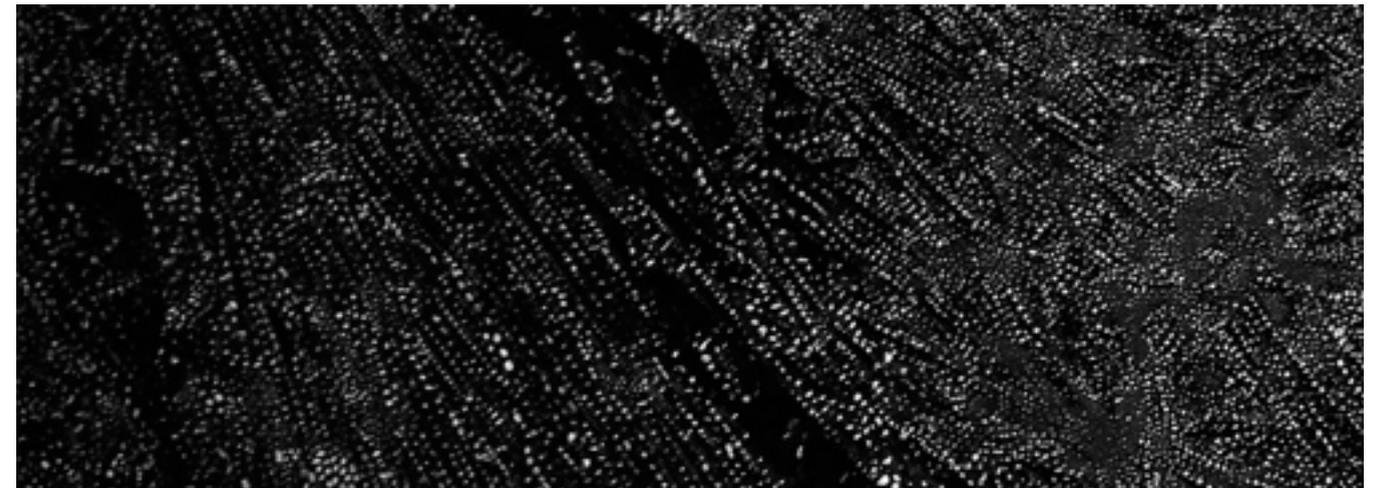
"I still love her," he finally responded after a long

pause, nodding towards Lizzie.

--

I feel David like the itch of a phantom limb. I can't tend to it because he is gone. There is nothing left to scratch, but an itch remains. A month has passed, and I am sideways in my bed, with my knees tucked into my chest, flipping through the last six months of my life. The pictures are all I have left. I got rid of everything else—of his green sweater, his toothbrush and deodorant. I wash my sheets so they won't smell like him; I get rid of the presents, too. I drop off boxes full of books at the Good Will store and throw away all the letters.

But not the pictures, I like pictures way too much. Especially the kind you don't get to see right away.



A Supermarket on the Jersey Shore

by Emma Shakarshy

What thoughts I have of you today, Walt Whitmanberg, for I walked along the beach between the boards with a sunburn self-conscious looking at the lifeguard stand.

In my thirsty sun-poisoned state, and shopping for images, I went into the local Jewish supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What matzah and what Manishevitz! Thirty-person families shopping mid-day! Aisles full of Bubbes! Zeydes in the challah, babies in the quiches!—and you, Garcia Lorcawitz, what were you doing down by the half-price ruggelach?

I saw you, Walt Whitmanstein, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the Hebrew National hotdogs and eyeing the bar mitzvah boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Why put lox on everything? What price babka? Are you my bagel?

I wandered in and out of the pungent cartons of gefilte fish following you, and followed in my imagination by the store yenta.

We skipped down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting kugel, possessing every deli delight, and never passing a goy.

Where are we going, Walt Whitmanfeld? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your shmegege point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our adventure in the supermarket and feel meshuganah)

Will we plod all night through heavy sand? The wind adds wave to wave, lights out in the condos, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost Jersey of one-piece bathing suits, salt water taffy, and the Coppertone kid?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old journey friend, what South Jersey did you have when Moses quit splitting the sea and you stood in the promised land watching the Pharoah float away on the red waters of Egypt?

That Monday

by Jenna Schoen

Do you remember that Monday we missed our morning seminars and I declared a holy day to worship subconsciously selected oversleeping? You tried to tag your best friend along on our adventure, but he fell from my fingers into the plastic bag you call a trash can, he vibrated amongst Sunday night's leftovers, and your lips parted in protest, but mine solved that problem.

Before pushing through the door to the frigid desert, we hooded our heads with massive sweatshirts and flooded our lungs with anxious oxygen, but turns out someone had shushed the wind and aroused the sun, and we exhaled, uncovered, and you took my hand, unglowed.

You directed us towards the city center, said you wanted a cheeseburger, but I begged a break from the monotonous chaos, so you settled for a sandwich at the bistro by us. And when you finished your feast of multiple meats, I raced you to the river, and though your strut was a weak impersonation of a sprint, I appreciated the effort.

The river seemed to me like a slurpee, I said I wish I had a spoon to churn the ice chunks, how a light stroke in freshly thawed water would be soothing, you said you agreed I could use a shower.

Then the geese came from Canada, and wandered over to where we were sitting, and you complained about the squawking while I tried to tickle the ducklings, but the mother minded a bit and tried to bite your finger though you were mostly innocent, and I commented on you contracting rabies, and you didn't find that funny.

So I offered to console you with ice cream, and we returned to the swarming streets, where I purchased two scoops of vanilla for you and chocolate for me, and I pulled you down to the curb, sprawled out with my head on your lap, and I kissed your infected finger as you kissed my dirty head, and we closed our eyes to feel the gusts from the tires searing the asphalt.

Peg Doll

by Denali Hussin

Putting together a peg doll that came in a kit on my eleventh birthday that i was too impatient to bother with back then (but have time for now)

i put
the little wooden mitten tipped arms
beside the little wooden headless torso
with the fussy little shoulder sockets
and tap the little sandy-colored pegs into
place.

the legs
are like elongated hourglasses and rivet
into place at the truncated crotch
in a most satisfyingly sensual way.
they do not bend at the knee,
but they swing back and forth like dancers at
the moulin rouge.

i cannot
find her head though i sift through the detritus of the
kitchen
table, lift the newspapers, the letters, the tablecloth.
no little round face stares back at me.
then, beneath my foot, i feel a rolling unsteadiness
and look to see a black eye regarding me from beside the
table's wooden clawfoot.

i bend
and retrieve her peanut shaped skull.
her eyes are sideways commas, always looking left
her hair a slick black bob, always curling beneath her ears—
if she had ears—which she doesn't.
her mouth is a bright red cupid's bow, pursed up with her
left-
looking eyes, ready to
SWAK.

i cannot
for the life of me figure out how to pop on the
now-recovered head, so i stick it on with
carpenter's glue and wait for it to dry, so
i can dress her
in blue cotton paisley.

i now
have a doll, complete, no bigger than my hand.

i wait
but she does nothing.

so i strip her dress from her narrow shoulders and pull her
arms from their sockets and her legs by the roots and leave
her head on (because it was strong glue)—

i tear her to pieces and start all over again.



Running

by Eugene Kim

I've never seen the stars burn so brightly.
Shambling forward, head and eyes up at the sky, I find
it hard not to appreciate the tremendous view.

Losing feeling in my feet. I'd stop to check on
them, but getting out of my shoes sounds a whole lot
easier than squeezing back in 'em at this point. So, I
let the feeling go.

Man, those stars. Each one of them a burning
sun, like ours. The sky is so clear and crisp. Most
people go their whole lives never seeing so many
distant sunsets at once.

I've fallen. Interesting. very good transition.
That's what I get for looking up instead of down.
Where was that rock? I wonder what it looked like. I
don't take it personally. I don't think the rock picked a
side. (this is where some of the readers got confused.
they weren't sure whether the rock had caused the
runner's death, or if the death was going to happen
regardless. Do you think there is any way to clarify?
I think the only way you could really clarify is if you
presented the fact that you're running—whole and
functional or already dying—in the beginning of the
piece. I get that stream-of-consciousness ambiguity is
what you're going for but this might make the piece
easier to read.) This dirt dries my mouth and is a
struggle to spit out. How long have I been lying down
for? I push my elbows into the hard earth; I feel the
tiny stones dig into my skin; I know what my limbs

should do, but they won't. Eventually I stop trying.
Rolling over is much easier, anyway. Now at least I
have something to look at.

Are my eyes going? The spaces between specks
of light smear together. Everything is leaning and
pulling in different directions, a teddybear tug-of-war
between children. (interesting side-track imagery
Very believable. Not in the context of stars, but as a
flashback.)

I feel the sticky, red, essential drip run from my
forehead to my ear and into a tiny puddle.

Breathe in. Close your eyes. Exhale. Open your
eyes. Open your eyes.

There you go.

Now, take in that dizzying sight one more time.
It's nice, isn't it? To know that each pinhole is a speck
of light that has traveled through the vast loneliness
to be with you, here, now, ending its journey also so
far from its home? Could have worse company, if you
ask me. Some much worse company, indeed.

Inhale. Deeply, hold it in. Hey, don't do that.
Don't cry. You accepted this a long time ago. You
don't have to run from it any longer, worrying if it will
catch you crossing a busy street, or in a dark alley,
or weak and sick in a hospital bed. The two of you
battled mano a mano and you came up short—there's
no shame in a noble attempt. The fighting is over.

Breathe out. Exhale. And enjoy the view.

Aeverything

by Andrew Reisman

A:
The first letter, but the lack of all things.
Anesthesia, without feeling,
Apathy, without caring,
Anaerobic, without oxygen
Anti. Against.
Automatic.
And yet we learn A first. A is the foundation of all knowledge.
We work our way through butterflies
Through cats and dogs
Emeralds, fireflies,
Girls, homework, idiocy, jealousy
Ketamine, LSD, mortgages,
New and old people,
We have questions, responses,
Sudden tragedies.
Until, victoriously,
We, expiring, yield.
Zero.

Passage

by Andrew Padgett



Rehab on the horizon,
I watch the red sky. It is still
because the trees stopped.

The giant squirrels look
so confident even though they're
nervous. They search for
acorns in the brownish-yellow
grass, but they find syringes
and needles.

I put the pipe down on the
windowsill... I want to apologize
to the squirrels. (For the contamination.)
But are they cuddly or not?

Maybe I should get to rehab before
sundown. To get there, I have to
leave the room and cross the meadow.
Suddenly I'm motivated because
through the window, I see a
little acorn I could offer to the hoarders.

I leave the room and find
myself in the crunchy needle grass.
My eyes pinpoint the nut.
I reach for it.

Blur of a swipe: goodbye to the acorn
and to my finger—I guess the
squirrels aren't very cuddly. I get lost
and dig through the grass for drugs.

Crushed

by Lenora Smith

When I introduced them, I didn't think that she would touch his arm, trailing her fingers down to the tips of his. I didn't know he would snatch her little white hand away from the conversation, and keep it. She couldn't know that earlier tonight, he walked with me through the cold suburbs, littered with dead leaves and dark houses, that every time his arm brushed mine, my stomach ached a bit; I blushed. I hadn't told her that he complimented my orange hat, that we talked about his childhood. When I told him her name, I never thought he would size her up like a chocolate bon bon or that she would simper. I don't know how to simper. I hardly smile well. And how could I predict that after a couple drinks, he would nudge her into his bed room, right next to mine, and I would hear them all night, through my open window.

Letter to Friends with Pseudonyms

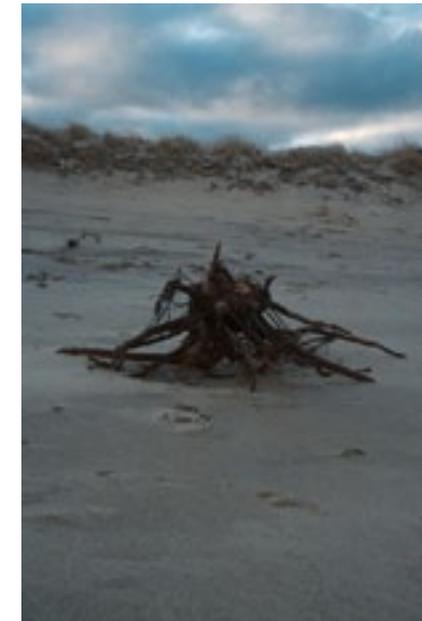
by Craig Dathe

I'm taken by wanderlust. The walls crowd in, the sky's too low - restless, restless. Time to move. You guys should come with me. You're the ones I care about, after all. This place just doesn't feel right. It snows here, which is good, but it's too flat. We gotta have mountains, mountains stitched together by roads, with lots of empty space in between where we can stand knee-deep in powder or build snow-tunnels.

I'm thinking of somewhere in particular, but I'm having trouble finding it on the map. Maybe you can help me. I know a few things about it. It's a place where there's a TV hooked up to nothing but a DVD player, a place where the people are born into fog, baptized by rain, and buried in snow; dust into silt, silt back into stone - and water, water. It's a place that's fallen sideways off the edge of a continent, a place that echoes, but the echoes take years to return. There are no traffic lights. But don't worry, it's no hermit's nest, no den for ascetics. We can keep up on our popular culture at the magazine racks in the corner grocer's, to make sure we stay at least a little human. Yeah, I know, those magazines are kinda trashy, but vice and distraction are like gravity for endless hearts: eyes on glossy pages that draw us in, that keep us together. Those eyes never blink, never look away, never dip into crescents under the weight of furrowed brows. Our eyes aren't like that. They get lonely. No matter how much we cross them, they can never quite catch a glimpse of each other. They're each backed up against the same wall, but neither has a hand to hold as they stare down the world.

I'm not sure what it's like there during the summer. it

doesn't really matter, though: summers come and go, and even on those rare moments when they last forever they never seem to settle into the cracks like a good winter does, snowbanks like mortar, catatonic bliss aching and reflecting sunlight in all directions, a prism - truly immortal, beckoning but not waiting. Those winters are really something. Those are winters you build a fire for; not to fight the ice, but to watch the sparks dance from crystal to crystal. I can see us



around that fire so easily. We fit right in. We'll wait until the moment that the snow is most hesitant and then build a bonfire taller than we are. And we'll make it on the beach. We'll be on the beach and the snow will be falling into the flames, and the waves will lap at the powder, and we won't shrug or shiver because we'll finally be standing like figures in the perfect family portrait, one never seen before because it's only in our dreams. A tableau for sleepwalkers. And the sky and earth will be brilliant, gleaming, until the earth spins too far and the horizon blurs into a pitch-black swath of haunted stars. But the sun will rise - we can count on that, at the very least. And we'll be there to watch the starlight melt into a wave of mist, and we'll ride it out as it floods the streets and silvers the pavement for miles like slow-motion magic.

Will there be strangers? What do you think? Some of the time there will have to be no one else, absolutely no one, to the point of complete liberty, a walk-into-any-house-and-wonder kind of liberty. Like being able to stop time. But usually there will be strangers, lots of them. You know? And they'll be doing wonderful, strangerly things. And pretty much everyone will walk to where they're going because they'll have figured out that cars are clumsier

Letter to Friends with Pseudonyms, continued

than a pair of rubber soles ambling and a pair of hands shoved into pockets, down with the lint and spare change. People might bump into each other, sure, but that's an organic kind of warmth - a far cry from the heat of twisted metal on an interstate. But we can have a car if you guys want, I don't really have anything against it. That way we can go to the city without taking a bus. It's a big city, but it doesn't sprawl; and it's built by a river, like all good cities are. We'll want to go there eventually. You might not believe me now, but people like us aren't sick of concrete for long. The urge will return. You know it well: the one that rises kicking from the bottom of your chest to beat at the back of your throat. It makes your voice all pitchy. It makes you call for shadows inverted by neon, for staircases that outrun elevators, for you and me and them to become us and only us as we pulse and watch the lightbulbs flicker on the marquees. It wants us to stand and invoke each and every connection, to drag all the weary synapses into the world and make them scream, but less in terror than in honor of shenanigans, and mirth. And when

they scream they won't be able to articulate, but they'll want to say, to demand, "Bodies: touch bodies, meet more bodies, build bigger bodies, salute your fellow bodies without fingers but with every ounce of sweat that's left running in the alleys between your veins."

So yeah, that's there when we want it, the city and all that; but it's far enough away that it won't interfere. All of its radio signals are pointed inland, and we're by the ocean. The ocean is ours. To prove it we'll climb up the hill to the telephone tower and topple it, hot paws pulling down cold steel like the creaks beneath floorboards. And that'll only be the beginning. Don't worry about having no cell reception: once we get there we'll all whisper our plans to each other through tin cans and lines of string. There's so much to say, and we'll be listening: just me and you, my headstrong loud/quiet damaged minimal/elegant friends, and our cadres and armies and packs, packs of perfect strangers. And yes. It'll be snowing. I promise. Ready? I'll even give you a ride to the airport, if you want.



Closing Distance

by Eva Parish

I feel my feet walk away from me in the night, tread the pavement on their way south to you. Under the dim stars, I am stepping over glassy flecks, cigarettes and floods of sand. Taillights flare below me in the darkness; I follow their curving afterimages past the sleeping townships. I can't not walk this road. I can't keep myself here where you aren't, when the boundaries between us merge and collapse with the closing of my eyelids. The highway uncurls itself, black and cold, at my feet. The sky holds the lamp-washed moon in its hands. My desire to go and my leaving are one bright motion: I raise lightning when I sleep, and it reaches for you.



Your Life on Film

by Thomas Nikiper

The concerto just happens;
The books are read,
Clothes wind up laundered
And in drawers,
Only to jump out
And be outside during the day.

The party was witnessed,
Drinks saluted,
Dancing dismissed.
Food steams.
Soda bubbles.

Bank accounts disembowel
Themselves into subway passes
That wander around town,
Just like the sun
Comes up at dawn.

The lights go out
And the alarm arms
Itself for another moment
In what is now
Tomorrow.

Meatsacks smile at the camera.



38

La Madre Española

by Emma Shakarshy

Your hands were covered
in fish parts and Spanish
tough love and you didn't want
to put your arms around me and
realize that I was more
than a load of laundry
a place setting
a guest.

In months, you'd never touched me.
The other madres called their girls hija
and forced tortilla down their American throats
but you stored your love somewhere deeper.

I lifted your arms from within
a slab of slimy scales and forced
them to circumnavigate me,
to bridge our worlds.

Your body softened and absorbed the words
my hands pressed into your back.
Through your thick, dark wall
of lost mothers and fathers and lovers,
I could hear the soft rumblings
of your deep secrets.

Abrígate means I love you.
A wink from across the table means
you give me somebody to cook for.
And when you look at me a moment too long
before I leave the house, you're trying to tell me
that the house becomes darker when I step out of it.

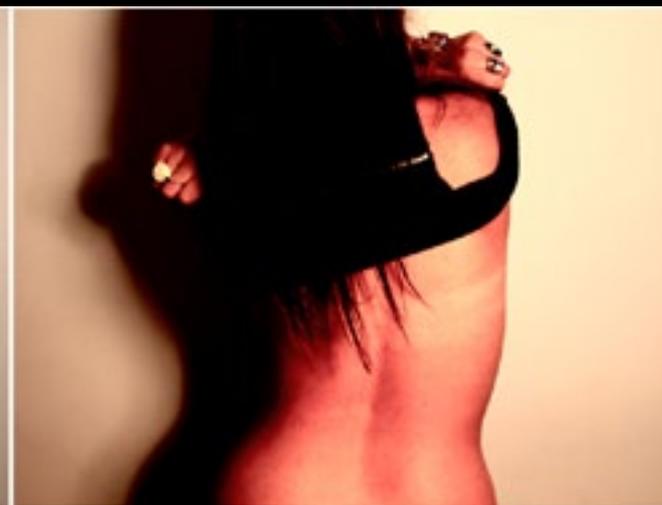
Que pequeña eres
were the only words
you spoke but I felt
a dictionary of words, I felt
your breath in my hair,
I felt 100 lullabies.



39

Photo Spread

by Joanna Hausmann



Memory

by Denali Hussin



I was small
and living in Belmont
Our car (a Trooper) was
parked under a tree
outside our house
It was raining
and I held very still in my car-seat
Listen, said my mother
Listen to the rain dragons
dancing on the roof

Flower Ladies

by Andrew Padgett

We took to each other,
bought a sunny house on
the shore and invited
elderly woman #1 to come
live with us; she ate
the sun and burst
into a thousand points
of energy (what a laugh!),
and then #s 2, 3, 4, and 5 came
along—the girls, the nutty
old Florida roommates—
golly, these gals searched
the house for each
singular little point
until all time passed:

The trouble with infinity,
however, was that once we
reached an age and
state similar to that of
the elders, we couldn't
tell who was friends and
who was lovers anymore,
all just some weathered ladies
reminiscing about Henry
and Louis and fiddlesticks,
I forgot my grandson's birthday.

Somehow

by Sadie Lansdale

Each morning, this city grits its teeth
and pulls on the same bright dirty dress.

Mangos, taxis, garlic, mud,
corn street-roasted
by women with teeth like windows
squatting with scarves like shrouds.

I want to run up into the mountains
where there is peace like a painting,
clean this closeness from my skin,
and not give them any money

because it will never be enough.
But the corn is charred and sweet,
and the crammed taxi hums smoke at the street
and warms itself in the rain.

Celestial Sea

by Craig Dathe

Understand the atmosphere as a celestial sea.

Take the following as an illustration. A priest was walking through the cemetery on the hill behind his church one afternoon when he found an anchor caught on a statue. A rope tethered to its loophole snaked off into the sky, pulled taut against the anchor's entanglement.

The priest then noticed something descending down the rope, too far up in the sky for his eye to discern its shape. As it approached he recognized it as a man. The man's breath pushed hard against his cheeks, desperate to escape. He arrived at the anchor and tied himself to the rope with a line of string so that he wouldn't float away.

No matter the force, and no matter the angle from which he pulled, the man could not release the anchor from the tombstone. The priest watched, thunderstruck, as the breath slipped away from the man's lungs. His body went limp and gently rose into the air, then bobbed gently against the string tying him to the anchor's rope.

It took all of the priest's strength to calm his nerves. He went to the man and untied his body from the rope, then watched him float upwards and through the clouds above.

Now, stand on the bow of your boat and open the envelope that contains the Proclamation. It reads:

ONE. Space and time together create the fabric of the universe.

TWO. The fabric of space-time often bends back on itself to form a ring or a sphere, creating an infinite loop in the process.

THREE. Any people or events that are trapped inside this infinite loop are forced to repeat themselves at regular intervals.

FOUR. The laws of a sphere's or a ring's form require an empty space to be contained within the shape, and for a greater empty space to contain the shape from without.

FIVE. Just outside the track of recurring events on either side of the loop is an abyss, in which the events not only stop recurring, but cease to exist.

CONCLUSION. There is always a way out.

As you read the conclusion, follow the forms of its letters with your eyes, then cast your gaze into the white space between the forms. Let the white seep through your pores and soak your organs. Do not blink. Sleep, but never rest.

Now, reach behind you for the lever that releases your boat's anchor. It is time to see what you can find in the waves below. But before you descend, understand this: if you do not want to drown, then you must let go of the rope once you reach the bottom.

At The Circus

by Emma Bushnell

The little man kept clicking and smiling, clicking and smiling.

--

Carlos hadn't told his friends he was going to the circus. There was a party that night at their fraternity, but he said he had to go home because his little sister was sick and he wanted to help take care of her. Everyone thought of him as that kind of guy, so it made sense to them.

But really Carlos wanted to see a circus. He had moved from El Salvador with his mother to resettle and reacquaint himself with his father when he was only eleven, and one of his first memories of America was a poster in the Heartland Immigrant Placement Center advertising a circus in Milwaukee. It had a red border and an elephant sitting up on its hind legs, smiling while balancing a tufty golden hat on its friendly head. Carlos didn't speak any English at the time, but a passing woman with a paper folder stuffed to the brim and wearing an ill-fitting blouse saw him staring at the poster and kindly pointed to it, asking, "¿quieres ir al circo?" Carlos nodded yes, yes he did want to go.

Of course he and his parents never made it to that circus. Which is why when he read a show was coming to Detroit he asked some SEO brothers casually if they'd like to drive over for an evening. They went on a tirade about animal abuse and untenable conditions, and Carlos didn't say anything. They were the wrong kind of people for the circus. So Carlos took a bus from Ann Arbor Friday morning on his own.

He was in the audience to the side of the far right ring. He had bought himself a snow cone and had been distracted throughout the entire lion taming wondering if his whole mouth was blue.

--

The little man in the circus tent was under five feet tall and had a waxed mustache. He wore a dark suit of imitation velvet with an oversized tie. Until he entered the ring, the arena had seen the wonders of papery-skinned elephants, buffooning clowns, and slim women in sparkling leotards lilted from trapezes above the heads of the audience members. The crowd was noisy, amorphous, smelling of popcorn and sticky sugar. Paper soda cups rolled among their feet as they shuffled around to go to the bathroom or take their wallets out of their pockets.

The little man walked with purpose to the very center of the middle ring, his small, shiny shoes clicking as he went. Around him the crowd's noise buzzed into something unintelligible, and he smiled from it. He kept clicking and smiling, clicking and smiling.

--

Annie was in the audience next to her father. They came to the circus every year it was in town, and she held her customary bag of kettle corn between her nine-year-old knees while swinging her patent leather shoes back and forth below the edge of her seat.

Annie's parents were fighting a lot. They thought she couldn't hear them in the kitchen because of her upstairs bedroom, but she lay awake at night nestled in her curly brown hair and staring at her plastic toy horses on her shelf. She alternately tried to tune it out and strained to hear what it was they were saying every time she caught her own name. And what about Annie? Her mother screeched from below. What would you propose we do about Annie? Don't bring her into this, her father growled back. That's not what this is about and you know it. It ought to have been comforting, not being what it was about, but upstairs in the dark Annie felt left out.

--

At the Circus, continued

The little man kept clicking and smiling, clicking and smiling.

--

Kira was cheating on her boyfriend. Not at this very minute – at this very minute she was sitting next to Ryan, sharing an overpriced Coke and giving his knee an occasional squeeze to signal how sweet she found it that he remembered her saying that she used to love the circus as a kid and so bought them tickets for their anniversary.

She had no reason to be cheating on Ryan. He was smart, worked as an actuary in Chicago and made good money. He had soft blonde hair that Kira liked to play with when he rested his head on her chest on the weekends when they watched old episodes of “The Twilight Zone” as a lazy tangle of limbs on Kira’s grandmother’s loveseat in her Detroit apartment. He was trying to get transferred to Detroit by the end of the year where Kira held a teaching fellowship, and then, she was sure, he was going to propose.

The man Kira was cheating on Ryan with was someone she’d met at a bar one Thursday night when she was out with coworkers. He was not smart. He was not particularly attractive. He had wiry, short hair that Kira felt no urge to cradle to her chest. He was a waiter at an Armenian restaurant, but was not waiting tables because he was pursuing an acting career or writing poetry on napkins between the lunch and dinner rushes. His name was Andrew, and he was content to wait tables for the rest of his life.

Andrew knew that Kira had a boyfriend – she had no reason to keep any secrets from him. He never called or texted on weekends, only weeknights. Kira would be planning lessons and grading papers late at night when her phone would buzz with a text that simply said “hey wanna hang out.” There was no use for punctuation if you could get your point across without it.

This was not the kind of sordid affair that one

entered into out of boredom to add spice to a life. Kira never wore any lingerie for Andrew, or even changed out of her wool socks and gray cardigan when she buzzed him into her building. He was not better in bed than Ryan. He didn’t offer anything that Ryan failed to fulfill. But Kira carried on lying beneath him in her cold bedroom while they both grabbed at each others’ bodies with familiar, frenetic movements only because after he left she never felt guilty.

--

The little man had reached the center ring. He bounced a bit on the balls of his feet and smartly tugged at his lapels, grinning at the indistinguishable masses before him as though what he was about to do was the most magnanimous act one could commit.

--

Carlos had enjoyed the show so far, but he was beginning to feel his familiar aquarium feeling. Growing up with a tinge of an accent and parents who sent him to school with pupusas for lunch left him familiar with the feelings of an outsider. Then when puberty took hold and he found more ways in which he was different from his blonde, wholesome classmates it only made matters worse.

Carlos hadn’t “come out” to anyone – himself included – until this past year when he immediately ran for shelter at Michigan’s all-gay fraternity and lived in constant fear of his parents ever suspecting. He had spent the better part of his sexually cognizant years feeling like a fish in an aquarium. No matter where he was – the library, the dining hall, a coffee shop – he would see the *comedia dell’arte* of Young Love played out at a sterile distance. A sophomore girl rolling the sleeves of her boyfriend’s flannel shirt on the street while he mussed her hair in an artless, masculine manner. A junior male hunched over Nietzsche on the lawn of the Diag,

At the Circus, continued

while a short brunette scalloped him from behind, rubbing his neck and shoulders with unselfish affection. Carlos wondered if he romanticized these actions because he believed them unattainable, or whether devotion and partnership really were wonderful once you could feel it and hear it, and not just see it over the top of your biochemistry textbook.

He still didn’t know. His new embrace of his sexuality had led him merely to what his fraternity brothers referred to as “experimentation.”

“You’ve got to play the field, man,” Eugene said. “We’re in college! There are dudes everywhere! Now’s not the time to be mooning around over true love.”

So Carlos drank and slid into beds with boys, and never the same boy twice. And he still knew nothing of companionship.

The crowd around him laughed and clapped with appreciation at the performers’ superhuman feats, but Carlos still sat in his plastic seat, touching no one, and watching everyone.

--

The little man had a microphone attached to his lapel. He opened his mouth and began to speak, relishing the sound of his voice ricocheting off the sides of the tent.

“Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls!” he boomed. “Our next act is an extraordinary woman who comes to us from the icy fjords and glacial mountains of Scandinavia!”

--

Kira’s mom had called that morning from California. She was a meticulous woman, a secretary-turned-dental-hygienist whose professions had left her with a penchant for obsessive list-making and calendar-marking. She called because she had noted in thin sharpie that it was Ryan and Kira’s fourth anniversary, and she wanted to offer her

congratulations to the young couple. She was forced to leave a voicemail, though – Kira had stopped answering calls from her mother, her grandparents, her childhood friends – from anyone who believed her to be young and wildly successful. Let them call each other, and leave her out of it. She didn’t want to ruin the illusion.

Kira had had no good reason, really, to move to the Midwest from her home state. As an unusually independent eighteen-year-old, Kira had grand images of herself as a middle school social studies teacher, wrapping a cotton scarf around her neck as she stepped out into the snow in brown boots to inspire and change the lives of Detroit’s most indigent and forgotten children. From her San Francisco apartment she had lain in her bed among her stuffed animals and quilt hand-sewn by her mother, longing for authenticity.

How many nights had she spent longing for authenticity? Now that she was drowning in it, she wondered whether she would have been better off without it in the first place. Her job was hard, and she was – of all imaginable things – struggling with it. Dean’s list at Macalester College, but flummoxed by an overcrowded classroom of pre-teens.

She had been making an effort to control the things she could, lately. She had bought a gym membership – with dearly parted with money from her teaching stipend – and was spending her weekend afternoons furiously bouncing on elliptical machines.

She was learning how to sew. Instead of replacing expensive teaching-appropriate clothes, Kira was cursing herself for rebuffing her mother’s multiple offers to teach her the craft, and was struggling through it without a guiding maestro. She sat on her loveseat on her weeknights alone with her legs tucked under her body, carefully pushing her needle up and down, mending hems in shirts and slacks and skirts, and making sure every last stitch was perfectly aligned. And if the hems weren’t perfect, she ripped them out and sewed them over and over again until they were.

At the Circus, continued

--

The little man continued to boom. His tinny voice buzzed in the eardrums of every member of the restless crowd.

"I give you the astonishing, the exquisite, the unbelievable, Ingrid Johansen!"

--

Annie had started counting all the sharp objects in her room at night. While her parents' voices rose and fell downstairs, Annie found comfort in the elegance of pointy edges. If she ever wanted to, she could run her stomach into the corner of her night table, or swing her head against her closet door handle. She pictured her head cracking like an egg, with her brain sliding out like a yolk onto the floor. Her parents would rush in, hearing the tremendous cracking sound from the kitchen, and would see her little jelly brain, lying innocently on the carpet. They'd probably try to put it back into her head and close it up again, but brains are goeey and they wouldn't be able to get all the slime back inside.

The four corners of her night table, the two edges of her closet door handle. The thirty-six colored pencils in her drawer. The pointy ears on her plastic horses, two per horse and three horses in all. Forty-eight so far.

Annie's father was a general contractor, and so sometimes he was home when she least expected it. Annie had come home from school four days ago to see her father standing outside the front door waiting, barrel-chested from his down jacket and grinning. He's going to tell me they're getting divorced, she thought.

"Hey, Anemone," her dad belted in greeting as she crunched up the front walk in the snow. Oh no, Annie thought. Here it comes.

"Guess what I got us for this weekend?" Annie gave him a blank look. A vacation away from home? Lindsay



At the Circus, continued

Gottschalk went with her mom to Flint for a week in fourth grade to visit her grandparents, and when they came back everything her father owned was gone to an apartment the next town over, along with their owner.

Annie's dad didn't let the little nonplussed girl in front of him slow his excitement. He pulled two pieces of paper from his jacket pocket.

"Tickets to the circus!"

The storm had passed. No divorce. Annie's face broke out into a wind burned expression of jubilation as she wrapped her arms around as much of his down jacket as she could gather in a hug.

She could hear crying from downstairs sometimes, too. Her mother's small body could emit racking, heaving sounds when it wanted to.

The edges of her alarm clock were pretty pointy. She reached out in the dark and pressed the plastic edge with her pointer finger, feeling the prickling sensation reverberate down her hand as she pushed harder and harder.

--

The little man gestured to the edge of the ring on his right, where the spangled fabric of the circus tent festooned out to reveal a slight, pale Scandinavian girl posing next to an ordinary bicycle. There was a scattering of polite applause as the part of the crowd that was paying enough attention greeted the new performer. Ingrid Johansen accepted the offering with a practiced smile and a flourish of her left wrist, her right hand remaining steadily on the bicycle.

She trotted out into the ring with the bicycle, her white feather headpiece nodding with her movement. When she reached the center, a long loop of rope was lowered from

above to her knee level.

In one fluid motion, Ingrid Johansen lifted the front bicycle wheel so that it nestled in the curve of the loop, then grabbed hold of the handle bars and, through some uncanny knowledge of balance of weight and gravity, lifted herself into the air, her slender legs curved delicately above her body as she supported herself by her arms, clutching the handle bars of the bike suspended below her. There was an appreciative lull in the hum of the crowd in response to this act. Then, the looped rope began to move.

It began slowly, cutting an elegant circle around the ring. Ingrid Johansen was unperturbed by the movement, retaining her eerie attunement to balance. The buzz of the crowd quieted further, and by the time the rope, bicycle, and woman had made one full revolution, the interior of the tent was virtually silent.

Annie sat, cradling her forgotten kettle corn between her knees, spellbound by the act before her. The circular motion, the graceful strength, was hypnotizing.

For the first time since the show began, Carlos was not preoccupied by anything. He could have been eleven, he could have been sixteen, he sat and he watched and he felt.

Kira felt calm. Something filled her chest with desire, and she wanted to cry because of the beautiful arcs Ingrid Johansen was making through the air.

Then, after only a short time, the circulating rope slowed to a stop, and the limber performer dismounted. She did not bow or flourish her wrists again, but set nimbly back toward the opening in the tent from where she had entered, soundlessly wheeling the bicycle away with her. And in her wake there was exactly seven seconds of complete silence.

Fifteen minutes later everyone was buttoning and zipping their coats as they left the tent.

Author Bios

Brandon Archambault is an abstract artist, a concrete analyst, an expert in grammar, a veteran in love, and a shameless thief. To quote Eliot, who quoted Picasso without proper citations: Immature poets imitate, but mature poets steal.

Emma Bushnell is a senior from San Francisco, California majoring in English and minoring in American Politics. She's an editor for the Arts section of the Tufts Daily and a theater enthusiast.

Alexandria Chu loves nothing more than the feeling of not being able to type as fast as you have stories to tell, words to say. She wants to make sleeping in the sun her pastime as well as driving down Mulholland Highway. In terms of controversy, she's a shameless karaoke singer and fan of Zac Efron and Justin Bieber.

Craig Dathe has just decided to stop downloading movies and music off the interwebz. For his next act, he will free every animal from the San Francisco zoo and smuggle them into Canada aboard a very large nuclear submarine.

Denali Hussin is a senior English Major from Pelham, MA. She's fond of salt, Walt Whitman, and the possibility of employment.

Eugene Kim is a senior at Tufts who doesn't know what to do after graduation. He runs a lot and writes because it's more constructive than playing video games all day. That, and because he likes to prove that he can read and write.

Sadie Lansdale is a junior majoring in English and minoring in Women's Studies. She loves Indian food, running in the forest and being barefoot, bonus if they're all at the same time.

Thomas Nikiper: O HAI YUZ GAIZ DIS HYUR IZ ABOUT TAWM KNEE-KEEPER CAWZ HE SO FLY. AH HURD HE LIEKS TA WRITE DA POEMZ N STURF AN SEN EM IN TA OWTBREF SOZ ALL DA WURLD'LL BE LIEK "OZAMAGAWSH HAF MAH BABEEZ CAWZ YOU MAKE ENGLISH SO GEWD." WHEN NAWT ENGAYGED IN DUH ARJOOWUSS PRAHCESS UV COMPOZISHUN AN REVISHUN, TAWM ENJAWYS LENDING HIZ CLASSICAL MYOOZIK SKIZZLES TA SEBERUL PURFAWMING ENSEMBLEZ ON CAMPUS. HE'Z ALSO PARTIAL TO CHEEZBURGERZ.

Andrew Padgett wants to be steady like the river, but it's not steady at all!

Eva Parish is a junior majoring in English. She is a co-chair for Film Series and is on the Tufts Fencing Team. Some things she likes a lot are food, Iceland, and (in all likelihood) you.

Andrew Reisman is a sophomore majoring in History. He is also, historically, majorly sophomoric.

Laura Moreno Saraga is a Junior majoring in English. She comes from Bogotá, Colombia and in her free time she likes to read, write, and juggle.

Jenna Schoen is a freshman who eats Gushers by the box.

Author Bios

Jake Seiden was once a boy, but now, today, he feels like a man. Why, you might ask? If you truly want to know, be at the corner of Pro Row and Curtis any Friday afternoon round 3:45 pm. Wear a bathing suit.

Rachel Seward will be graduating in May with a degree in Biology, no firm postgraduate work or education plans, and a somewhat excessive obsession with Survivor. This is Rachel's second poetry publication, her first being the haiku classic "Ant on a pebble," which you may know from its honorable mention in the KCLS Children's Poetry Contest (1st-3rd Grade division). And yes, she *does* still have that award certificate.

Emma Shakarshy is a junior majoring in English and Women's Studies and minoring in how not to get a job after graduation. She enjoys Shania Twain karaoke and pecan pie.

You cannot read this biography because it does not exist. **Anne Skelding** has forbidden it.

Lenora Smith collects rubber ducks and missed opportunities, but has some rad purple shoes.

Lisa Tannenbaum is a junior majoring in Biopsych who has foolishly decided to go pre-med. She's a Gospel-singing Jewish atheist who loves the universe and is a sucker for a British accent. When she's not talking about the fascinating hive behavior of bees, she's probably talking about the fascinating wing structure of bats. Occasionally she shuts up about the life sciences long enough to write a poem about them.

Molly Wallace MUST FIND THE MEADOWS.

Alison Williams is a freshman who likes postmodern literature and crocheting sea animals.

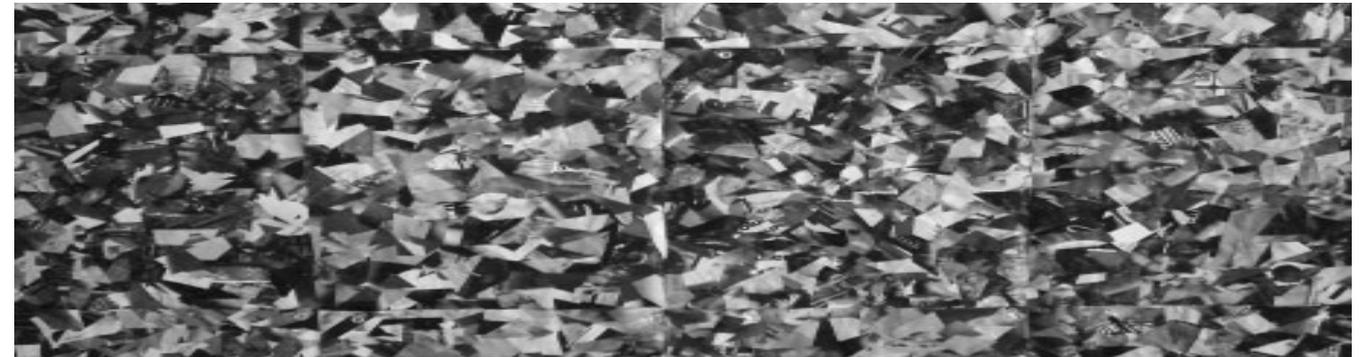


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