

Harbinger

2017



FACE THE STRANGE

n. har•bin•ger [här•bin•jər]

a person or thing that comes before to
announce or to give indication of what will follow

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FOREWORD

Face the Strange

Before he was David Bowie, he was David Robert Jones, born in Brixton, England, during the post-World War II baby boom. In the fifties, the time of Bowie's adolescence, the Teddy Boys and Girls, anarchists clad in Edwardian dress, ruled the streets. Bowie began performing in the early sixties, when mod and rocker fashion was taking over. The seventies gave way to the rise of glam rock, when Bowie, our cosmic chameleon, invented his most recognized persona: the androgynous alien, Ziggy Stardust. Through his innovative and unique style, he became an icon in music, fashion, and gender. Bowie became the patron saint of the outsider, encouraging us to cultivate and celebrate our strangeness. Even after his passing in 2016, Bowie continues to touch our hearts in the way only rare artists can.

To honor David Bowie, we celebrate the strange with our 2017 issue. This year's title is taken from his iconic song, "Changes," in which he remains optimistic in the face of the unfamiliar and unpredictable. In light of today's bizarre social-political climate, we encourage our readers to indulge in the strange, take comfort in the odd, and find beauty in the ugliness of life. To assist in this noble resolution, we offer this year's collection of prose, poetry, and art which blurs the line between whimsy and realism.

As the co-editors of *Harbinger* 2017, we are pleased to present the "Face the Strange" edition of our magazine. To say that 2017 has so far been a surreal year is an understatement. But reader, never fear! History shows that during surreal times, surrealism works its way into all art forms, as a necessary artistic coping mechanism. David Bowie is a prime example of this phenomenon—dealing with life's changes through art.

Our fiction this year plays with narrative structure and dabbles in the genre of magical realism. In Racheal Rhea's "The Puddle," the inner turmoil of a woman suffering at the hands of her husband's emotional and physical abuse manifests physically and persists until she can no longer ignore it. We observe the woman's growth through Hemingway-esque dialogue and the contrast between therapy sessions and her home life. Likewise, Lynn Quist's "Supper-time" explores a young woman's rocky relationship with her mother by interpreting a

single scene over and over, first in prose, then poetry, and finally in pseudo-script format. In Cindy Harbour's "Soulmates," two strangers' relationship through time and space is revealed in a simple chance encounter. Harbour's attention to detail questions our perception of time and its impact on our (many) lives.

In poetry, Emily Ritcheson's "God Help That Woman," skillfully explores a woman's mental landscape through a physical cityscape. In contrast, Cai Santee's narrative poem, "Salvation," depicts a miniscule world. The romantic tryst with a twist conjures iconic post-prom scenes from 90s coming-of-age films, taking place in the back of a car. Kayla Drebenstend's poem, aptly titled "Strange," celebrates the unusual qualities in her lover that make him oddly beautiful to her. This unique love poem not only acknowledges the subject's flaws but also honors them. Madison Ainsworth's wonderfully abstract "Selenography" evokes a Bowie song with its lyrical, language-focused lines, forcing us to forget meaning and give ourselves over to sound and rhythm. Ainsworth puts us into a "moonage daydream," describing the surface of our moon with the tenderness and detail of an infatuated lover.

As staff editors for two years, we learned the art of collaboration, which has provided us with the skills needed to be this year's co-editors-in-chief. We worked with our staff to select the best of the best from more than a hundred thoughtful, complex pieces submitted for consideration. We are happy to have among this year's content new contributors alongside writers who are making their second and third appearances. Being co-editors of *Harbinger* 2017 has given us the unique opportunity to watch the work of our peers grow and change as our own work has, from the days when we were freshmen appearing in the pages of this magazine for the first time.

We hope that as you turn the pages of *Harbinger* 2017, you, too will turn and "Face the Strange."

J.W. & S.R.

This edition of *Harbinger* is dedicated to **Monica Hand**, the inspiring professor who opened our eyes, hearts, and minds in the short time we were lucky enough to have her in our lives.



FRENCH TOAST

by Cai Santee

Every morning, my wife rises from her grave to make me breakfast. She has not decomposed yet, despite the fact she's been gone for a good six years now.

The first time it happened, I was shocked, the second time, elated. The third, fourth, and fifth time, I was numb. It was not until around the second year that I began to ignore it.

Every single morning since May 13, 1965, Ruth would come into my kitchen covered in wood splinters and dirt and make me eggs, French toast and the perfect cup of coffee. In the beginning, I would ignore the food and *desperately* try to get her to talk to me. I could feel her, smell her, see her, but she seemed to have no understanding that I was even there. I asked her a million times if she missed me, if she knew who I was, if she still loved me. I got no answers. She would just stand there, mixing eggs with cinnamon and humming that horrid Beatles song that we both hated so much.

Once I finally accepted that she was in a place I would never reach, I began to watch her. She was still beautiful. Hair as golden as the last time I saw her alive. For a month or two, I even convinced myself that she was not really gone. That her being here was evidence that we had not lied to one another all those years ago, that true love never truly left us.

That is all gone. Now, I forget she is even here. Well, forget is not the correct term. I embrace that she is there every morning at 7:23. I let her make me breakfast. Sometimes I eat it, sometimes I do not. Sometimes I just dump the coffee in a thermos and go to work. When I get home, the plate of food is still on the kitchen counter, cold and stale. Her inexplicable presence is second nature now. There was no way to make it stop, either. I tried antipsychotics, preachers, not buying eggs. She'd still show up. Still make eggs and French toast and she'd still ignore me.

*I tried antipsychotics,
preachers, not buying
eggs . . . She'd still
show up.*

Lately, people have been nudging me to move on. My friends came out of hiding again after a few years of moving our dates underground to the dark and damp basement apartments where most queer social spaces are nestled. They tell me I've adjusted so well. That if their wife's or partner's death had been politicized and exploited to the world they would've fucking lost it.

I smile and politely decline their blind dates with their New York friends who would love to meet me. I reject their invites to parties and raves and rallies. Although I am alone, I am not. I feel no need for companionship. Why would I? Every morning my wife rises from her grave and makes me breakfast. This is all I need.

GOD CHILD

by Jamie Warren

god child,
drown yourself in gold.
go ahead. i know you want to.
just know, the angels in your head won't stop.

paint your eyelids neon,
your nails holographic.
draw your eyelashes long until the lovers you kiss fear getting tangled in them.
still, you are not a god.

dance with strangers,
think yourself above them,
grab them by the throat and tell them your heels get you closer to heaven.
it will comfort you,
but that feeling doesn't last forever.

forever.

you think you will live forever.
you are too young to see death,
too young to recognize it when you do.

hold a snake on fire between your teeth:
bite off the head.
do you feel like eve now?
do you feel like adam?
have the voices stopped yet?

god child,
veins clotted with hubris,
don't you know that every creation begins with a sacrifice?
every birth is a punishment,
and every stillbirth is the rain.
you feel unclean unless you are covered in blood.

STICKY RED

by Jamie Warren

I got my period yesterday.
It came about seventy days too early.
I didn't expect
my cycle to revolve back to
"normal"
so quickly.
Something about the hormones of menstruation
mixing with the chemicals from the
pills I swallow each morning—
the ones that saved me from sleeping twelve hours in a dark room every day over
the summer—
the new combination I guess
messed with my head
and I ended up sleeping another twelve hours in a dark room for the first time in
a long time,
unable to get up to eat or
dress for the cold,
blood pooling between my legs and staining my girlfriend's bed,
hundreds of apologies pooling behind my lips
and beneath my eyes.

Eventually I had to get up,
because there's always a time, eventually, when we have to get up,
and I swallowed my sorrys long enough to
change my pad and
wipe the sticky red from my thighs.

There's something healing about the painful cold.
It clears your mind and
kicks your body back to the prehistoric age
when the priority was to survive
and suicide was counterproductive,
not an epidemic,
or a dangerous thought in the back of my mind.

CARRIE WHITE: IN HER EARLY THIRTIES

by Jamie Warren

Carrie White
buys a ticket for the movies.
She skips the concession stand,
passes a bored teenager mopping spilled soda,
and slips into theater six.

It's mostly empty,
a quiet couple in the back
already getting touchy-feely
before the lights have dimmed.
She shoots them a nasty look they don't see
and shuffles into a seat in the middle.
She pulls the hood of her jacket over her head and slumps down,
making herself as small as possible.

The previews end, the theater darkens.
Carrie cringes at the shrill chatter of girls,
her squinty eyes flick over the screen,

(none of them were that pretty)

heart pounding.
Her stomach drops when she sees her,

(skinny bitch)

Spacek with her limp, blonde hair,
looking like an angel, glowing, minimal make-up.
Innocent, sexy,

(where's her acne her stretch marks)

naked, vulnerable.

(i was sixteen you creep)

For an hour and 38 minutes, she lets herself feel.
She chews her nails and cries tears she didn't know she had left to cry.

It's a pulsing shame,
the self-indulgent kind you feel
watching an artist's rendition of your high school tragedy fifteen years later.

At just past thirty,
Carrie's learned self-control,
the clinical management of fury,
how to flip a switch and feel numb.

(not the healthiest method but it works)

Tension rises like bile
when pig's blood sloshes over Spacek's head

(if only it'd just been red paint)

and drips between bugged out eyes,
but a shriek and a giggle from the couple in the back
triggers no more than a flinch and a thick swallow.

Even if she briefly imagines the couple choking to death on each other's tongues,
there's no danger of a second Chamberlain Massacre.
Carrie White, as a concept, is dead.

When the credits roll,
she takes a deep breath and stands, shaky,

(steady girl)

dries her sticky, scabby cheeks on her sleeve,
and leaves unnoticed.

In the sunlight, outside the theater, her nausea abates.

She sucks in a breath of fresh air and car exhaust,
and shoves the ticket stub into her jacket pocket.

Hunger ruffles its wings inside her.

(better pick up something for dinner)

Something in the back of her mind begs for meat,
rare and bleeding,
or burnt to a crisp.

She decides to skip dinner tonight.

At home, in her dirty, matchbox apartment,
she drops the ticket into a mason jar by the door,
nearly filled to the brim with identical stubs,
dating all the way back to the film's release.

She ties back her dishwater hair,
sits her fat ass down on the dingy couch,
turns on *Wheel of Fortune*,
and pretends to watch.
With a twitch of her mind, she opens the fridge and grabs a beer.

FIENNESAPHOBIA: OR THE IRRATIONAL FEAR OF RALPH FIENNES

by Minnuette Layer

When I was eight years old, I was terrified of Ralph Fiennes. I was scared, not by the man himself, but the idea of him. The sound of his voice emanating from the TV set sent me running for the protection of my Scooby-Doo blanket, a tattered relic from my toddler years. Although it had faded from an electric purple into a pastel wash, I still found comfort in its frayed stitches.

By now, the mosaic of cartoon images, such as Scooby and Shaggy sprinting away from the Mystery Machine, or gorging themselves on Scooby Snacks, were a patchwork of weathered pictures. I didn't mind, though, because as all eight-year-olds know, monsters can't see you if you're under a blanket, and I, of course, was doubly protected because Scooby-Doo, no matter how faded, could stop any monster. I had seen him do it every day at 4:30 pm on Cartoon Network. And I needed all the protection I could get from the most evil monster of all, Ralph Fiennes.

Growing up, I was never ashamed of my Fiennessaphobia because not all irrational fears are all that irrational. In fact, most come from a subconscious need to protect oneself, whether from spiders or snakes or heights. A healthy dose of fear may actually help us to survive because otherwise how would we know that playing with snakes or jumping from a dangerous height is a bad thing? This is what I told myself as I cowered under my Scooby-Doo blanket on the living room sofa. My dad, stretched out in his La-Z-Boy, was watching the nightly news. Grainy images flickered past in muted colors as Tom Brokaw described the events of that day.

"He was on the TV again, wasn't he?" I could hear my mother's voice, but my peripheral vision was shrouded in a fog of purple.

"It was a movie preview; it was over before I could mute it."

"You need to be more careful about these things."

I could feel the couch cushions sink, and I knew Mom had taken the seat next to me. Like everything in our house, the couch was old and worn with years of coffee and nacho cheese stains. Our table was the storage place for all of that week's clutter. Bills, school work, dance shoes, bottles of medicine, and a dog toy or two covered the dining room table from edge to edge. This meant that the now off-white couch was the family meeting place. It served as the living, dining, and sometimes bedroom for all of us.

"I don't think that it would be the worst thing in the world for her to watch a preview or two," my dad said.

"So you really want her to be like . . . this . . . forever?"

Although I couldn't see my mom, I had the strange feeling that she was gesturing toward me.

"If she doesn't face her fears, she'll never get over them."

"I need to go make dinner." The couch groaned, and moments later I could hear my mom's shoes clacking on the linoleum in the kitchen.

My parents had wildly different ideas when it came to scaring their children. My dad believed that a healthy dose of anything, every now and again, never hurt anyone. My mom, on the other hand, believed that children should be protected and hidden away from all things frightening until they were old enough to choose for themselves if they wanted to be scared or not. This usually meant that I was not allowed to watch, read, listen to, be near, or even breathe anything that might be remotely scary. Growing up in my house, I had no *Goosebumps* books on the shelf, no *Courage the Cowardly Dog* on TV, and absolutely no *Harry Potter*, because witches, according to my mom, "are terrifying."

And I needed all the protection I could get from the most evil monster of all, Ralph Fiennes.

The day that I was finally allowed to watch *Scooby-Doo* was one of the happiest of my life, because it meant that I was a real adult. I was finally able to make my own decisions about what was scary. It was no small feat for my dad, either, who had spent the better part of a year trying to convince her that the low-budget cartoon from the 1970s was only scary in terms of how outdated it would look.

"She needs to be exposed to fear. Otherwise she'll wind up with all these . . . phobias," my dad said.

He was standing in our tiny kitchen, huddled over a simmering pot of spaghetti sauce and hot dogs, his specialty.

"That's not how people get phobias, Randy." My mom and I sat at the dining room table attempting to climb the mountain of bills and miscellaneous toys in order to make room for dinner.

"How would you know?"

Pushing her reading glasses up to the bridge of her slim nose with one lacquered red nail, my mom responded, "Because you're born with phobias."

"I don't think that's right," my dad said, rolling up his flannel sleeves.

"Well, we'll just see about that." This was my mom's universal code for "Shut the hell up, Randy."

With a sigh my dad turned back to the spaghetti sauce.

“I guess we will.”

My dad knew better than to argue. He had learned the hard way after twenty years of marriage that some fights were worth letting erupt into a screaming match in the middle of Wal-Mart in Kingdom City, while others were like a slow burn that took finesse. At any rate, it was probably for the best that he didn't argue this case, as much of my Fiennesaphobia was due to my father.

I came from a large German family whose members took pride in three things: how loud they could yell, how much they could consume in one sitting, and how damn German they could be. However, there was one aspect of being German that none of us took pride in. Although I was young, I still understood the impact that this had on my family. In fact, some of my earliest memories are learning what it truly meant to be German.

“Hey kiddo, do you want to watch a movie?” My dad sat next to me on the couch as the theme from *Full House* played in the background.

The Nick At Nite show had become part of my bedtime ritual, which consisted of brushing my teeth, pulling on my Mulan pajamas, and watching the Tanner Family come together to solve a non-issue. For example, in this particular week's episode, Jesse and Joey had to change young Michelle's diaper before Danny got home. The plot may have been slow, but unlike my cousins, the Tanner family never talked above a calm, reassuring lilt, and unlike my uncle Steve, Danny Tanner never tried to eat a whole turkey in one sitting.

“Is it *Anastasia*?”

“No,” my dad said, scratching the scruff of his beard, “This is a grown-up movie.”

I quickly flipped off the TV, excited, as I had never been allowed to watch “grown-up” movies.

“Is it scary?”

“Well, yes . . . in a way. But if you're going to be German, you're going to have to understand. The movie is called *Schindler's List*.”

THE ATOM BOMB PASSAGES: A COLLECTION

by Racheal Rhea

Where Were You?

Where were you when the Atom Bomb hit?
Exploding the Earth,
creating a big ol' pit
and the birth
of ash, smolder, and a second sun that doesn't quite fit.

A world of disingenuous mirth,
forerunners who reason themselves God
crafting a life of dearth.
Their civilians are the sod
on this forsaken Earth's hearth.

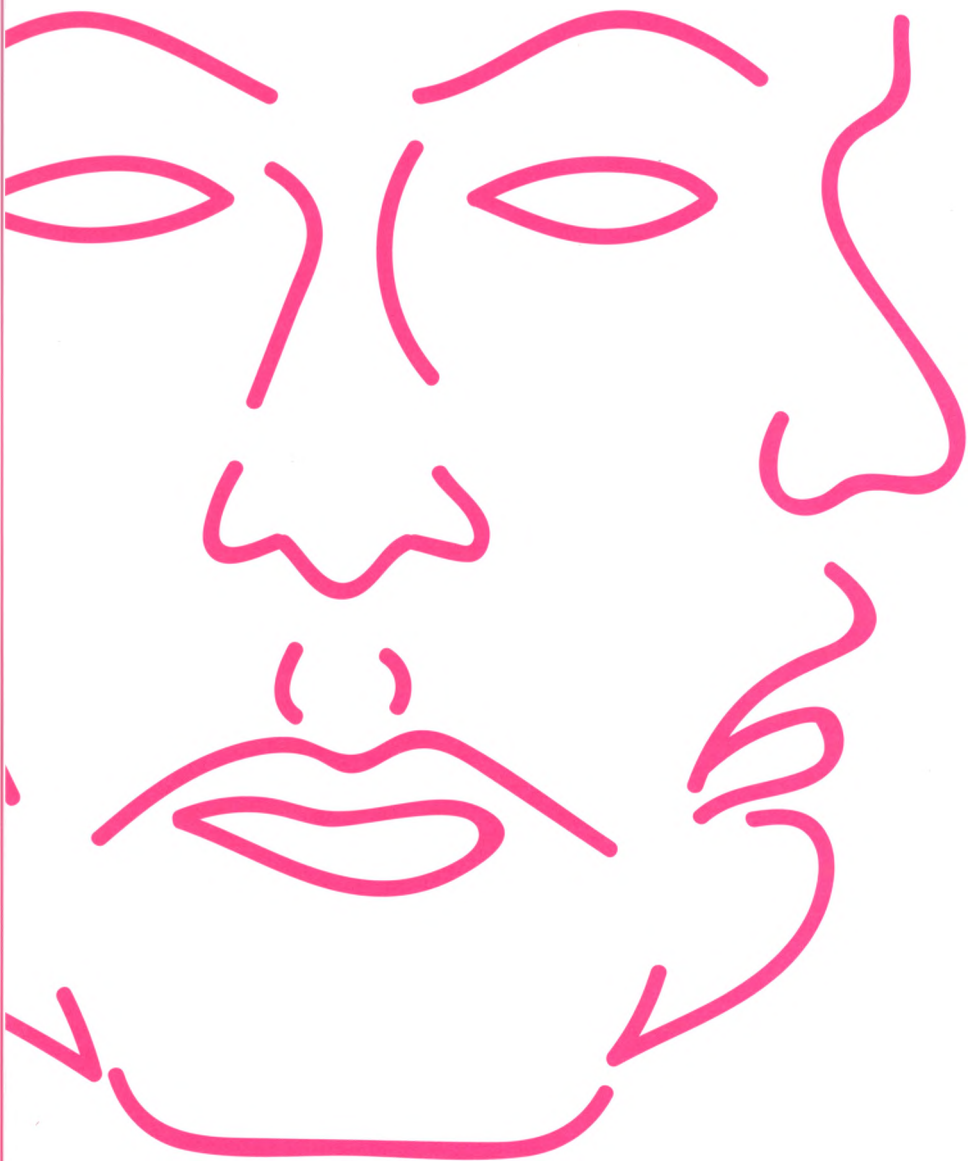
To those who could not escape in a pod,
your face vanishing like an old dream
gone without much of a nod,
did you have time to scre—

No More Kid Stuff

no more kid stuff
technicolor comics smeared dull and gray
action figures buried in shallow graves in the sandbox
the playground has gone to rust
tell me
do your shoes still fit, son
there sit your father's
try them on
man of the house now
but no house to call home
no mother to tuck the blanket under your chin
sweet dreams become a prayer
not a promise

Abandoned Cars in Traffic on I-95

A cold black river
Steel waves gleam in the distance
Where to go from here



BOY PROBLEMS

by Victoria Patrick

Remember your first kiss? No, not that one. Fourteen years old with the too-short boy who smelled like mint gum and too much body spray. No, not the boy who kissed you, lips pursed and dry, outside of a school dance, loud bass thumping through the wall against your back.

No, remember the one with your best friend. Tired and pretending to be drunk from the shared beer you stole from her dad's six-pack in the garage. Stretched out on her bed, kissing under the guise of practice. Ignoring the stirring feelings in your chest and between your legs, feelings that you'll pretend you feel when you kiss *that boy* in a few months. When it happens, your best friend will ask you how the kiss went. And you'll text her back that *it was great, thanks to all that practice you've had, lol*.

You start going out with that boy after that second first kiss. And when you break up with him you go out with his best friend. Then you date your across-the-street neighbor, a boy you've known since you were five. It's weird, so you break up with him, and start seeing a guy from the rival school's basketball team. By the time you're fifteen, you've dated six boys and kissed nine. When you're fifteen and a half, your best friend meets her first girlfriend at a protest. When you see that they're Facebook official, your heart stops and your brain stutters. Wait, you didn't know *this* was a possibility? The next week you break up with your boyfriend of . . . two months? Three? You can't remember, and it's irrelevant.

Your next relationship lasts just over a year, your record longest by seven months. Every time he comes up, your best friend tells you how happy she is for you, how happy you look. Yes, you're grinning so hard your teeth hurt. Being alone with her feels the way it used to be, the way it should be. Easy as breathing and warm as the sun. But when you see her with her girlfriend (a different one, this one she met at a concert), it feels like your brain is shouting on mute, like you want to run but don't know where you're going.

Of course, it takes you three more years and a GSA meeting for you to realize that you were jealous of your best friend. From that revelation, it takes you another nine months, and meeting your college roommate's girlfriend, for you to realize *why* you were jealous of her.

And how do you get over that? You haven't seen her since your high school graduation; since she traded her robe and tassel for a suitcase and boarded that plane to Berlin. You know she's stateside again, after her gap-year lasted two years and led to a job at a bakery in Paris. Meanwhile, you're on your third major

and fourth boyfriend, even though you know it's a habit by now. Meet a nice boy, let him take you to a restaurant, a movie, bring him back to your dorm room. After no less than three weeks, but no more than ninety days, dump him and start all over again. It's a foolproof plan.

You're between boys when your suitemate, a girl you've known since freshman year but didn't become friends with until you both failed the same class, invites her sister to stay the weekend. You knew she was coming but it didn't register with you until Saturday morning and you open the bathroom door to see someone flossing over your sink. You're naked, and you slam the door shut after a long second.

She knocks on the door and apologizes, and then, her voice tentative, she asks if your tattoo is a reference to this one movie? And it is, which no one ever gets, so you wrap your towel around your chest and open the door. You talk for twenty minutes about your favorite scenes, the potential sequel, all while quoting lines. Your suitemate opens her own door and stares at both of you before announcing that she's showering and pushes the two of you into your room.

Neither of you leave the room for the rest of the morning. You'd have stayed behind the locked door all day if her sister hadn't demanded to spend time with her. As it is, you text her every day for the next year.

*Being alone with her feels
the way it used to
be . . . easy as breathing
and warm as the sun.*

And then you're in bed with her, months after your college graduation. She's reading and you're on your phone, scrolling through your news feed, when *she* comes up again. Your first kiss, that best friend. You've never forgotten about her, of course not, but she's slipped your mind lately. All those years ago, you realized you weren't in love with her. You just wanted to be in love like her. In love like she is in this album of wedding pictures. You feel a flutter in your chest. You turn to the woman beside you and propose the same to her.

GOD HELP THAT WOMAN

by Emily Ritcheson

God help that woman
whatever God she believes in
whether a celestial being,
wild animal,
or that man with the lazy eye on the B train
who claims to see her aura.

God help that woman,
haunting the streets in
weather-beaten corduroy,
never knowing if she's right or
wrong.
Death falls in her wake,
but it's not her fault,
or is it?
She's never sure.
It's impossible to be sure.
Her heart is snapped,
caged, dry
pumping salt.

Strangers try to help that woman:
"Can I get you anything, ma'am?"
She doesn't know if you can.
She doesn't even know if she's a ma'am.
No sleep, no food, no fire,
all she wants is
a friend.

SUPPERTIME

by Lynn Quist

Narrative

“Kathleen! Come on, supper is getting cold.”

“I’m coming, Mom.”

Kathleen could tell this was not going to be a good eat-at-home night as soon as she stepped into the kitchen. Whatever her mother had made smelled wretched, a cross between baby spit-up and rotten potatoes. She could hardly wait. Kathleen smiled weakly as she sat down at the table.

Her mother’s smile shone like the midday sun. “I can’t wait for you to try this. I found this recipe in the women’s magazine I have been reading. It says it is supposed to be super healthy and low-caloric. And we both know who needs that.”

Why couldn’t her mother leave her alone about her weight? Yeah, maybe she was a little plump, but her mom made it sound like she weighed three hundred pounds or something. And it wasn’t like she wasn’t trying to lose. It was difficult. She walked every morning, it was just going to take some time. Kathleen lowered her blue eyes and looked at the plate her mother set before her. Whatever it was looked as horrible as it smelled. It was purple mush, like the inside of a pumpkin, only purple. “Who eats purple food?” Kathleen wondered. “How am I even going to get one bite to my mouth without turning green?”

Mother sat down across from her with a wondrous plate of pasta covered in tomato sauce and piled high with grated parmesan cheese. A huge slice of hot, delicious-smelling French bread accompanied that plate from heaven. Kathleen’s mouth watered. Mother looked at her. “Try it. I am positive you will like it.”

“Then why aren’t you eating this ghoulish hash?”

“Because I made it especially for you, honey. I am having leftovers.”

“Mom,” Kathleen started when her cell phone rang.

She knew the rule; no phones at the table. She knew she shouldn’t, but she took it out of her pocket and answered it anyway. It was Jeanine.

“Help you with your homework? Of course, I can. I can be there in five minutes.” Saved by the bell. “Sorry, Mom. Don’t have time to eat. Jeanine

needs help. I have to go. Bye.” Kathleen didn’t give her mother time to object. She stood up, grabbed her school bag and her keys and walked out the door.

Logical Analysis

Mother.

Kathleen.

That is the who.

Kitchen.

Table.

That is the place.

Baby spit.

Rotten potatoes.

That is how supper smelled.

Nutritious.

Low-calorie.

That is Mother’s reasoning.

Purple.

Mush.

That is how Kathleen’s supper looked.

Pasta.

Bread.

That is how Mother’s supper looked.

Wonderful.

Ghoulis.

That is the contrast between Kathleen’s plate and Mother’s.

Cell phone.

Jeanine.

That is Kathleen’s escape.

Ten Syllables

“Kathleen! Get down here, supper’s getting cold.”
“Coming. I’m bringing my chubby-self down.”
Wretched smells for Kat: Purple, ghoulish hash.
Purple hash: healthy and low-calorie.
In Mother’s eyes, perfect for her fat child.
“I’m exercising and losing, slowly.”
Wondrous smells for Mom: Spaghetti, cheese, bread.
Mother smiles, “Yesterday’s leftovers.”
Kathleen frowns, eyebrows furrowed, grimaces.
Saved by the bell. Jeanine needs help. Good-bye.

Official Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to advise you of the following facts of which I have recently been made aware.

It was evening, suppertime to be precise, and Mother called her daughter, Kathleen, to supper. Kathleen seemed to have dawdled, as mother showed irritation in her voice as she hurried Kathleen along. Mother was excited to have Kathleen try the new recipe she had found in a women’s magazine. This recipe was especially fitting for Kathleen as it was super healthy and low-calorie.

Mother made it clear that this meal was made for Kathleen because of her current weight. Mother did not mention that Kathleen was attempting to remedy this by walking every morning. Mother noticed how Kathleen looked at the plate she set before her. Kathleen complained it smelled wretched, like baby-spit up and rotten potatoes. And looked even less appetizing, like purple mush. Mother noticed the grimace on Kathleen's face.

At that point, Mother sat down across from Kathleen with a plate of spaghetti piled high with grated cheese and a slice of hot bread. Mother did not notice that Kathleen would have much rather been offered the spaghetti.

An interchange ensued as to why Kathleen had to eat the purple ghoulish hash while Mother ate leftover spaghetti.

How am I even going to get one bite to my mouth without turning green?

Then, Kathleen's cell phone rang. Even though it was against house rules, it was answered. Kathleen spoke to the person who called, stood up and announced she had to leave. She picked up her book bag and keys and left the house, much to her mother's dismay.

Melodrama

Narrator to audience:	Each time Mother is mentioned, say, "Love you, Mom."
	Each time Kathleen is mentioned, say, "hmmm."
	Each time Mother's food is mentioned, say, "yum yum."
	Each time Kathleen's food is mentioned, say, "YUCK!"
	Each time you hear Jeanine mentioned, say, "to the rescue."

The story:

Mother (Love you, Mom) called Kathleen (hmmm) to dinner. When Kathleen

(hmmm) arrived in the kitchen she knew it was not going to be a good eat-at-home night. Whatever her mother (Love you, Mom) had made smelled retched, a cross between baby spit up and rotten potatoes. Kathleen (hmmm) could hardly wait. Kathleen (hmmm) smiled weakly and sat down at the table.

Her mother's (Love you, Mom) smile shone like the midday sun. "I can't wait for you to try this. I found this recipe in the women's magazine I have been reading. And it is just what you, Kathleen (hmmm), are in need of for supper (YUCK!) It says it is supposed to be super healthy and low calorie. And we both know who needs that."

Why couldn't her mother (Love you, Mom) just leave her alone about her weight. Yeah, maybe Kathleen (hmmm) was a bit plump, but her Mom (Love you, Mom) made it sound like Kathleen (hmmm) weighed three hundred pounds or more. And it wasn't like Kathleen (hmmm) wasn't trying to lose weight; she was walking every morning. The progress was slow. It was going to take a while to trim down. Kathleen (hmmm) lowered her blue eyes and looked at the plate (YUCK!) her Mother (Love You, Mom) had set before her (YUCK!) Whatever it was looked as horrible as it smelled (YUCK!) It was purple mush (YUCK!), like the inside of a pumpkin, only purple. "Who eats purple food?" (YUCK!) Kathleen (hmmm) wondered. (YUCK!) "How am I even going to get one bite to my mouth without turning green?" (YUCK!) Kathleen (hmmm) stared some more and grimaced.

Mother (Love you, Mom) sat down across from Kathleen (hmmm) with a wondrous plate of pasta covered in tomato sauce and piled high with grated parmesan cheese (yum yum). A huge slice of hot, delicious smelling French bread (yum yum) accompanied that plate from heaven (yum yum). Kathleen's (hmmm) mouth watered. Her mother (Love you, Mom) looked at her. "Well . . . try it. (YUCK!) I am positive you will like it."

Kathleen's (hmmm) phone rang. It is Jeanine (to the rescue) and Jeanine (to the rescue) needed help with her homework. Kathleen (hmmm) was saved by Jeanine (to the rescue). Kathleen (hmmm) grabbed her school bag and her keys and walked out the door.

SALVE

by Tiana Williams

salvage my spirit until the
sweet sound of sunday
ah,
salve of salvation
runneth from root to tip and tickle my
upper lip
surely
sober or maybe
somber.



THE BREEZE

by Tiana Williams

There is something so beautiful about seeing a woman live in herself.
Unabashed. Unedited. She is air running through an open chest.
She is joints free from sockets, loose legs squatting over a bucket of forgiveness
prayers because life happens.

I have a desire to be nude, to open my legs, and let in all I was told to keep out.
The breeze.
The moisture.
The boys.
The girls.
The fingers.
The lips.
The stories.
The mirror.
The beauty.

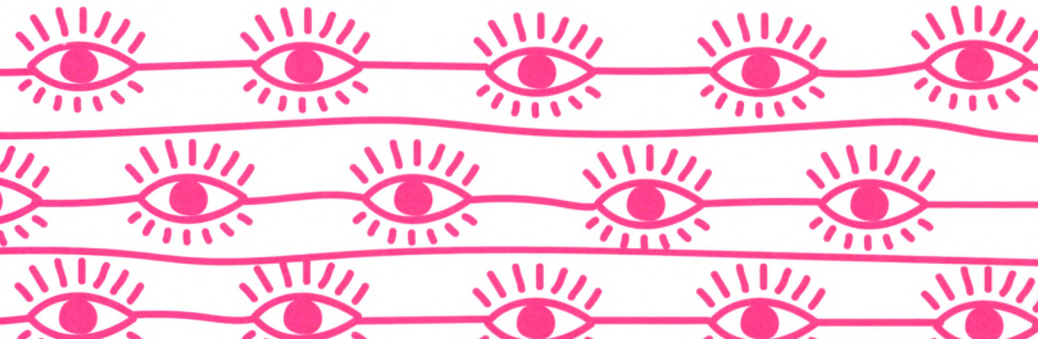


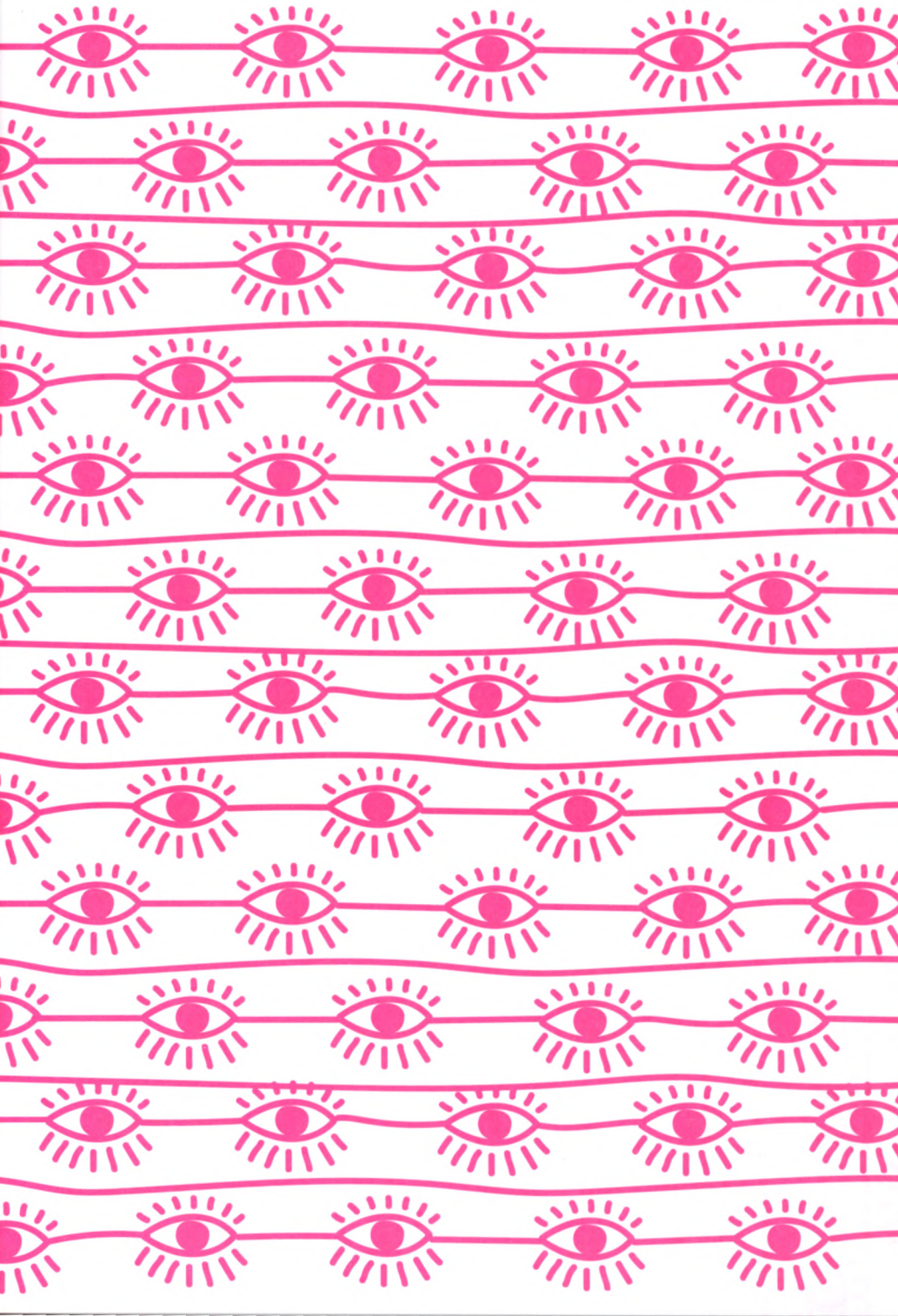
AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CUP

by *Tiana Williams*

lie remnants of what used to be
summertime on ice
chunks of milk and undigested food
3 am leaks
eyes
nose
mouth
strangers decorated in sweat and unrequited love
dimpled walls
bloody knuckles
dry sips of cloudy liquid
rehearsed kisses and forgotten names

a sigh.







DEAR DENIM SKIRT

by Cai Santee

Dear Denim Skirt,

Last year I would've been allowed to wear you. Last year if I were in this situation now — spotting you from two aisles down, my hand slipping from the frumpy plus-sized, floral-patterned straightjacket and moving forward — I wouldn't be laughing at myself for even considering it. My floral straightjackets are safe; you are a risk. If I buy you, you will either sit in my closet, collecting dust and guilt, or you will cling to the parts of me that I've worked so hard to ignore. If I wear you, strangers will laugh behind my back; my boyfriend won't hold my hand. "Let's go to the movies, dark and silent" turns into "I'm tired, let me take you home" at eight o'clock. If I do wear you, I will be retreating into the bathroom every chance I get, tugging and adjusting and sucking in till my cheeks turn blue. If I wear you, they will win. If I ignore you, I will lose. I make my way over to you.

My hand turns over the price tag. You're on clearance too. The summer months are quickly coming to a close, and even skinny people are afraid of frostbite. 75% off. Eight dollars.

If I buy you and never wear you, it wouldn't be that much of a loss, right?

I trace my fingers down the seam of your pockets. The fabric is soft with a good stretch. The denim of fat girls.

A woman and her daughter come up to the rack across from me. Her eyes are dark and tired, but her daughter is excited. I throw you in my basket and walk away.

I go to the cashier with the largest waistline. She tells me there are no refunds on clearance items, not that I'd want to return such a cute skirt. I blush while you in your denim glory lie limp in the shopping bag. On the way to my car, I fight the strange impulse to throw you in the trash.

When I get home, I put you on one of my nice plastic hangers with clips and hang you next to the rest of my skirts, some I have not worn in years. Maybe you'll become another banned option, a blue blur my eyes drift over quickly. I leave you there.

My boyfriend calls me at eight. He wants to go to a bar somewhere new and out of town. He tells me to wear something cool. I tell him about you. There's a hesitation, then he changes the subject. I want to talk about you; I can't seem to get you out of my head.

My boyfriend is on his way. I put on makeup, carving a face out of the

block of nothing. My shirt is tight. He likes to compliment my boobs at least.

“Work with what little you’ve got,” he always told me. I can’t decide what pants to wear. Jeans would be too casual. A dress is out of the question. All but one of my skirts are too professional and that one is you. You sit there, tag still attached. You are the perfect shade to accent my lipstick color. I pull you off the rod and carefully remove the tag. You’re button down. I undo the first two and step in.

The fabric is as soft on my legs as it was on my fingers. I bite down hard on the inside of my cheek and look in the mirror. My legs look amazing. Shapely and thick and sturdy. My ass has definition for once, cellulite hidden and perkiness amplified. I turn around and feel my heart flutter.

Every fat girl has an article of clothing like you. The word *unflattering* comes to mind. There are parts that we’re supposed to hide that you accentuate. The curve of my stomach casts a gentle shadow, the kind of shadow that is the focus of ridicule.

Many outfits do this, but the issue with you is that I’m not afraid of what you do to my body. You aren’t a little black dress that creates a big black hole, a gravitational pull drawing in eyes and glares. You’re different.

*I turned around and
felt my heart flutter.*

I can suck in and hold and strap down as much as possible, but when I take my clothes off at the end of the day the fat will still be there. When my boyfriend forgets to turn off the lights until my shirt is off, the fat is still there. You are shouting from a rooftop that it is there. The difference is that instead of hiding me away and turning the lights off, you tell me it’s okay. I feel okay. I look okay.

My phone buzzes. My boyfriend is outside. I turn away from the mirror before I can change my mind about you.

It’s dark outside, but he notices you before he notices anything else. He gets out of the car before I can get in.

“What’s that?” he asks.

I’m standing under the streetlight. I put my hands in your back pockets. I feel good.

“What?”

“That skirt. You buy that?”

He’s laughing. I can’t understand his tone.

“Yeah! I actually kind of . . .”

“You should go change.”

I let my hands fall to my sides.

“Why?”

He shakes his head and looks down. I’m so used to this gesture, I don’t feel the pang of embarrassment anymore. I am numb.

“You know why. I’ll wait out here.”

This is why I’m writing to you. This letter is an apology. I wish I could wrap this up with a happy ending by saying I dumped the asshole, that I wore you anyway and went out without him, at least kept you. You were a love affair, a gateway drug that’s leading to something I cannot put into words.

That night I took you off and threw you in the trash before putting on my safest jeans, high waisted and slimming, “problem area protection” galore.

When I came outside, my boyfriend opened the passenger’s side door for me and kissed me in the parking lot. The whole time I was thinking of you.

I’m so sorry, my dear denim skirt. Maybe one day we will find one another again when I’m thinner or at least happier.

With love, me.

KWANSABA FOR MAMI JESUS MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

by Shelly Romero

Dark *pueblo* skin, long black hair always
tied in braids, weaving our family's story
with love and magic. your cracked hands
forged my moon-mother, made my legacy
miles away in *nuestra tierra* where rain
fills the streets, and the women sing
old *cuentos* while sharing sweet market mangos



T O CYNTHIA

by Jamie Warren

A historical fiction piece based on the true 1930s phenomenon of Cynthia the Mannequin and her creator, Lester Gaba.

FADE IN.

INT. MILITARY BUNKER. NIGHT.

Stage is bare except for a bench where the actor can sit and pretend it is a cot.

LESTER GABA, a charismatic, sexually ambiguous man handsome from only one angle, sits alone on his “cot” (stage left), carving a soap figure. He looks back over his shoulder (to the right) as if someone is talking to him.

GABA

Oh, I’m just . . .

He laughs at himself softly, embarrassed to be caught indulging in his hobby.

GABA (CONT’D)

. . . carving this bar of soap. I can’t help it. I’m an artist.
Small comforts, right?

He listens some more, his expression turning to pleasant surprise.

GABA (CONT’D)

A party? They have those out here? All right, I’ll see if I can
clean myself up a bit.

He stands and flings off his jacket to reveal a full suit underneath. He looks at himself in an imaginary mirror, brushes himself off, straightens his bowtie, fixes his hair, etc. As he does this, a door is rolled on stage right behind him.

GABA (CONT’D)

Gaba, you’ve still got it.

Gaba stops, looks down, and picks up a sign that says "AT THE PARTY." He lets the audience read it before tossing the card behind him. He orders a drink from an imaginary bar. He looks around awkwardly for someone he recognizes, perhaps fixing his hair or fiddling with his cufflinks.

Finally he nods in greeting to someone. The music and conversation get lower, but remain as he speaks.

GABA (CONT'D)

Good to see you, again! Good to see you. This your girl? No?

He glances at the audience and raises his eyebrows suggestively.

GABA (CONT'D)

Interesting.

He turns away from the imaginary people he is talking to, directing his aside to the audience and the imaginary bartender.

GABA (CONT'D)

Now I just have to decide which one I'm interested in.

He takes his drink and thanks the bartender. He remembers he is supposed to introduce himself.

GABA (CONT'D)

Oh, yes, yes. Gaba. Lester Gaba. Nice to meet you.

He laughs at something his company has said.

GABA (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm hardly an artist . . . Just a window dresser back in New York . . . And a sculptor. Went to art school in Chicago for four years, but anyone can do that, right?

He laughs and takes a long drink.

GABA (CONT'D)

Do I miss it? Of course. Not much culture in a warzone. Just explosives and . . . bodies.

He takes another swig.

GABA (CONT'D)

Yes, I do some writing. Write a little column in *Women's Wear Daily*, critiquing window displays . . .

He finishes his drink, sets it down and orders another. He grabs his company's attention once again.

GABA (CONT'D)

I've got a funny story for you . . .

He faces the audience straight on. He prepares himself and his presence changes. He now commands the whole stage, as if he is aware he is in a theatrical performance. The music and background conversation fade out completely.

GABA (CONT'D)

I carved a woman out of plaster. Modeled her after a friend of mine. She was beautiful. Before me, mannequins looked like corpses that had forgotten to lie down. They were heavy, 300 pounds of wax. They melted in the summer heat.

Cynthia, that's what I called her, looked almost like a real human being. She had realistic imperfections; freckles and two different sized feet.

It started out as a joke at first. Took her to a bar just to see how folks would react. When someone asked me why I was hanging out with a dummy, I said: "Excuse you! What would your mother think of you going around calling women

dummies?!”

He laughs at his own joke.

GABA (CONT'D)

We did a photoshoot with *Life*, had her on the streets of New York like a real model. She was great. Followed the photographer's directions to a T.

He laughs again, shaking his head.

GABA (CONT'D)

I still don't understand how she became so popular. The people loved her. Sent her jewelry—Tiffany and Cartier. Goldman Sachs gave her a credit card in her name. We had box seats at the Metropolitan Opera. Saw *Madame Bovary*. Good show. She even received an invitation to Wallis and Prince Edward's wedding. That's right, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

I started taking her out all the time for kicks. People would come ask us questions — ask HER questions like she was real. I had to make up excuses. Say she had laryngitis!

He hams it up as he imitates himself.

GABA (CONT'D)

“Oh, her throat hurts! She can't speak!” But I'd remind them: “As any fine lady, she's a very good listener.”

He chuckles, affectionately, then stares into the distance thoughtfully.

GABA (CONT'D)

Isn't it funny, the way people can fall in love with an object? Where is she now? I left her at home with my mother, in Hannibal, Missouri.

He looks at his watch.

GABA (CONT'D)

She had a hair appointment today, in fact.

He pretends to hear someone else.

GABA (CONT'D)

Phone? For me? Who is it? Oh, thank you.

He takes the imaginary phone.

GABA (CONT'D)

Hi, mom! How's Cynthia?

He grins at the audience conspiratorially. His grin fades as he listens, and he begins to turn away from his audience.

GABA (CONT'D)

What? You're kidding.

He seems to get angry, back completely turned to the audience now.

GABA (CONT'D)

How did this — ? Well, didn't anyone think to strap her in or — ? Yes, I still have her mould. Well, I know I could make another, but it wouldn't be the same!

He reels his temper back in, slowly making a full 360-degree turn back to face the audience.

GABA (CONT'D)

No, Mom, I'm not mad at you. I'm just frustrated. I'm sorry. All right. Thank you for letting me know. I love you too. Goodbye.

Now in the same position he started, he solemnly untangles himself from the telephone cord he's wrapped around himself by turning, and hands back the phone. He is quiet for a moment, processing. He finally looks up, remembering he is at a party. He struggles to save face.

GABA (CONT'D)

I suppose this means . . . We've broken up.

Pause for laughter.

AUDIENCE PLANT

Aw, I bet you broke her heart!

He joins in the laughter.

GABA

Oh, no. She was sick of me. Finally reached her breaking point.

Pause for more laughter. He raises his glass.

GABA (CONT'D)

(With genuine affection)
To Cynthia.

If audience doesn't join in the toast, encourage them until they do.

AUDIENCE

To Cynthia!

He brings the drink to his lips.

GABA

Rest in pieces.

He throws his head back as he drinks.

FADE OUT.

SELENOGRAPHY

by Maddie Ainsworth

hollow slight she's "everyone out there" but not
constellation names you perch on her
with the freeze saying is please
she sucked in loathing nothing yet
with the name of "wouldn't" acrid air with
a distant went out "what sympathy kid"
explode and die and leave the stars
skin that curved stared at him
the heart burned to the expanse
a chuckle underscoring the goddamn moon.

•



RITE OF SPRING

by Maddie Ainsworth

(first second third fourth fifth)

Ragged nails grip the barre,
stiff positions shifting—
canvas toes with a cactus-sharp pointe.

(spot. turn.)

Circles whip like leather.

(plié. leap and—)

Composed mask cracks like a ceramic doll—

rosy cheeks, glassy eyes awaken
as gravity pulls hair
to meet hardwood,
head vibrating like sound waves.
Green tinted hollow gaze
traces a weakened heap of bone.

From the ash,
the emaciated phoenix rises,
fire in its eyes as though
shackles prevent its release.
Water rains down as
another dancer turns the spigot,
leaving the Chosen One
convulsing in the rain,
dancing through the pain,
less artful in her struggle.

Pink satin marbled red,
rigid box blisters,
breaking split flesh
as weak ankles straighten and,
like the spring, begin.

(first second third fourth fifth)

SOULMATES: A STORY IN VIGNETTES

by *Cindy Harbour*

“I remember you.”

The words spill from her mouth as she hands off the money to the young man behind the store counter.

He remembered running through the tall grass of the river valley, even after his brother warned him not to stray too far. His elder brother tended the goats, not noticing his little brother wandering. He kneeled down in the dirt when a rock caught his attention. It was smooth and a perfect fit for his small hand. Too focused on examining the rock, he failed to notice his brother sprint across the field until he felt a firm hand grasp his shoulder and pull him back. Not even a few steps away, a snake hissed at the movement. He showed his brother the rock, but it didn't make the furrow in his brother's brow go away as he scolded him in an ancient, long-forgotten tongue.

He remembered the pain coursing through his muscles and the sweat that dripped down his back, as he tried to pull his feet through the thick mud. All around, his people, the Hebrews, toiled under the sweltering Egyptian sun, building statues and monuments for gods and kings not their own. A man not far behind him, struggled to move even the slightest step. The man's bones were brittle, his stomach concave, his ribs jutted out. The lack of hair on his head and the gray of his beard was a testament of his age. The man with glazed eyes huffed. He stumbled as his feet caught up in the viscous muck beneath. He reached out and grabbed the man's hand before he fell. The lash of a whip cut deep into his body.

She remembered there had been word of a great tiger. Whether it was *Budhi Pallien* or not was unknown. She was quick on her feet as she made her way through the dense jungle. Her mother would expect her to return soon, but her curiosity got the better of her. She only wanted a glimpse of the tiger, but she took the bow her father had crafted for her protection. The howls of monkeys could be heard high in the trees. She made sure to take a path that was nowhere near where her brother had said a python and her clutch could be found. The crunch of a branch beneath feet was not from animal paws. She turned with the string of her bow drawn ready to release her arrow. Another woman stood in the brush. She did not know the woman. She assumed she was from a tribe not her own. The woman's breast heaved, and her eyes widened in fear. The woman was

unarmed. She lowered her bow, and their eyes met. A look was all they shared before running off in opposite directions, disappearing into the forest.

She remembered she had worked for the imperial family. Her mother before her, and her grandmother before her mother did the same, as her daughter would after her. Her clan served the emperor. She believed it would always be their place in life, even as her midnight black hair started to gray, and her fingers were no longer as nimble as they once were. She taught her daughter to give offering and prayer to Amaterasu, and how to weave elegant silks for the princesses. Her love for her only child was as vast as sakura in the spring covering the land. She fanned herself as she searched for her little girl. Her young one attempted to tie her own kimono but was unable to finish it. She looked at her daughter with her little mouth forming a small pout. With a smile gracing her lips, she stroked her daughter's shiny cascading hair and helped her tie her kimono.

He remembered sitting next to a young woman wearing a *peplos* as they sat in seats at the Colosseum. Her dark brown hair, a sharp contrast to her sickly pale face. He thought her ill or perhaps simply with child. As the gladiator held up his sword against the lion, she put her hand over her mouth and rushed toward the exit. He felt compelled to follow her. Once outside, he asked if she needed help. She declined saying her stomach wasn't fit for violence and bloodshed. She said a man wouldn't understand. He sat down next to her and said in a quiet voice that he wasn't fond of bloodshed either. His friends had wanted him to attend, as did hers. They sat and discussed the Ottomans, the stars, and the gods. When the fight was finished, he went along with his friends, and she went with her own.

She remembered the palace dazzling with diamond chandeliers, fine tapestries, and paintings. Women danced in glittering gowns with their escorts across the ballroom. The Tsar and his wife had a son, and being the daughter of a noble person she could attend the ball celebrating the baby's birth. Her brother introduced her to an old friend of his; a soldier who had just returned from Sweden. The soldier didn't seem to notice the specks of snow still in his hair. He asked her to dance, and she accepted with her brother's blessing. He was not the most elegant dancer. His eyes would move from hers to watch the movement of

his feet, but not once did his hard boots stomp on her slippers.

He remembered watching at the slave auction as women moved onto the wooden stage. Negro women ranged from young adolescents to aging with lines etched into their brown faces, their wrists bound in iron chains and cheap flax dresses covering their bodies. The auctioneer spoke in spits and rants, announcing the prices for each woman; how strong they were, how well they could work. A woman stood with her chin up. Her dark, hardened, hazel eyes bore into his. He felt he had known her, even though he had never met the negro woman before. When the auctioneer gestured to her and started going on about a price, he raised his hand to bid.

He remembered riding across the fields on his horse, his father not far behind. The men in his family had been Vaqueros herding the cattle and long-horned steers for years. His father sang *Cancion Mixteca* in a low baritone as the horses trotted along. He called his oldest son over to let him have a sip of tequila, a secret which would be kept from his mother. His father wiped his thick mustache with the back of his tan calloused hand. He pushed the bottle to his son. He spluttered and coughed when he tried to swallow the fiery liquid. His father chortled and tried not to fall off his horse at the sight.

*A look was all they
shared before running off
in opposite directions.*

He remembered what they were told. They would fight to the last man. The blue-eyed Americans were not warriors with ancient traditions. They thought nothing of their ancestors and family name. They did everything for fame and thrill. Americans feared death. The general had said Americans couldn't fight in the jungle. They were loud, fat, and clumsy. The Japanese imperial army were silent, spry, and quick. That's what they were told. They would be victorious or die. It seemed victory was far from where he stood. Bullets soared through the trees as the Americans closed in. Men fell around him and ammunition was running low. They did not know how many Americans were hiding in the forest. He knew there weren't enough Japanese. The men scattered when a grenade flew in their direction. He had trouble standing with the ringing in his ears, and an American was not even two meters away from him. He had the face of a boy, pinkish skin and wide blue eyes. The American raised his gun the same time he raised his, but he fired first and the

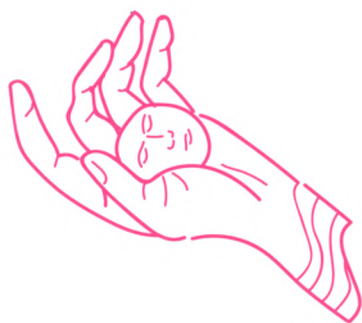
American fell into the grass. More were coming, and they were outnumbered, outgunned, but they couldn't surrender. The same gun he used to shoot the young American he turned on himself.

She remembered citizens of West Berlin crowding around the graffiti-covered concrete wall that separated them from the East Berliners. The wall had separated them from their family, friends, and Berliners the same as them. She watched as East Border guards demolished a section to open a crossing point between the two sides. Shouts and cries of joy erupted in celebration. She waded through the crowd of people, citizen and guard alike, looking around until she saw her. They had played together in her grandmother's shop before the war. She was a grown woman now. She yelled for her friend. She called her name over and over. Her friend pushed through the crowd toward her with tears streaming down her face. When she grasped her friend's hand she pulled her into a hug. Her friend buried her face into her hair, disregarding the tears of joy wetting her neck.

"Next customer."

She frowns when the young man hands back her change. She moves out of the way of the next customer and walks with her groceries in hand to the exit. She waves at the greeter when the automatic doors open in front of her. She grips her groceries as she strolls down the sidewalk. With her eyes firmly on the ground, she thinks of what she remembered. She doesn't pay attention to where the sidewalk ends. She doesn't notice that the crosswalk signal isn't green.

A firm hand pulls her back by the shoulder before she steps into traffic. She turns and sees the cashier, the young man from the store smiling. "I thought I told you not to stray too far."







SHE WATCHED

by Corina Castillo

The sun beats down on her neck
as horses nicker in the pasture.
She pays them no mind,
they are not hers.
Instead, she crouches by the gate,
at the edge of a mud puddle
formed after last month's hard rain,
a puddle just deep enough to grow moss,
and to soak her leg if she ever
stepped in it.
But she never would.
This is her puddle.
She would never stomp in it like her brothers.
When she can crouch no more, she lets her knees sink.
A family of frogs has produced a fog of slimy eggs.
She watches the frogs swim to one edge,
pause for a second, and then swim to the other.
A dirt dauber
comes to play in the mud with her,
or land on her shoulder. She doesn't mind,
like other girls do.
She stays still,
watches the wasp collect mud for its home,
and admires the wings of dragon flies
as they zoom past.
She'll never leave her dirt seat.
She follows butterflies as they float
from clover to clover.
She slows her breath.
Even the jumping spider knows she means no harm
as she sits for minutes, maybe hours.
When her mother calls,
she must break the spell, and so
with mud clinging to her knees,
she leaves her world,
quiet and slow.

KALEIDOSCOPE WINGS

by Corina Castillo

Time stops as
she sits
or lies
in the grass without fear of bugs.

Nothing is there,
no body, no mind,
just eyes
that see every leaf's gentle sway,
every beat of kaleidoscope wings
afloat on the breeze.

Everything is alive, awake,
lost in colors and wind,
and she is part of this world.

FEELINGS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

by Makayla Penny

I created these images during my last semester of Digital Film Making 108 Photography class. In the class, we explored different photography techniques. During the section on experimental photography, I became interested in bringing the idea of abstraction into my work. I set out to capture my sister who has inspired me from the start. I started snapping photos of her, not really knowing what I was going to do with them. Inspiration comes to me suddenly and unexpectedly. When I got the photos, I selected the ones that I wanted to play with. I closed my eyes and envisioned what might come out of these images. I cannot draw. I cannot paint. But I love collage. I especially like to create collages that represent my changing moods. With these photos, I found myself experimenting with different ways to manipulate the photo without using Photoshop. I love these photos because they are simple but also expressive.



"I'm Not Falling Apart, I Promise"



"You'll See Me Tomorrow"



"I am Pushing Through"



"No Hope for Reality in Sight"

CRAB OF JOY, CRAB OF SADNESS

by Nicole Ihler

When I was very young, I wanted a hermit crab. More specifically, I wanted a mall hermit crab. They were little hermit crabs that lived in a sales booth in the middle of the mall. The booth was surrounded by a glass wall, and fluorescent lights shone down upon the sand, which, unlike in nature, was neon pink. These crabs were special; their shells were either painted with bright shiny colors or had a plastic trinket glued to them. To six-year-old me, this made them a good pet, even though I knew nothing about them other than that they were colorful and pretty.

Every time I was in the mall, I would visit the crab stand. The colorful crabs would move around, but not much. Hermit crabs, in fact, don't really do a whole lot. But they were still cool. Their little beady black eyes and long antennas held a certain ugly, cute charm. Eventually, a plan came to my tiny child-mind. Christmas was coming. My mom, my brother, and I had entered the Columbia Mall through the food court. The smell of cheap, greasy food wafted through the air. The sound of children chattering rang out. Fake pine garlands, large, shiny ornaments, red ribbons, and bright white lights decorated the space. In the center of it all was the most important part of the mall in December: Santa. And I had to get business done. I headed to the line, behind some other children. It took half an hour before I reached the man in red.

I sat down in his lap. "Have you been a good girl?" he asked.

"Yep," I replied.

"What would you like for Christmas?"

"I want a hermit crab."

After this, they took the usual Christmas photo and handed my request to my parents. I had done it. I was sure to get a beautifully colored hermit crab now. I just had to wait. That month, we put up our artificial pine tree and decorated it with limited-edition Disney ornaments my mom collected, as well as other decorations. Our stockings were hung on our wood fireplace; they would be filled with candy. The night before Christmas, we were allowed to open one gift. The one I selected was not a crab. But, all was not lost. I went to bed and dreamed of Christmas crustaceans.

That morning, I ran out of my room. There was something new under the tree: a plastic container topped with a pink, slotted lid. Attached to it, a shiny green bow. Inside, beige sand, a rock house, and a hermit crab. Sadly, for me, it was not a painted crab. Instead, it was homed in a white shell with amber swirls. I had wanted a painted one, but I could be okay with this plain guy.

When I was older, I found out that I had received a plain crab because my parents had learned that painting the shells was harmful to the crabs. First, there is the danger of paint fumes, which is bad for the little guys. Second, paint can forcibly glue a hermit crab to its shell. And third, if the paint peels off, hermit crabs will eat it (crabs are not smart). Finally, hermit crabs usually have to be forced into a painted shell, and that freaks them out and their limbs can fall off from stress. My parents, responsible adults, did not buy a crab from some shady neon crab booth in the middle of the mall. They went to a pet store and asked questions of the guy who owned it. Because of the pet shop guy, my parents and I were able to care for the crab in a semi-competent manner.

“What do you want to name him?” my mom asked.

He needed a name that fit who he was. A good, catchy name that any crab would be proud to have. I came up with an idea.

“Kermit.” He was Kermit, Kermit the Hermit.

The crab cage was placed on my room’s black desk where a lamp kept his cage bright and cozy. He was given a rock water bowl to drink from, a rock food bowl to eat his crab food flakes from, and an extra shell, one that was spiky, pink, and pretty, just in case he outgrew his current one. Every day, I would fill his bowl with fresh water, every three days he got more flakes, and every two weeks, I cleaned his cage.

There are not many ways to love a hermit crab. They have claws and are pinchy creatures. However, I found a way to deal with him. When I wanted to give him affection, I would pet his shell. In retrospect, he couldn’t feel my touch, but it’s the thought that counts. I also had to find a way to remove him from the cage so I could clean it. Eventually I figured it out.

Every week, on hot damp days, I would take his cage outside. On cooler days, he would stay inside. To remove him, I grabbed him by the shell. He would flounder around, trying to flee from the mysterious giant that had removed him from his home. I would then set him down in a Tupperware container. He would scuttle to the corner, upset that he had nowhere to hide except his shell. After I wiped out his cage and filled it with clean sand, I would set him back in his cage. Frightened and stressed from being grabbed by a giant, he would scuttle under a rock without any acknowledgement of what had just happened. It is perhaps a blessing that hermit crabs have short memories as well as a lack of ability to question their place in the universe. It leaves them unaware of the Lovecraftian horror life they live. Any human that went through what

Kermit experienced on a regular basis would likely lose his or her will to live. But Kermit was able to recover and go back to his old crabby self within, at most, an hour.

Kermit was not a very active crab, at least not when I was awake. Hermit crabs are nocturnal creatures, something I was unaware of at the time. His main hobbies in the daytime were covering himself with his hidey rock, burrowing into a sand hole he dug for himself, moving his eyestalks, and getting a drink. In the summer, sometimes I would take him out of his cage to wander in the grass outside, figuring that while there was no sand, it would still be kind of like the beach. I would watch as he walked around the grass, likely very confused by the complete change in scenery and uncomfortable about the lack of a nice rock hut to shield him from the hot sun.

Kermit was more of a pet to watch than a pet to love. Often, he went ignored, content to be silent, only making a scratching noise as he dug into the sand. He got his water and his flakes and that was all he truly needed. Unfortunately for me, he never outgrew his old shell. I had wanted him to move into the big shell we had given to him. However, there was something we had not known. The spare shell was a pink conch bought from a trashy Florida gift shop that sold bootleg discount Disney merchandise and alligator heads. It was probably just a pretty, fake shell. Hermit crabs cannot really thrive in fake shells, even if there are cases of crabs using garbage like a broken-off end of a bottle to live in. Kermit was better off not outgrowing his first shell. At least the new one could serve as a decoration for his plastic home.

The typical lifespan of a hermit crab in the wild is 30 years

The typical lifespan of a hermit crab in the wild is 30 years. The average domestic hermit crab lives typically for a couple of months. Kermit lived for a year. The last night he was alive started with, unknown to me, a sign of his demise.

It was a few weeks before Christmas, and we had just finished eating dinner. In my room, I looked over at Kermit's container. There was something different. He had gotten out of his shell. He was sitting in his water bowl, his odd curled-up body exposed to the world, or at least my family, to see. This was new. I called in my mom, wanting her to see the strange sight.

"Look, he's naked," I said.

"He is," my mom replied. "I guess he wanted to get some sun."

We watched him for a while. Then we lost interest, figuring everything

was fine. At the time, no one in the house knew that a naked hermit was a bad sign. I went to bed that night, Kermit still naked. When I woke up, he was back in his shell, lying in the water bowl, unmoving.

I decided to move him out of the bowl, back over to his rock. When I picked him up, his claw immediately fell off. I dropped him and started bawling. My mom heard me and came over to see what was wrong. I was sniffing and crying. Snot was running from my nose.

“Kermit’s dead!” I wailed.

My mom took Kermit out of his tank and placed him into a shoe box. We had a creek at the back of our house, so we took him there. We buried him beside the water, since he always liked water and rocks. Kermit was my first experience with death. I cried for the rest of the day, and my mom made me my favorite dinner of spaghetti and Alfredo sauce with shrimp scampi to make me feel better.

“You know, Kermit had a good life. Hermit crabs don’t usually live very long.”

WEDGE WASH

by Kayla Drebenstend

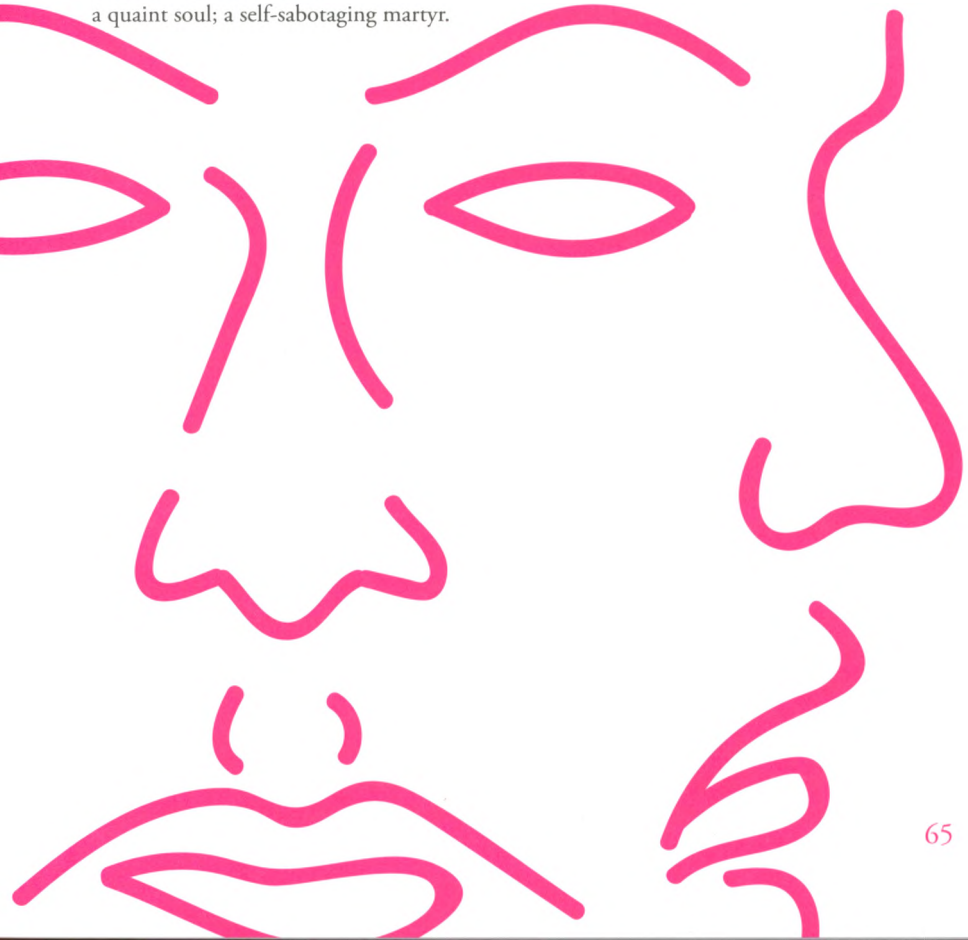
Clinical, spartan steel appliances
swish Tide detergent suds.
Fluorescent tubes jar the senses.
A bare-bones corner laundromat
boasts a bathroom, sans mirror.
A sweet-faced young mother
gambles with the fickle change machine.
The stacked dryers are also in need
of ongoing maintenance; pieces of apparatus,
“vintage,” in various states of disrepair.
A red glow from the soda machine
shines only from the Yoo-hoo button.
The pale, well-coiffed mother
talks softly to her young son.
She probably spent four and a quarter
to freshen and dry a load of clothes.
Her eyes turn up at the corners. Her mane, dahlia-black.
She spends forty-five minutes at the establishment
and leaves with clean clothes for the upcoming school week
to be promptly dirtied at recess.



STRANGE

by Kayla Drebenstend

My pale darling; he wore blanc
and feigned concern about the seasonal
appropriateness of such a choice.
My sweetheart calls himself a turnip.
I mull over the idea as Apollo bringeth the day.
Were my lover a god,
he would be the mad Dionysus.
His fuel is liquor, regret.
Contradicting fractals and idiosyncrasies,
undefine a peculiar man;
a quaint soul; a self-sabotaging martyr.



SURFACE

by Kimberly O'Loughlin

Staring at the bright screen in her hand, the girl let her eyes blur. She tried to focus on her breathing. NEW TEXT MESSAGE FROM Mom. It was impossible to pick out just one word of her thoughts, so she turned her head toward the wall. She wanted to listen to music, but she could not think of any song, any lyrics that would do.

She pressed the LOCK button firmly and the night once again claimed the living room. When the light disappeared, the reality of where she was and what she was doing solidified in her hand. The blurs became different shades of black and gray: the shiny, black rectangle of a television, the wavy shadows of the handmade curtains.

She tried to find words in the curtains, but she only found a face. Two faces. Actually, several faces. The floral pattern seemed to have several different faces, rather than the usual two different-sized roses.

In the brighter, far folds of the waves, she saw closed eyes and a ridiculously round mouth. The features of the faces were so defined and visible, how could she have not seen them before? She could see each wrinkle and eyelash in the fabric.

In the close folds, dark, blurry faces glowered at her. It hurt to try to focus on the features, but she tried. The faces reminded her of her father's sunglasses, the pair that were so protective that they reflected what he saw, and you could not see one hint of his eyes.

Her eyes tried to clarify the blurs of the faces, but they ached and stung the longer she looked. She began to develop tears, blurring her vision even more.

She let her arm fall beside her, and one by one, her fingers stopped gripping her phone.

She heard the almost silent flump of it hitting stained carpet and continued to blink at the shadows.

Eighty Percent.

I blinked. The toilet bowl held me up. The floor held me up. The boy held me up. The air held me up. The bones held me up. The gravity pulled on me, but I held up.

I didn't think about my mom or the car or the day it happened.

The toilet water stared at me. I stared back. I stared a long time. But I blinked. I blinked and then I stared. I tried to force it out of me. I have a thing against vomiting. I tried to explain. The toilet water stared at me. The boy

touched my shoulder. The toilet held me up. The boy told me, "It's okay."

The toilet water accused me, "What are you doing? You hardly drank anything. If you're gonna puke, do it already." The toilet bowl held me up. I blinked and then I stared. The boy touched my hair. "Are you okay?" My head nodded and answered for me. I blinked.

Synthetic texture. Like when something looks soft, but it's hard. Or when you see a scratch on your car, but you run your thumb over it and you can't feel it.

"I like your late night messages."

"Not gonna lie. I was pretty fucked up when I sent that."

The toilet bowl helped me up. The floor helped me up. The boy helped me up. The air helped me up. The bones helped me up. The gravity pulled on me, but I got up.

Two hands pulled me back into the living room. It looked like a living room. It was plain. The couch frowned at me. The couch held me up. The boy touched my hand. I touched my drink. The girls were laughing. I was laughing. The boy was laughing. The television was laughing.

Voyeur. A person who is pleased by secretly observing sexual objects or acts.

I blinked. I was soft. The bed was soft. White. A blanket next to me, but not on me. The boy. I reached for the blanket. It was small. The boy was sleeping, but he pulled back. I pulled back. Nothing. I got closer. It was cold. The boy's warm shoulders. I hugged him. Did I want to?

Two hands on the steering wheel. Low. I felt sick. Not sick enough. I needed to sleep. I wanted the blanket. The boy. The bed. The couch. The laughing. The drinks. Not the toilet water. Not the half-hour drive. Not the next day or the day after that.

The test strip blinked. Nothing. One dash. I needed two. Defective. The test. Or me? Me. Of course, I couldn't even get the test right. I felt lighter. If nothing else, at least it was nothing. Absolute nothing. Better than something.

Tensile strength. How much pressure it takes to break down a material. The girl asked if I wanted a drink. I nodded. "Like a drink? Or a drink drink?"

"Maybe something in the middle?"

"I don't know what that means."

Intrinsic motivation. Like when a student is in ninth grade health

class, but doesn't care about health class because her mom had told her she never wanted to see her face again.

I blinked. We shared the last of the Fireball. I prepared for a burn, but it was smooth. The only sting I felt was in my eyes from smeared mascara. I blinked. I blinked. I rubbed it out.

The boy talked to me. I talked. And then I didn't.

"Honestly, I just want to sleep."

"I'm sorry. Good night."

An eighty-minute drive. Twice? Five times. That's ten times.

I blinked. The boy. His warm shoulders, again. "I have to get up soon."

Nothing.

I blinked. "I think I'm going to stay longer."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." Nothing.

I blinked. "I have to leave in thirty minutes." I got up. I got dressed. I brushed my teeth. I saw the old toothbrush there, the one I had left. I placed it in the trash.

I put on my shoes. The mattress held me up. "I think I have everything." Nothing. "I'll probably talk to you later."

"Okay. See you later." Will I?

Nonrepresentational. When something isn't accurately depicting the physical look of something.

"Bye."

I blinked. The steering wheel held me up.

Ukiyo-e. Images of the floating world. A vision? Or a dream? Or a hallucination.

The way it happened was so perfectly ironic, yet not at all surprising. The car, the stupid ice-blue Ford Focus with only one working door handle and two working windows, it was almost unrecognizable. Even the back license plate had been balled up as easily as balling up imperfect origami.

"I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry. Thank you. I'm going to throw up." The girl was crying, naked in the bath. "The water is so hot. Please? Could you get it out?"

"Okay, I'm going to drain it. Okay? Don't worry. You'll feel so much better tomorrow. I promise. Okay? Look, the water's draining. See?"

"Yeah. I want my mom. Please, get my mom. I want her. I'm dying."

I blinked and then stared at the girl. I thought about how drunk someone would have to be to say something like that to someone like me. And then I thought about how drunk I'd have to be to miss my mom, even now. "You'll see your mom tomorrow, okay? What hurts? Your stomach?"

She nodded. "Okay, well we'll get you downstairs once your hair's clean, okay?"

"No, I can't. I'm gonna throw up. Right now! I'm throwing up!"

"Okay, here's your bowl." Nothing. "Is anything coming up?"

"Please help me. I feel so bad. I'm dying." I'd never seen her this bad. I thought about a month or maybe two months ago. I had asked my sister's best friend on a date.

"I mean, like. I just think it would be weird."

"Okay, yeah. It'd be like going on a date with my sister."

Chiaroscuro. Highly contrasted light and dark, especially in a work of art.

She started spitting up again.

"Honey, you'll be okay. Just relax." I touched her hair. "You'll be okay. Do you need to throw up?" She nodded and tried again. This time, a little came up. "Good job. I'm so proud of you. You're gonna be fine, okay?"

"Is she okay?"

"Yeah, she just wants her mom. And her stomach hurts, but hardly anything's come up."

The gravity pulled on me, but I got up

"Shit. I'll get her clothes."

"Good idea. Honey? She's gonna get you some clothes, okay? The water is all drained out now. We'll wait for her, and then we'll dry you off and get some clothes on you, 'kay?"

"Yeah, okay. Thank you. I'm so sorry."

"Don't worry about it, honey." Some people just can't hold down anything. I knew I'd had at least two more shots than her and that I'd taken the longest drags on the joint. I hadn't even been hungover in weeks, but I didn't say anything.

She came back with shorts and a T-shirt.

"This is all I could find for her to wear to bed."

"Okay, that's fine. Honey, we're going to help you up, okay? I've got a towel for you."

We wrapped her in the towel and helped her stand. She held her up and still and balanced while I put her shorts on. "Okay, now the shirt. Almost done, all

right?”

“Okay, yeah.” She blinked.

When the shirt was finally covering her, I picked up my phone from the floor, right next to a small trickle of vomit. “Okay, let’s get you back downstairs and you can sleep.”

“You’re gonna be such a good mom.”

I thought about the broken pregnancy test. And then the negative one at the doctor’s. And then the conversation I had with the boy.

“I don’t plan on ever having my own children. I don’t want to deal with all of the problems of being pregnant.”

“Wow. That’s hardcore.”

“I just don’t think I should pass on all of the hereditary problems of my family.”

“Oh, yeah. That makes sense.”

Shibboleth. An old saying that is specific to one group or time period. It’s usually no longer said or true.

“I love being drunk, but I hate drinking. I’m really good at shots, though.”

“Oh, I hate shots. Can’t do them. I’ll try it though.”

“I texted the boy about cleaning up after her.”

“I’m seriously the mom friend.”

“That sucks. Around me and my friends, you don’t have to be.”

“I cleaned up after half of them, haha.”

“I’m not sure how I feel about your friends. They should clean up after themselves. That’s our rule. Nobody is a mom friend. Everybody is a damn adult.”

“It’s okay, haha.”

I was too used to it. Not just with my friends. I had given my mom money. I had bought clothes for my sister. I had bought food for them. I had even gotten her favorite Marlboro Lights for her. Her coffee, even though the smell alone made me nauseous. I had dealt with everything she said. I was the mom friend, and I was the mom.

“I usually try to stay up until like twelve, at least, when I drink, no matter what time I work in the morning. But I don’t know. Just not the best night.”

“Haha, I can respect that. How is it not the best night?”

“Just feels empty. I’ll probably talk to you later.”

Bildungsroman.
A coming-of-age story

Assimilationism. When people follow the cultural trend. Like when a Puerto Rican girl has to change her name from Alicia to Alice when she comes to America.

“Oh. How does it feel empty though?”

“It’s just disappointing to think that I don’t feel connected to people sometimes and I could just leave and I probably wouldn’t miss specific people. Like I feel like I don’t need my friends.”

“That’s really depressing. You don’t have anyone you would probably miss?”

“I don’t know. I’m not depressed. I don’t think. I just feel disconnected sometimes. Like I know I’m needed, but sometimes I feel very off.”

“I can understand that. I have felt like that before.”

“It’s just really easy to leave things alone and not talk to people. Like even right now, I don’t know.”

“I’m sorry you’re feeling like that. If you left now, I’d miss you. You are a very unique person and you are great.”

Unique. I hated that word.

“I appreciate that. I know I’d be missed. You know what’s really ridiculous? I’m not suicidal or anything. But if I was, I couldn’t be, because I know too many suicidal people. So I know I’d take people with me. And like, just knowing that makes me feel shitty. I’ll feel better tomorrow. After work, probably.”

“Life can be very difficult and I completely understand what you’re saying. I hope you do get to feeling better. I appreciate you.”

“I appreciate you too. You’re a good person. I’m all right and I’m not going to do anything crazy. I’m just sad every once in awhile.”

“I really like you. I’m glad we are what we are and I think we could start legitimately dating soon, like maybe in the summer?”

My hands opened another beer and my legs carried me to the couch. I didn’t know what to think. I didn’t think. But I did, and I loved being a logical drunk. I loved proving how much smarter I was when I drank.

“I like you too. But probably don’t tell me that when I’m drunk.”

Optical science of color theory. When two separate colors form one color, just with your eyes.

"I'm sorry. It didn't cross my mind."

"It's okay, baby. I just don't want to ruin anything."

"I understand."

"My friend had texted me that night."

"Are you okay?"

"I don't know, I don't know what I'm doing."

"I love you! I'm so sorry. Are you going to be okay?"

"Yeah, I just feel really shitty. And happy. And like nothing. And like running away."

"Work was busy, but it was fun. Everyone was talking about the impossible number of deliveries. We had told people over the phone that deliveries would take at least an hour."

"You know, I don't think I've ever seen it like that. Have you seen it like that?"

"Not in a long time. It felt like a game day!" I had to almost yell over the volume of the slicer, but I still wasn't loud enough.

"It felt like what?" The driver started laughing. "A gangbang?"

I laughed and turned around, "I said, 'It felt like a game day!' That's what I said!"

"The rest of the day, I felt so light, even though the orders came in like hail and everyone kept saying 'Game day!' to me and winking."

"You wanna come down and hang out tonight?"

"I work at eight tomorrow."

"Ah. Well, I'm only an hour away instead of an hour and a half. So if you brought your clothes maybe? I don't know, but if you don't feel like you can, that's okay."

"I'd like to and I probably could, but I don't know if I'd be good company. Like I just want a shower and to relax."

"We can just relax. I'm not partying tonight. I'm just gonna be hanging out at Dylan's place."

I thought about the empty house I'd be going home to tonight.

Bildungsroman. A coming-of-age story.

"I think I'll come, actually."

AFFLATUS

by Cai Santee

It was just that sudden.
I wake and find myself
flailing
neck deep and forgetting how
to float.
I force my eyes open under darkness
and see a boat
captained by my savior,
a forgotten deity that gave out too
many unpaid favors.
She pulls me out of the water.
“Another lost child,”
she sighs.
I drop to my knees and kiss her feet
seventy times.
“My queen, I beg to know how I can repay
you in your humble glory came to my aid
when any other would have sailed on.”
Her rose-tinted lips
parted in surprise.
She leaned down
and with the softest touch
tilted my head up
so that she could let me drown in a
different
way.







SALVATION

by Cai Santee

Last night I was reborn in the backseat of a Toyota
parked by the Missouri River at 2 am.
The ritual
began at the bottom
of a Ziplock bag.
Pastor ground up just enough for my bloodstream to feel the stars
packed it tight
pressed it to my lips and
said “drag.”
And so I
pull, release, pull, exhale,
let the sensation prevail.
I was anointed with THC and laid back
where his body met mine I lost track.
Pastor touched his parted lips to mine,
called it a shotgun
and told me he loved the way my eyes rolled back
like I was
committing the ultimate crime.
He said once wouldn’t suffice
and that night I reached Olympus twice.
Who would’ve known
the promised land
was nestled in the
indentation of my pastor’s tongue and the
meat of his hand
while I was up there
where galaxy meets air.
I told Dionysus to pass the bowl.
He tossed it down to me as I returned to my own
flawed soul
and to the backseat of a Toyota
parked by the Missouri River
at 2 am.

THE PUDDLE

by Racheal Rhea

It was no bigger than the base of a teacup. Brandy would never have noticed it if the puddle had not soaked the heel of her sock. She looked down at the half-smile of water, her head cocked. *Maybe Tucker trekked around after his shower.* Brandy removed her wet sock and held it between her toes as she mopped up the rest of the water. He always forgets to wipe his feet when he gets out. She left the sock on the bedroom floor to remind her to ask him about it later.

Passing over the threshold of the dark hall, the kitchen was bright with afternoon sunlight. White walls burned into her eyes, and Brandy hurried to close the blinds Tucker had opened that morning. She shivered at the touch of the light, the ties of her robe twisted in her hands as they dangled like intestines from her waist. Brandy picked up the plate Tucker had left on the counter, crumbs of burnt toast and a smear of raspberry jam all the evidence of his breakfast. She scratched at the jam with her fingernail and then crammed the plate into the sink where dishes were already stacked high. Impossibly high, as perilous as a glass vase on the corner of a desk. Brandy grabbed the plate once more and ran warm water over its pale surface, the bruise of jam refusing to be washed away. She tossed it in the sink and walked back to her room where she sank into the cool embrace of darkness.

“I think my mother named me Brandy because of her drinking habit.” Brandy rubbed her fingers over each other as if to warm them, her head bowed over her knees. “You name children after something you love, right? There are little girls named Crystal, Sapphire, Amber. Their mothers like pretty, shiny things. I knew a girl named Chastity. Her mother was a whore, everyone knew that.” Brandy bit her nails, but lowered them again as she spoke. “If I had a daughter, you know, the one I told you about, I would name her Lolita. Nabokov was right about the way it feels on the tongue. Lo-lee-ta.” Brandy tasted the syllables. “Of course, I wouldn’t want my daughter seduced by a pedophile, so maybe I’ll just name her Bunny instead. What do you think?” She blinked at the man across from her.

“Do you think your mother loved drinking more than she loved you?” He adjusted the notepad on his knee as the top of his pen tapped on the bottom row of his teeth.

“Of course not. She named me Brandy, after all.”

“How was work today?” Brandy plopped a pile of peas on his plate. Tucker made a face as the oil from the vegetables splattered on his baked chicken.

“You know I don’t like peas, B.” He scooted the peas into a neat pile and used his napkin to soak up the puddle they had made.

“I forgot, sorry.” She sat in front of him, plate piled high with food. The smell of it made her nauseated. “How was work?” She crunched an ice cube from her glass of water.

“No car chases or bank robberies today.” He tore into the meat of the chicken with his fingers.

“Just saving cats from trees and helping little old ladies cross the street?”

“Just paperwork.” Grease stained his lips as he sucked on his fingers. “Did you go to your appointment today?”

*Do you think, maybe,
his water is snuffing
out your fire?*

Brandy stabbed a few of her peas on the tines of her fork. “There was a small puddle in the middle of the floor this morning. I stepped in it. My sock got wet. I mopped it up.”

“Are you asking if I left it there?”

“Did you shower this morning?”

“No.”

Brandy sucked one of the green peas into her mouth. It did not taste as pretty as it looked.

“Maybe you spilled some water from a glass.”

“I didn’t get up to get a drink last night.”

She watched him rip the chicken to pieces and shove strips of it into his mouth.

“Are you sure?”

“Did you try to do any dishes today?”

Brandy placed her fork back on her napkin, peas still skewered on the prongs. “I washed the dish you left out this morning.” She felt his gaze on her even as she stared at her plate. A fly had landed on her chicken. It rubbed its front legs together. “The jam was stuck.”

“Did you even try?”

“The mountain. . .” Her voice was strangled, too dry. “It’s too high.”

“Didn’t he tell you to take something big apart piece by piece?” Tucker wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, a greasy kiss on his skin.

“He has.”

“Then try that, B.” Their eyes met across the table. “Take it one at a time.” He left her with a kiss on the top of her head and then the static of the television turned on.

She dumped her food in the trash and left the dishes in the sink.

It was bigger this morning. Brandy stared down at the puddle, now the size of a man’s large shoe. She had looked outside, thinking that it might have rained and Tucker had stepped back inside after remembering something. Sometimes he forgets his watch. He likes to be on time. The yard was bone-dry.

Brandy sat down next to the puddle, her legs crossed. She dabbed her finger in it, surprised at the chill it sent through her nerves. She brought a drop of it to her nose but could smell nothing. Brandy looked up at the ceiling. Maybe someone upstairs has a leaky tub. She took her sock off and soaked up the water as best she could. She left it there again and returned to bed.

“How are things at home?”

Brandy gnawed on a callus on her finger. “Things are good.”

“Tucker? How is he?”

“He’s fine.” She brought her legs up into the chair with her, her chin balanced on her knees. “Sometimes. . . I think he’s bored with his job. Maybe his life.”

“Do you think he’s bored with you?”

“B!” Brandy opened her eyes as Tucker shook her shoulder. “Look at this.” She sat up off the pillow, moving her hair out of her face. He pointed to the floor, to a glowing shaft of light. Brandy blinked. The puddle was back, pregnant and stretched into an oval. “Is this what you saw that morning?” He was watching her.

“It wasn’t as big as that.” She covered her eyes with her hands. “Do you think there’s a leak upstairs?”

“I sure hope not.” Tucker peered up at the ceiling. “I don’t see a wet spot, and it’s not leaking now.” He looked back to Brandy.

“We moved here for you. Nice big city. I don’t want this to fail, you know that, right?”

Brandy buried her head under the blankets. “I know.”

“What do you mean? Why would he be bored with me?” She stared at him, wide-eyed.

“I didn’t say he is. I asked if you thought he was.”

“I think he might be frustrated with me.”

“What does he say to make you think that?” He posed his pen, ready to take notes on the yellow pad.

“He doesn’t really say anything. He doesn’t have to. I know when he’s frustrated. We’ve been together since we were in high school. I can tell what he’s feeling. My sophomore year, I had a best friend who was obsessed with astrology signs. Her name was Ruby and she was a Cancer. She found out I’m an Aries and knew we were destined to be best friends. I actually met Tucker through her. He’s a Scorpio.” Brandy dropped her head and blew through her lips. “You probably think this is silly.”

“I’m a Taurus.”

They shared a soft smile.

“Ruby told me that an Aries and a Scorpio is storybook magic romance. He’s a water sign, I’m fire, and together we create steam. He’d be my hero, and I’d provide a safe place for him to come home to after a long day of work. A Zack to my Paula.” There was a long pause. “Of course, I haven’t been cleaning so well lately.”

“Do you think, maybe, his water is snuffing out your fire?”

Brandy met his eyes. “I think astrology is ludicrous. Ruby died of cancer.”

Brandy plucked the dead leaves from the plant in the kitchen window. They were furled like long, brown fingernails, brittle to the touch. She crushed them in her palm and blew the ashes into the garbage can beneath the sink. The front door slammed closed and Tucker’s boots plodded up behind her. “I talked to the neighbor upstairs.” Brandy kept her eyes on the painted shades of gray sky outside the window. Tucker leaned back against the sink beside her. “It’s an older lady. Her apartment smells like cats and piss.”

“Did you ask her if she had a leak?”

“I asked her if she’d been taking a bath lately.” He chuckled, the corners of his mouth pulling up. “She got offended there for a second.”

“You have to be careful the way you say things.”

"He tell you that? I guess that's a good thing to remember. Anyway, she said she hadn't noticed a leak. I told her she should call someone to come look at it, just in case."

"Is she going to?"

"I don't know." He pushed himself away from the sink. "I don't really understand the people out here."

"I'm trying to get better."

"I know, B." Tucker placed a hand on her shoulder. "You get better and we can go back home. We don't belong here. Don't you miss walking on grass and seeing the stars at night?"

"I don't think I want to do this anymore." Brandy stared at his polished leather shoes.

"I can't make you stay, Brandy, but we've made so much progress. I think it would be to your benefit to continue."

"Tucker isn't happy here." The pen scratched on the notepad.

"Has he told you he wants to leave?"

"He wants me to get better."

"Do you want to get better?"

Brandy ran her tongue across her chapped lips.

"Yes. For him."

*The puddle was
too big now to
clean with her
sock*

"I called facilities to check out her pipes upstairs." Tucker sucked the soup off his spoon. "I guess I should have done that in the first place. I hope this doesn't ruin our flooring."

Brandy kept her head down, the tips of her hair dangling over the soup. "Did you have a good day?" she asked.

"I should have known she wasn't going to call. Having that many cats is probably a violation anyway." His spoon clinked against the bowl as he scooped up more soup.

"Tucker, did you have a good day?" She raised her head to look at him.

"Yes, B, more paperwork. How was yours? I see you didn't do the dishes."

Brandy turned back to her soup. "Do you like supper?"

"That's not what I was saying, B." Tucker sighed. "Have you even been going to your appointments? They aren't cheap."

"I have." She lifted her spoon and dipped it into the bowl, catching a piece of celery.

"What's he told you? Are you getting better?"

"I don't know."

"Damn it, B!" Tucker flung his spoon on the table, splattering red soup across the wood. "Why am I paying for this if it's not helping?"

"I told him about our daughter." Her voice was a whisper.

"Our what?"

"Our daughter. He thinks I can be a better mom than mine. I just never could settle on a name, you remember? You name daughters after something you love, and I loved too many things. I loved summer nights and fireflies and baths and talking to you." She watched as Tucker rose from his chair.

"We don't talk anymore, Tucker. In the middle of the night I could wake up and tell you my dreams. I could call you at work. We could talk to each other over supper and not just at each other." Tucker's palm bounced off her jaw.

"Shut up." His upper lip curled in a snarl as Brandy stared at him, doe-eyed.

The puddle had spread. Brandy stood on the edge of it, her socked toes wiggling. She looked up at the ceiling, but saw no water dripping from there. The puddle was too big now to clean with her sock.

"Why are you here?" she asked. She placed her hands on her hips and scowled like a disappointed mother. "Why are you here?" Her voice was sterner. The water reached for her toes. "Why are you here?" The shout ricocheted into her ears, frightening herself.

Brandy kicked at the puddle, succeeding only to soak her sock and spread droplets across the wooden floor. She tore the sock from her foot and threw the wet fabric away from her. It smacked against the dull blue wall and left a wet trail as it slid to the floor like a giant slug, landing with a plop.

Brandy started and blushed at the mess she had made. She grabbed a mop and soaked up the puddle and placed the sock in the hamper.

"You seem distracted today." The pen tapped against his bottom row of teeth. "Something happen?"

"The puddle." Brandy pulled her hair back out of her eyes. "There's a puddle that keeps coming back in the bedroom."

"A puddle?" He clicked the pen.

"Yes. When it first came, it was the size of a teacup. Now, it's taking up half the floor."

"Here you go, sweetheart." Tucker laid a kiss on her temple as he came up behind her at the kitchen stove. A small bouquet of wild flowers was in his left hand and he pressed them to her chest.

"Thank you." Brandy took them. The rank of their perfume tickled her nose.

Tucker held onto her. "I know you're already cooking, but how about we go out tonight? You can pick, even if it's some godawful French place."

"That sounds nice." He gave her hips a light squeeze.

"You go see him today?"

"Yes." She stuck her nose deeper into the flowers.

"You tell him about me?"

"Only how much you want to help me."

"That's right, B." He kissed her again. "I only want to help you."

"I know." She sneezed into the flowers, petals flying.

"Could it possibly be a leak?"

"Tucker already talked to the upstairs neighbor and called facilities. They told him the pipes are fine." She nibbled on her peeling nails.

"So, Tucker has seen the puddle, too?"

"Yes. He's stepped in it. It's cold, almost burning."

"When does the puddle usually appear?"

"In the morning."

Brandy had already mopped up the puddle. She sat down, legs crisscrossed, where it had been.

In her arms was a photo album. It was made of soft pink cardboard, a carousel on the cover. Brandy traced the dancing horses with her fingernail, sinking into the curves of their legs and backsides. Their wide blue eyes regarded her, mouths open in toothy roars.

She opened the album to the first page. Beneath the "My First Baby Book" printed in curlicue lettering was an empty dotted line.

Brandy flipped the page, but the album was empty, the crinkly paper

laughing at her.

“Where is Tucker when you see it?”

“At work.”

“Have you ever actually seen the puddle form?”

Brandy wrinkled her brow. “No, I wake up and it’s there.”

“When did Tucker see the puddle?” He sat down his notepad and pen and leaned forward.

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore.”

“Okay, what do you want to talk about? Your daughter?”

“No, not that either. Tucker doesn’t like for me to talk about her.”

Brandy rubbed at her temples.

“You usually like to talk about her.”

“She doesn’t even have a name.”

“What about Bunny?”

“What kind of mother names her daughter Bunny? She’d be soft and weak. She’d sit quietly in a cage in her own filth with a name like that.” Brandy threw her hands up. “I could never name her. I never knew her.”

“You knew her, Brandy. She was a part of you.”

“She was a part of him, too.”

A heavy silence hung between them.

“Can you tell me when Tucker saw the puddle?”

Brandy sighed. “He woke me up one night because he had stepped in it.”

He clasped his hands together. “So, Tucker is already gone when you see the puddle, or he wakes you up to see it?”

“Yes, but I don’t understand?”

“Did you go talk to the upstairs neighbor with him?”

“No.”

“Did you hear him talk to facilities about checking out the pipes?”

“No.” Brandy tucked her legs tighter under herself.

“Brandy.” He rested back into his chair. “Tell me again about what happened with your daughter.”

Brandy wiped off the last plate with a dry cloth and placed it back in the cabinet. She washed the sink free of dish soap and dried her pruned hands.

Sunlight streamed in through the window, soaked up by the green leaves of the plant. Her hair was pulled back in a ponytail, and she shook it loose as the radio played one of her favorite songs. The white walls dazzled her eyes and a long, deep laugh burst from her chest as she danced around the kitchen.

“Has he tried to contact you at all?”

Brandy smiled. “No, I haven’t heard anything in weeks.”

“Good. How are things at home?”

“Great.” She crossed her leg over the other, one foot firmly on the ground. “I’ve been keeping up with the dishes, and I’m thinking of getting a cat. You know, something to keep me company and take care of.”

“Wonderful. And the puddle? Hasn’t come back since he’s been gone?”

“Nope. Not even a pinprick of water.”

“Good, very good. I think your last visit with me is on the horizon, Brandy.”

She beamed. “Really, you think so?”

“You’ve made marvelous improvement. Be sure to send me pictures of your new cat.”

Closing her book, Brandy set it down on the bedside table. She turned off the lamp, the bedroom lit only by the harsh yellow glow from the security light outside. She snuggled down into the sheets in the middle of the bed, her eyes on the ceiling.

I’m okay.

When she awoke, the puddle had drowned the room.

AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURA MCHUGH

by Shelly Romero



Laura McHugh is the award-winning author of *The Weight of Blood* and *Arrowood*. *The Weight of Blood* won the International Thriller Writers Award and Silver Falchion Award for Best First Novel, and the 2016 Missouri Author Award for Fiction. It was also nominated for an Alex Award, Barry Award, and GoodReads Choice Award, and was named a Best Book of the Year by BookPage, the *Kansas City Star*, and the *Sunday Times*, UK. McHugh's second novel, *Arrowood*, was published in 2016. She lives in Missouri with her husband and children.

Shelly Romero: Both of your recent novels, *The Weight of Blood* and *Arrowood*, fit within the Midwestern gothic genres, focusing on dark secrets, familial relations, and mystery among the Midwestern landscape. What draws you to these stories? Are there other authors working in this tradition who inspire you?

Laura McHugh: All my life, I've been drawn to what's hidden in the shadows. I can't help thinking of the worst-case scenario in any situation—which, while annoying to friends and family, is a great source for story ideas. I imagine part of it comes from growing up in a large family and living in small towns. I'm fascinated by the complex web of interdependence within families and in closed-off communities. You're stuck with these people for a lifetime, and you're bound to develop debts and grudges and affections and secrets. How do you navigate that sticky web and maintain the balance in these relationships? And what happens when the threads pull apart, when secrets are spilled and blood is shed? That's the sort of thing I like to write about. I'm inspired by several contemporary authors who set their dark tales in the Midwest or rural areas in Appalachia or the deep South—especially Daniel Woodrell, Nancy Pickard, Ron Rash, Amy Greene, Jesmyn Ward, and Gillian Flynn.

SR: Why do you believe the Midwest contains great fodder for these gothic mysteries? Why do both readers and writers alike flock to the landscape of Middle America? Also do you think it's an area underrepresented in literature and film?

LM: Those who live in the Midwest know it's not a homogenous place—the region encompasses a variety of cultures and landscapes and several large cities—but it's collectively known as the nation's Heartland, home to hardworking, down-to-earth folks, a friendly place with small towns and good neighbors. Whether it's a farming community or a rural Ozark mountain town or a quaint college burg, these small towns harken back to simpler times, when family and community were all-important. It's interesting to examine the dark side of a place thought to be idyllic, values-centered, safe: to turn that perception inside out. Darkness can be found anywhere, but in a Midwestern setting, hidden away from the rest of the world, threats can be amplified through a sense of isolation and claustrophobia. Who knows what terrible things might happen out on the farm, away from prying eyes? The possibilities are endless.

I would be happy to see more books and films set in the Midwest, though quite a few writers are mining the rich depths of small-town and rural fiction, with some notable works focusing on the gritty criminal side of the drug epidemic. I like to combine the darker elements with an intense love of place. Not only is my writing set here, I myself am deeply rooted and invested in the Midwest.

SR: Can you tell us a little about your upbringing? Did you live in the Midwest your whole life? If so, how'd that impact your storytelling as a writer?

LM: I'm originally from a small town in Iowa along the Mississippi River (where *Arrowood* is set), and spent the rest of my childhood in the Ozarks (the setting of *The Weight of Blood*). Aside from a year spent in Colorado, I've always lived in the Midwest, and all of my work thus far has been inspired by the places I've called home. The Midwestern landscape is the backbone of my writing. My stories begin with setting, and then the characters, their relationships, and their secrets grow from there.

I'm the youngest of eight kids, and we grew up very poor. I remember we all had one hairbrush to share, and it was tied to the bathroom doorknob so it wouldn't go missing. There was a great deal of stress and upheaval, as we moved frequently. My upbringing definitely shaped me as a writer and continues to influence the stories I tell today. I'd be writing very different books had I been raised in a different environment. When I bring up any hardship from our past, my mother will interject: "It gave you something to write about, didn't it?" And

she's right.

SR: With *Arrowood's* recent publication, what is next for you?

LM: I'm under contract with my publisher for two more novels, both in the same vein as my first two, and I aim to finish number three later this year. It's set in rural Missouri, and centers around an accident that tears apart a small town. *Arrowood* will be released in paperback this May.

SR: How did you find your voice for storytelling? And who are some of the writers who have inspired you?

LM: I think the voice was always there inside of me, cultivated throughout my life. Like most writers, I was a voracious reader and attentive observer, and when I began to write, my voice came out onto the page. I thought of myself first as a literary writer, though when I began to write novels, it became clear that my work leaned toward mystery and literary suspense.

I've been inspired by so many writers over the years. Early on, I read Shirley Jackson, Ray Bradbury, Margaret Atwood, and Stephen King, and then I fell in love with Toni Morrison and Southern Gothic writers like William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. I currently read a lot of contemporary mystery writers, like Laura Lippman, and admire the nonfiction work of Eril Larson.

SR: Most writers have a writing ritual to get them into the habit of writing. What is yours?

LM: Procrastinate by doing nearly anything else, make lists of ideas relating to my current work-in-progress, and then panic about how much time I've wasted and buckle down. When the writing is going well, I can stay up working all night long. If I get stuck, I make dessert—cookies or pie or fudge—and then get back to work. Recently, when I was having trouble reaching my daily word count goals, I would go to a coffee shop, order a large chai, and then not allow myself a bathroom break until I had hit a thousand words. Sounds ridiculous, but it worked.

SR: There are often great little communities within the writing world that writers

can join. For you, what has been the community that you have been welcomed in/embraced? And how do you think young writers interested in publishing their genre writing can seek out and join these communities?

LM: I started out in a small, local writing group that has become my best support system. There are six of us, writing in various mediums and genres, and we critique each other's work, talk about the writing life, and support each other. If you're interested in meeting likeminded writers in your community, get involved in the local literary scene by attending readings and other literary events. Beyond that, the mystery community is notoriously welcoming, and I have joined Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, and International Thriller Writers. I also attend annual mystery/thriller conferences such as Bouchercon and ThrillerFest, where I've been able to meet and get to know fellow writers and many of my writing heroes. Writing conferences are usually open to anyone, and most of these organizations have associate or guppy memberships for aspiring writers, and can be a good source of mentorship, friendship, and support.

SR: Fun Question: if your novels were paired with either an alcoholic drink or ice-cream flavor, what would they be?

LM: *The Weight of Blood*: Southern Comfort on the rocks. Non-alcoholic drink would be sweet tea, of course.

Arrowood: A & W root beer float in a frosty mug. One book club I visited served root beer floats and chili dogs to go along with the book.

SR: Lastly, *Harbinger* is often the first publication for Stephens College students—and now Moberly Area Community College—for these aspiring writers, what wise words do you have for where they can go from here?

LM: People are quick to tell you how difficult it is to succeed as a writer, and yet, it is possible. You'll never know if you don't try. Keep writing, keep revising, keep reading, keep sharing your work, keep submitting to journals. Apply for residencies and fellowships, attend conferences and workshops, reach out to other writers, join a writing group or organization, develop a network of supportive writer friends and help each other. Seek out feedback. Put yourself out there. Work hard and persist. I'm living my dream now, and my one regret is that I didn't go after it twenty years sooner.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I'm glad that this year's brightly colored *Harbinger* cover didn't completely blind you and that you were able to recover and read the amazing collection of literary genius within. With our focus on the strange, the eclectic, and the whimsical, it seemed only natural that the colors and illustrations convey exactly that. Facing the strange and embracing the ch-ch-ch-changes in life is a part of growing up, and everyone experiences it.

The cover art conveys the theme in a rather literal sense, while still leaving room for the imagination to explore the possibilities of what lies ahead. The illustrations seen throughout the magazine further show the strange in the everyday. Since the colors used are so loud, I took a quieter approach to the line quality of the illustrations and placement of the text. The primary typeface is on the stranger side as well, a sans-serif/decorative font that Ziggy Stardust would certainly approve of. The magenta spot color is drawn from the cover art and creates a bounce of energy on each page.

Words can't describe how honored I am for being chosen to design this year's issue of *Harbinger*. As a graphic designer, getting a chance to create something that many many people will hold and interact with is a dream come true. It's even more magical when you're creating a piece that helps others share their passion.

We all collectively knew how "facing the strange" felt and how we wanted others to feel when they read it. I had a blast turning these feelings and visions into reality. I hope that you feel the same way as you turn the pages of *Harbinger* 2017.

Maddy Spall
graphic designer



CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES



MADDIE AINSWORTH

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? English

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Heroes”

What is the last book you read for fun?

In the Sea There are Crocodiles by Fabio Geda

Last Google search? Silicon Valley

Minimum Viable Product



CORINA CASTILLO

What are your preferred pronouns?

Her/she but neutral when it comes to style

What is your major? Creative writing

What Bowie song describes you best?

His duet with Queen, “Under Pressure.”

What is the last book you read for fun?

Firestorm by Greg Keys, the official prequel to *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*.

Last Google search? Learning to drive a stick shift so I can learn to drive my new VW Bug



KAYLA DREBENSTENDT

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Graphic design

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Helden”

What is the last book you read for fun?

The Prince by Machiavelli

Last Google search? How do I know

if my body is producing too much testosterone?



CINDY HARBOUR

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Creative writing

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Space Oddity”

What is the last book you read for fun?

1984 by George Orwell

Last Google search? Steven Universe

Garnet Wiki



NICOLE IHLER

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her/they

What is your major? Integrated marketing with a psychology and creative writing minor

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Space Oddity”

What is the last book you read for fun?

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

Last Google search? David Bowie songs



MINOETTE LAYER

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Creative writing with an emphasis in script writing

What Bowie song describes you best? “Under Pressure”

What is the last book you read for fun? *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang

Last Google search? How do you spell Hwang?



KIMBERLY O'LOUGHLIN

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? English

What Bowie song describes you best? “Under Pressure”

What is the last book you read for fun? *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath

Last Google search? do do dee do song



VICTORIA PATRICK

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Creative writing

What Bowie song describes you

best? "Moonage Daydream"

What is the last book you read

for fun? *Where Am I Now?* by Mara

Wilson

Last Google search? Spurned

definition



MAKAYLA PENNY

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? English with a

minor in film

What Bowie song describes you

best? "Life on Mars"

What is the last book you read for

fun? *Attachments* by Rainbow Rowell

Last Google search? tumblr.com



MADDY SPALL

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Strategic communication: design

What Bowie song describes you best? “Changes”

What is the last book you read for fun? *Brooklyn* by Colm Toibin

Last Google search? Where is the nearest urgent care



LYNN QUIST

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Religion

What Bowie song describes you best? “Changes”

What is the last book you read for fun? *The Dark* by Lemony Snicket

Last Google search? Mexico’s top ten songs



RACHEAL RHEA

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/he/they

What is your major? Creative writing

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Cat People (Putting Out the Fire)”

What is the last book you read for

fun? *The Devil’s Star* by Jo Nesbo

Last Google search? Brendan Fraser’s

haircut from *The Mummy*



EMILY RITCHESON

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? Creative writing

What Bowie song describes you best?

“Modern Love”

What is the last book you read for

fun? *The Essential Calvin and Hobbes*

Last Google search? Japanese house bat



SHELLY ROMERO

What are your preferred pronouns?

She/her

What is your major? English

What Bowie song describes you

best? “Let’s Dance”

What is the last book you read for

fun? *The Assistants* by Camille Perri

Last Google search? The lyrics to

Falco’s “Rock Me Amadeus”



CAI SANTEE

What are your preferred pronouns?
She/her

What is your major? Creative writing with a minor in film and women's studies

What Bowie song describes you best? "Life on Mars"

What is the last book you read for fun? *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

Last Google search? best found footage horror movies on Netflix



JAMIE WARREN

What are your preferred pronouns?
She/he/they

What is your major? Creative writing major and film minor

What Bowie song describes you best? "Suffragette City"

What is the last book you read for fun? *Apocalypse Now Now* by Charlie Human

Last Google search? Sexy cop role play



TIANA WILLIAMS

What are your preferred pronouns?

What is your major? Digital filmmaking with a creative writing minor

What Bowie song describes you best? "Moonage Daydream"

What is the last book you read for fun? *All About Love: New Visions* by bell hooks

Last Google search? Show times at local movie theatre



