

A white, stylized mountain range logo with jagged peaks and valleys, positioned above and below a central horizontal line.

ARROW♦ROCK





ARROW♦ROCK

Issue VI

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A Day in the Life: The Tale of Dr. CapiTillar

Danyelle Pullens

There is a story
about a doctor.
But not just any doctor,

He's Dr. CapiTillar.

The only caterpillar who knows
how to perform CPR

on other caterpillars.

His degree,
he got from France.
His stethoscope,
Dubai.

His body is black
and he wears a blue polka-dotted
yellow tie.

One day,
as he meanders through
the crispity, crackally, crinkally leaves,
he stumbles upon a caterpillar
struggling to breathe.

First,
he gives it a
huffff.

Then,
he smacks it
in the face.

But if that doesn't work,
he'll lift his fuzzy, stubby legs
to the sky
and yell,

“WHY?!”



Then he forgets
about his fallen brother,
and wriggles away
to save another.



Jimmy

Abby Edele

A small blue car pulls into the parking lot, and everyone inside the bookstore groans. We love Jimmy, but he is a pain in the ass. Jimmy sits in his seat for a few moments before grabbing a stack of worn books from the passenger's seat and making his way inside the building. He swings open the glass door with a piercing ding of the automated "doorbell" security system. "Hey, Jimmy! What's up?" Sasa [pronounced "Sasha," if you want to call him by his full name, or "Sass" as we all affectionately call him] says from behind the counter.

Jimmy walks up to the counter and sets his stack of books on the ledge. His clear, light blue eyes twinkle in his worn and weathered, pink face. He stands at an average height, and he has a mop of white and grey hair that is twisted back into one ponytail. Unfortunately, that ponytail has existed for so long that it has morphed from free flowing hair into one large, ratty dreadlock at the back of Jimmy's head. He has a grizzled beard that matches his white and grey hair, and if it were fuller and crept up more on the sides of his face, I'd say it was Santa-like. He usually is dressed in a casual, button-down shirt and jeans, and today is no exception. As my coworker Chad has said to me, "the only fault Jimmy has is that he was born in the wrong time." It looks like the 1960s were good to Jimmy, and he probably would have benefitted if they had lasted much longer than a decade.

We're not just Lindenwood University's bookstore; we will buy back books year-round from other college students or anyone who happens to have textbooks. We have Jake, who commands the basement of the store and sells any books that Lindenwood is finished with, or books we purchase from anyone who wants to bring them in and get rid of them. Jimmy is one of a few individuals who finds college textbooks and the occasional novel and then brings them to sell to us. He's one of the "regulars."

Jimmy greets Sasa and begins to tell him one of his notoriously bad (and sometimes downright filthy) jokes. His voice is gravelly and filled with mischief.

While Sasa is scanning books into the computer to see if they're worth anything for us to purchase, Jimmy has wandered over to my side of the counter. "How's it going, Jimmy?" I ask. He grins and replies, "Good, good." He digs around in his pocket to produce his wallet. With that ever-present smile on his face, he produces what looks like a business card from the folds of his beaten-up wallet. "Did I show you this one?" he asks me. I've heard most of Jimmy's jokes and I've seen most of his "business cards," but I shake my head in negation and reach out for



the card he's holding. It's what looks like a normal business card, but is in fact one of those comic cards that has a fake name and occupation on it. This one says something about how the cardholder was abducted by aliens, and there's a little green face staring back at me from the glossy paper. I chuckle and hand the card back to Jimmy. He turns around to Kurt, another one of our employees, who has walked up to the front of the store, and shows him his abductee business card. Kurt laughs loudly and appreciatively, and starts chatting with Jimmy.

We usually see Jimmy in person, but on occasion we'll get a phone call from him. "BOOK-X-CHANGE, how can I help you?" I automatically answer. "Uhhhh, hi," a familiar voice greets me. "This is James Duncan," he says. "Oh hey, Jimmy! What can I do for you?" I respond cheerily. He then reads me the ISBN (the identifying number) of a book he wants me to look up. I look up the number like usual, give Jimmy our price for the book like usual, and then he sits quietly on the phone for a moment before he asks, "Is that all?" like usual. The first time I answered one of Jimmy's calls, I had no idea who it was. I had met Jimmy a few times before, but he was "Jimmy." Who the hell was "James Duncan"? Now I just laugh at his phoney formality.

Back at the front desk, Sasa finishes up pricing Jimmy's books, and he waves him back over to the counter to give him the rundown. He passes on a few of the older and/or cheaper books, but he buys the rest. Some books we can give some good, hard cash for. Other books we can only offer a dollar or two. It all just depends on how current they are, and much they're going for online. Jimmy listens intently to Sasa's pricing, and he nods along to most of the quotes, and says "Uhhh, yep," after each one he likes and "Uhhh, no. Pass," to each one he wants to hang onto. After Sasa gives Jimmy a total, Jimmy freezes and stares hard at Sasa. He requests a higher price, his mouth curling into a grin and his blue eyes twinkling. Sasa laughs; Jimmy does this all the time. "What about this one?" he asks, holding up a battered book. "Ehhhhhhh ..." Sasa thinks on it. "Okay, fine," he acquiesces. Jimmy chuckles a victory chuckle.

After Jimmy is given his pricing on his books, he always grabs his pencil from his pocket or from behind his ear. He opens the book's first page, and he carefully erases each notation from each book's interior. Until recently I had never asked him what his notes are. It's always just been one of those Jimmy-Quirks. I asked our store manager, Matt, what Jimmy's mysterious pencil markings are. He said that they're price quotes from all the other bookstores he sells books to. There are a few other establishments he sells books to, apparently, and he will call or search around before selecting the store with the best price. Matt told me, "He always tries to erase all the markings on the inside and I tell him all the time, 'Jimmy, you don't have to do that. I don't care.' And he always says, 'No, no, no, they're my scribbles', I'll erase 'em.'" Then I just shake my



head at him. I don't give a shit if there are pencil marks."

You would think it might take just a few moments to scrub a pencil eraser across a few markings. With anyone else, that might be the case. With Jimmy, it can take up to half-an-hour. He gets so excited to talk to the employees as they come upstairs or come in to work or come back from lunch. He greets each person enthusiastically and shares some new (or old but still good) story with him. After each employee shuffles back to work, Jimmy goes back to his erasing, only to be interrupted when a new customer comes in, or he thinks of a new joke, or one of us cracks one that reminds him of another story. It sometimes takes him five to ten minutes to even get out of the store after he's finished. Jimmy always pauses at the door, turns around, and asks, "Did I tell you the one about...?" He especially enjoys jokes involving the clergy.

It's through these little chats each time Jimmy swings by that we find out a little bit more about Jimmy and his past. We really have no idea where he came from; the current employees of the store weren't employed here when he originally started to come by BOOK-X-CHANGE to sell books. We just sort of inherited him and his quirks.

The first time I met Jimmy, the usual experience went down. He came in, joked around, pocketed his cash, erased his scribbles, grabbed a soda from the vending machine, and left. "So ... was that our resident nutcase?" I asked everyone. They all laughed and filled me in on what they knew about Jimmy. It wasn't much.

Melissa, who had been at the store for years before me, said she thought that Jimmy had a gambling problem. He had a lot of stories about the casino, and he knew a good deal about blackjack. Melissa and the store manager at the time, Jeff, said that there was a period of time where Jimmy just disappeared. He wasn't one of the regulars for several months to a year. They had no idea where he had been, and they hadn't wanted to ask. Jimmy didn't supply an explanation, either. Of course there were several wildly colorful stories the bookstore employees created to explain the disappearance of Jimmy. I don't remember most of them now, but there were some involving jail, fugitive status, winning the lottery, and other various extreme scenarios.

We do know that Jimmy has a sister, and we're fairly certain he lives with her. He mentions her sometimes, but not often. We rarely hear about anything that gives us a glimpse into Jimmy's life, let alone his family. One day, Jimmy pulled up into our parking lot in his shiny, royal blue car. This time, there was a passenger. We couldn't see very well through the car windows, but we could see that the passenger was a woman, and she was very old. Jimmy is definitely old, but we're not sure exactly how old he is. Perhaps 70? It's a guessing game. This woman in the passenger seat of Jimmy's car had to be close to 80. She didn't get out of the car with Jimmy. Jimmy came in, sold us some books, and went



about his usual routine while the woman waited in the car. One of my coworkers finally asked Jimmy about it, and he said something along the lines of, “Oh, that’s my sister. She’s fine.” That was it. Jimmy finished up with us, and went back outside to carry on with his day.

One day when we were chatting about Jimmy, Matt told me, “You know he was a college professor or something? He has a shit-ton of degrees! He’s insanely well-educated.” I told him about the day Kurt and I found out about Jimmy’s past academic life.

Jimmy was at the store, commanding everyone’s attention, when he told us about how many classes he used to take. He has multiple degrees—“all of which are useless!” Jimmy happily told Kurt and me as we were taking a look at the books he was selling at the front desk.

“Really?!” Kurt asked, pausing his book buying.

“Oh yeah,” Jimmy said, still grinning, but with the tiniest flicker of sadness and reminiscence. He then told Kurt and me about how he had earned several degrees from several universities around the nation. I don’t remember most of the degrees he had earned. I think one was in communication, and I think he said he worked on a radio station for a while. Jimmy also had studied several languages. The one that struck me was that Jimmy had studied some ancient, dead language from the country of India that was written in some sort of hieroglyphics. Given Jimmy’s joking nature, Kurt and I thought he was kidding at first. We demanded he tell the truth, and he just shook his head and insisted it was true. He said he was one of only a handful of students who took the class. The story gets better, and he knew it. He had us holding on to every word of this new tale. “The professor was blind,” Jimmy told us.

“Nuh-uh!” Kurt insisted. “How could a blind professor teach a course on hieroglyphic language?”

“I don’t know!” Jimmy told us gleefully. “But he did it! He had an assistant, so that helped.” Jimmy laughed and walked away to grab his customary couple of sodas while Kurt and I exchanged a dumbfounded look.

It just doesn’t seem like something our Jimmy would do—take a course on Indian hieroglyphics. It strikes me as the sort of behavior of an insanely pretentious person, someone addicted to academics and that scholarly world filled with dissertations, conferences, putting new spins on old ideas and publishing them. It doesn’t sound like our Jimmy - the one who always looks a little disheveled, the one who is super friendly but slightly creepy. But then again, beneath the cheerfulness and the quirks, there’s a hint of world-weariness behind his twinkling blue eyes and laugh lines.





Mai Urai



10-42

Blake Fields

Three bullets, a badge, a folded-up flag
A trade for the Man in Blue
Five flies, three rods, The Old Mounted Stag
That's all I have left of you

Parade of Lights, Blue, Cherry, Zebra Stripe
Tribute to the Man in Blue
Nine rifle rounds, plaid, bellowing bagpipe
The "we're all praying for you's"

Soar over the lake now, song of spring peeper
Salute to the Man in Blue
Welcome him home now, pearly gatekeeper
Sound now the 10-42

Call out His Name, His Name, His Name
Sound now the 10-42



Believing, You'll See

Emily Bounds

A sky with **no** reluctance,
Filled with silver **matter** of mystery.
Their eyes know **how** to listen
To **your** desires
And the **heart** of the earth.
A tear **is** their call,
To those **grieving** in secret.
Even **if** shadows
Circle **you** like
Corners who **keep** dark secrets,
Light will shine **on** your sorrowed face.
And **believing**, you'll see,

There is **the** magic
Of a child's **dream** and its course.
A passage of time **that** seems too constant
Won't leave **you** in your need.
When you **wish** in sincerity,
Your eyes **will** dry soon
And morning will **come** in a gentle wind,
Leaving your **true** needs behind.



Danse Russe

Danyelle Pullens

“I am lonely, lonely.
I was born to be lonely,
I am best so!”

Danse Russe by William Carlos Williams

She stood in the center of a small circular platform. Her feet, which were encased in silky white ballerina shoes, met at the ankles, and her toes pointed outward. Her violin was held loosely in one hand, and her bow was held in the other, both held at her sides. Her hair was pulled back neatly from her face, and her white dress looked brand new. The smile that graced her face was natural and genuine as she gazed out at the endless Blue that surrounded her.

After a count of three, she lifted her hands and began to play. The music seemed slow and gentle at first before growing into a whimsical tune as the platform beneath her began to turn. Completely at ease, she shifted her feet wider apart and lifted herself onto the tips of her toes, and at the end of a long note, she paused.

The world around her seemed to freeze.

With a deep breath, she began dancing as she continued her song. Around and around she would leap and twirl. Never once did she miss a note. Never once did she lose her smile. She looked to the world like a bird about to take flight, but never once did she step off the platform. She was in control, and no one could take that from her.

My name is... Amelia.

She was back to the center of the platform. Her ankles touching, her dress new, and her smile in place. Her violin and bow were held to her sides. With a smile and a breath, she began to play. The Blue that surrounded her seemed to dance with her, leaping and twirling with no end in sight. There was a feeling in her chest; it felt like millions of tiny bubbles that wanted to escape through her mouth.

Laughter. Happiness. Contentment.

She was where she was supposed to be.

She never stepped off the platform.

My name is Amelia.

The Blue was always with her for every dance. Lifting and holding her with warm hands, never letting her fall off her platform. There was



bubbling laughter and unstoppable smiles. Sometimes, if she listened really hard, she could hear gentle chimes in the background that weaved themselves through the sounds of her violin.

She never knew where the chimes came from, but they were beautiful. She tried asking the Blue once, but she never received an answer. The Blue didn't seem to care, but she did. Who was out there? What were they doing? Did they want to dance and play with her too?

Days passed. Dances were danced, and songs were played. Some days were a light gray, some were Blue, but they were always filled with warmth. It never rained, and she was never sad. No, never sad or lonely, just curious about the chimes that she could still hear. The sound would curl around her ear and hold her hands. It danced under her chin and beckoned her forward, away from her platform and the warm embrace of Blue.

She didn't know how long the Chimes played. They were always there though, dancing and calling. Asking her questions and singing her stories. They were such fantastical things. Sometimes, if the Chimes were feeling playful, they would spin a tale around the notes of her chords, bringing pictures of horses and knights and something called love.

My name is Amelia!

It was on a Gray day.

The Gray was marbled with black and white, but it didn't bother her. It never did. Her dress was new, and her hair was neat. Her toes were pointed out, and her ankles were touching.

The Chimes didn't dance with her music that time. They waited until she was finished, so that they could play a song for her. No one had ever played a song for her before. The Blue was gone, and the Gray did not dance and twirl with her. The Chimes, they called to her. Asking her to dance and twirl with them like the Blue did with her. They had never had someone dance with them before. They told her about how lonely they were, but they never answered her questions.

Where did the Chimes come from?

Why were they lonely?

Would they show her what love was?

She stepped off the platform.

My name is Amelia! Can you hear me?

She was back in the center of her platform. Her dress was new, and her smile looked genuine. Her ballerina shoes were white, and her violin was in her hand. The world around her was Gray, but that didn't bother her. It never did.



With a deep breath, she spread her feet shoulder-width apart and rolled to the points of her toes. Then she began to play. The music was slow and gentle with hints of whimsy. There were no Chimes anymore. They disappeared, drowned in the howling of the Gray around her. She hadn't seen Blue for a while now. The Blue didn't like it when she stepped down from her platform that spun beneath her feet. It was too dangerous, too unknown.

She wasn't sure she believed the Blue. There wasn't anything out there that could hurt her, and she was only going to the Chimes. They were going to hold her hands like the Blue did.

She had tried to leave the platform other times too, but she never got too far. The Blue would always catch her and guide her back to where she was supposed to be. Its warm hands would touch her back and brush her hair away from her face, and she would know that she was safe.

My name is... Amelia?

The world around her was dark.

It wasn't the warm Blue and Gray that she was used to. There was no warmth here anymore. There was no light. It was as if the blackness—no—the darkness had gathered all of the light that was left in her world and had hidden it in a box. It seemed to breathe around her, a constant reminder of its presence. She hadn't seen the Blue for a long time.

She was dancing and playing, never straying from her platform when she heard it. There was a gentle chime, just one note. It curled around her ear and tapped under her chin. It wondered where she had been, why she had stopped laughing.

The Black never paid her attention when she stopped playing songs.

The Chime continued, urging her forward, begging her to come closer and take its hand.

She looked at the Black around her, took a deep breath, and began to run.

My name is—is...

She didn't know how long she was running. Her feet were throbbing like she had never felt before, and she had dropped her bow somewhere behind her. Her hair was no longer neat, and her dress was torn. Behind her, the Black roared and loomed like an angry beast.

Something touched the back of her neck. She screamed and tried to run faster.

The dark ground underneath her rippled as her feet continued to move. One of her feet sank beneath the surface, and she struggled to pull it back out. She succeeded, but lost one of her shoes. Another roar from



the Black made her look back. It sounded closer. Her heart picked up its pace, and her breathing grew strained.

Then, her body ached as she ran into some kind of barrier. She struggled to stand back up as the ground clung to her like tar, pulling at her hair and staining her clothes. She dropped her violin.

She finally managed to stand, only to be confronted by a glass wall. It looked thin, but it stretched up and to the sides in an endless sheet. Beyond it, she saw a light. It looked so beautiful after so long with the Black. She banged on the glass with her fist, yelling for help. Chimes leaked through the glowing light, but they could not reach past the glass either.

A breath from behind her ruffled her hair.

Black arms wrapped around her legs, waist and shoulders. A hand covered her mouth. There was a jerk, and then the light was shrinking and wind was howling in her ears.

When it was over, the arms laid her on the ground. In front of her stood a small revolving platform, and on it lay her bow and violin. She continued to lie on her side, not moving. The Black grew impatient.

Warm hands picked her up and carried her to the platform. They stood her up, brushed back her hair and gave her the violin back. She did not smile, and her fingers refused to hold the instrument. Black vines sprouted from the floor and threaded themselves through once white shoes to keep her in place. More moved up to wrap her fingers in a tight grip to ensure that she had ahold of her violin. The warm fingers pulled her hair back to make sure it was neat.

Still she did not smile.

Vines curled up over her shoulders and around her neck. They hooked themselves into the corners of her mouth and pulled them up.

She was smiling again.

My name?

She stood in the middle of her small revolving platform. Her feet touched at the ankles, and her toes pointed outwards. Her dress was white and brand new. In one hand she held her violin, and in the other she held her bow; both were held down to her sides. Her smile looked calm and serene as she gazed out at the Blue around her.

She had no name.





Isaac White



Bookstore Limericks

Abby Edele

There was a man who couldn't pay
To get his books to learn all day.
So he stomped, he screamed,
He chomped and he steamed
Until the clerk shouted "Away!"

Bored students are ever so fun
They sure pick their noses a ton.
Just look at this book—
It's covered in gook!
Green boogers a finger has spun!

There was a young woman who lied,
"Heaven and Earth know I had tried
To return my books
On time, but it looks
As if my ... Grandma ... had gone and ... died?"

It's eight weeks since the start of your class
Yet your brain is filled with much gas!
Your book's on Peru?
You think that it's blue?
Lord knows I can't help you to pass!

There was an old woman who yelled
About the wet book her hands held.
It wasn't her who
Ruined the book—true!
It was rain that clouds had expelled!



Daniel Definitions

Daniel Coker

Futility is:

Kidnapping your three-hundredth princess.
Slaying your three-hundred-first dragon.

Guessing at meanings in random numbers.
Submitting an empty paper.

Fear:
A woman who could feel no fear said, "Fear is a baby crawling."
No.
Fear is a wolf in your face, poised to tear out your jugular.
Fear is a spider or snake, poised to inject.
Fear is a perfectly good plane, you must throw yourself from.
Fear is fifty zombies, running for you.
Fear is threadlike worms, digging into your flesh.
Fear is a point of light in the sky – an ICBM.
Fear is your child, not answering the phone.
Fear is everyone you have ever known, hating you for your failure.
That is fear.

Fashion:

"Fashion is an excuse to shun people.
Useless; I can't believe the sheeple!"

But seriously, what is this passion you all call 'fashion?'
I must memorize what matches; I still know nearly nothing.

I knew not nice clothes,
Though I thought their wearer lovely;
They seemed "too formal."

Cynical Me:
I see the world too cynically –
Criminals don't really
Lurk in every alley.

"...protect the Universe, at all costs."
"Don't worry; humanity isn't that stupid."
I don't like that bet,
But my cynic's fears
Calm: Nuclears
For sixty years
No Global War yet.



Edele Family Vacation 2014: Wisconsin

Abby Edele

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

--- Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*

Edele Family Vacations are not for the weakhearted, the easily tired, the unwilling to learn, the picky eaters, or the unadventurous sort of man, woman, or child. Travel begins early in the morning, usually when the rest of the world is still tucked away under their quilts, nightcaps upon their heads, and dreams in their brains. The family piles into the van—in the seats they had reserved many years ago, and still claim today; sitting in anyone’s seat but one’s own would be absurd and as uncomfortable as sleeping in a strange bed at night. Everyone settles into his or her seat, and the van pulls out of the garage and driveway and onto the quiet, dark, residential street where it meets few other cars in the foggy, but brightening morning. By the time the sun has risen enough to cast its light upon the world, the Edele family has been on the highway for several hours. Dad is driving, Mom is leaning her head back with printed directions clasped in her lap, and the four children are in various, cramped positions of sleep, headphone cords dangling from their ears.

It always happens that I bring the largest suitcase out of all six members of my family. My younger brother, Ben, always packs frugally. On occasion he has packed so prudently that he has completely omitted clean underwear. My younger sister, Sharon, stuffs her suitcase with enough shorts and t-shirts to last her a week’s worth of travel. The youngest of us all, Lucy, wears the shortest shorts of us all, so her clothes rarely take up much space. My parents share a suitcase. Yet my suitcase is still larger and still heavier than the combination of both my mother’s and father’s clothing and toiletries. I’m afraid I am a serial overpacker, and while I have improved my packing skills over the years, I have copious amounts of room to improve.

My father, Andy, drives the majority of the way to our destination and back home when our excursions have ended. My mother, Sue, is the navigator and the voice of reason throughout the trip. When my father drives, he has a thermos full of coffee on hand. When my mother drives, she has a bag of beef jerky and a bag of LemonHeads on hand. Not LemonHeads and Friends. She only eats the lemon ones, and she only eats them two at a time. The rest of us have a communal bag of snacks such as minibags of chips and cookies, trail mix, juices, water,



and other goodies to keep us satisfied between stops for meals. My parents have the radio and CDs to occupy them, and the rest of us have various electronics, notebooks, and other objects to keep us entertained throughout the drive to our destination. As far as I can remember, we have driven to every vacation destination except for two: Boston, Massachusetts, and Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

The Edele family is big on museums and tours. We have been to museums about nearly all the American wars, we have been to museums about several presidents, and we have been to science museums and history museums. We have been to a museum for dolls and a museum for shoes. We have been on tours of famous homes and buildings around the nation. We have been to battlefields and prisons, graves and monuments, and been on ghost tours. We have been to several interpretive sites with guides to show us around the historical grounds.

We, the Edele children, have grown into the museum and tour lifestyle, but we did not always embrace the art of reading plaques and peering into glass cases full of artifacts.

There was one trip in particular where Dad wanted to visit nearly every museum in sight. It was in the Museum of the Confederacy where the four of us staged a secession and sat on a bench in the middle of the museum, pouting, waiting for our father to finish reading about Jefferson Davis and the South's plight.

Since then, our parents have been sure to divide up our trips into more equal parts of relaxing and touring. This summer was no different from every other summer before. In July the family and I embarked on our annual adventure filled with Forced Family Fun. This year we were headed to the wildly exotic land of Wisconsin. My mother had learned, through one of her many gossiping sessions, about the land of the cheese. Many other ladies had made the trek there with their families in tow, and they found the trip tolerable and not too lengthy or tiresome, and the accommodations were plentiful and diverse, and as for fun, there was plenty to be had. My father delighted in the prospect of the region's food, and as a true American he wanted to show his family as much of the land of the free as was possible before he sent them off to show their own families this great country.

My only goals for the trip were to remain quietly amused, to read part of that damned novel I had been meaning to read but had been putting off for months, and to find an actual wheel of cheese. Wisconsin is always pictured with wheels upon wheels of cheese, so no slices or cubes would suffice for me—I must have and I would have a wheel of cheese. It did not matter the size of the wheel, but I would find my cheese wheel.

The first day of our trip did not begin as so many had begun in years past. We did not leave until well after the sun had risen. The day



before we were to depart I had been struck with a terrible ache in my back and upset in my belly. I awoke at the appointed time, but I could barely move around and nausea overwhelmed me. Eventually we could not wait any longer for my illness to pass, so my mother helped me down a shot of Nyquil, stuffed me in the car, and we headed on our journey. I do not remember most of the ride there except for the bits where I woke up and demanded more pain medication for my back. Sitting in a strange position in the car was doing it no favours.

After approximately seven hours of driving (not including stops), we arrived at our hotel in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, but my illness had traveled with us. I managed to stumble into one of our adjoining hotel rooms before crashing out for the night.

My first full day in Wisconsin was spent watching cheesy local television and sleeping in order to recover from whatever sort of illness I had contracted. My mom stayed with me in the morning to catch up on some of her homework, and the rest of the family headed out to explore the city.

For those of you unfamiliar with Sheboygan, Wisconsin, let me give you a few points of interest. The city is located on the eastern coast of the state with Lake Michigan curled up beside it. There are nearly 50,000 residents of the city, and it is known for its German influence from the immigrants who came to the area in the mid-1800s. This is precisely why Sheboygan is well-known among food connoisseurs as one of the best places to order a bratwurst or other German fare from a traditional restaurant.

This is precisely what prompted my father, children in tow, to stop at a small, highly rated restaurant in town and order lunch for us all.

It was when the travelers had returned and I was sitting up in bed and was eating the soup they had gotten for me, listening to everyone talk about their morning, when my sister, mouth full of a bratwurst sandwich, said, "Yeah ... this place was a bar. Dad took us to a bar."

My father quickly hushed my youngest sister and began to explain that he had not known the place was a bar, and they had all walked in innocently. He said he noticed that there was a bar inside, but they also had seating like a restaurant. He ordered everyone's lunch to go, and the older employees of the bar had not said anything about the 20-year-old, 18-year-old, and 16-year-old standing around with their father. In fact, they even jokingly encouraged my father to buy a drink for Sharon.

"The lady was really nice and we were talking, and she told Sharon that they couldn't offer her a drink, but if her dad bought a drink and handed it to her ... well ... they couldn't do anything about that!" my dad told us with a devilish grin. "But I DIDN'T," he reassured my mother.

While I could not stomach an entire German lunch, I did sample



the bratwurst and cheese curds - another famous fare of Wisconsin—and they were most delicious even in my sickly state. My father and his offspring, my brother, who eat anything in sight, said that it was some of the best bratwurst they had ever had, so I will have to take their experienced words for it.

The next day I felt much better, and I could move about as long as I was able to sit and rest between periods of walking. We headed to a touristy street to do some shopping where a small shop called “Olivü 426” caught our eyes. Well, it caught my mother’s and sisters’ and my eyes. My father and brother groaned, scanned the street for another shop they could browse in, and headed off to a bookstore they had spotted. My fellow females and I entered the shop and looked around. It was a small store whose scent hit you as you stepped inside. It smelled as clean and fragrant as the chunks of soap and bottles of lotions and lip glosses the store sold. We milled around the store, picking up products, reading their descriptions and how to use them, sniffing them, and placing them back in their baskets. The two ladies working in the shop were overly kind and helpful. As we wandered to the back of the shop, we discovered that we could make our own products. We gleefully chose lip gloss colors and flavors as one of the employees melted the premixed ingredients together for us. Once our choices were made, we mixed together our personal flavors and colors and poured the mixtures into the tiny tubes. Sharon picked the brightest shade of pink-red she could find and paired it with a wild, fruity flavor. Lucy chose a sweet pink color and bubbly champagne flavor. My mom and I chose practical rose colors we could actually wear in public and normal flavors like raspberry and mint.

The lip glosses quickly congealed in their tubes. We picked out a few more items to purchase, and made our way to the cash register. We were the only customers in the store, so we politely chatted with the ladies in the shop as one of them rang us out for our purchases. The older woman of the two turned the conversation to the weather, as so many people do in polite conversation. She exclaimed about how hot it was, and mimed fanning herself rigorously. My mom, sisters, and I all plastered smiles to our faces and we kept them tightly fastened there as the woman continued on about how huuuuuumid it was there. She could barely stand the 80-something-degree heat and humidity. We smiled and nodded along with her complaints as we made our way to the door. We thanked the ladies and stepped outside into the cool Wisconsin “heat.” We then burst out into the laughter we had been holding inside the shop.

“I hope she doesn’t come to Saint Louis!” Mom said, referring to the 100-degree heat that was nearly always paired with shirt-drenching humidity. The heat always seems to follow our family from Saint Louis, whether we go north, south, east, or west. The year we traveled to Boston there was a heat wave, and the locals were complaining about



the 85-degree sunshine beating down on their brows. There was a drought when we visited Colorado. Utah was hotter than usual, and South Carolina's humidity was thicker than normal when the Edeles arrived in each state. In "hot" Wisconsin, Mom, Sharon, Lucy and I laughed together at the heat that never failed to meet us as we walked down the street toward the bookstore where Dad and Ben were browsing.

The next stop on our trip was the Wisconsin Dells, which is west of Sheboygan in about the middle of the state. The Dells is a tourist town. I cannot come up with any better words to describe it other than extravagant, family-oriented, and extremely touristy.

There were giant billboards that line all the main streets of the town boasting about their highly-rated shows, their mouth-watering restaurants, their enormous waterparks, their fast and abundant zip lines, and their bountiful shops and sales. The attractions themselves had even bigger signs around and above their premises advertising their goods. There was a show that took place on the water that involved stunts on water skis and other water tricks; there was a Bigfoot zip line that was the greatest zip line one could ever imagine; there was a zoo with exotic animals on display; there was a Greek-themed amusement park and several monstrous waterparks that adjoined it; there was a Noah's Ark waterpark of biblical proportions; there were boat tours and "duck" boat tours and canyon tours and horse rides and go-karts and mini golf.

There was one particular street we explored on our first day there that contained everything an overexcited tourist could want: multiple fudgeries all claiming to be "the best," several cheese shops, dozens of restaurants all claiming fame for some recipe or dish, a few dark arcades with hundreds of blinking lights racing around, and a handful of those gimmicky tourist traps that I will never understand. One such trap had a giant sculpture of a gorilla fighting an octopus on top of the building. I believe it was a themed arcade and laser tag area, but I was so distracted by the top of the building that I didn't look at what was inside it. A few blocks away from the gorilla-octopus building was the Torture Museum. I'm not entirely sure that I would want to be in a dark museum filled with weapons of torture and the tourists who are actually attracted to such sights, but thankfully we were pressed for time so we had to skip that museum.

Nearly every other shop on this street was a gift shop full of "souvenirs" for tourists to purchase for their families back home, or as mementos of the trip. I have never understood some of the ludicrous merchandise available for tourists to purchase. I know many people who collect small tokens of their travels—snow globes, key chains, decorative thimbles, charms for charm bracelets, shot glasses, and other little trinkets. I know many people who collect t-shirts from the various cities



they visit. These items are plentiful in gift shops, as one can assume they would be. There is a market for them that has existed for generations. However, the other items available for patrons to purchase in souvenir shops are questionable. In each shop we entered, I was left to puzzle over how t-shirts with the poorest grammar and slogans about sluts and weed could count as souvenirs of a trip to the Wisconsin Dells, but perhaps I was missing that section of town.

There was one shop that only sold Hawaiian merchandise—pineapple paraphernalia, loud Hawaiian shirts, leis, and other goods—while blasting John Denver’s “Country Roads.” Multiple shops sported children’s t-shirts emblazoned with characters from the latest Disney film, Frozen, with the words “Wisconsin Dells” printed below the images. For those of you who have not seen the film, Frozen takes place in Norway. Some bigwigs in marketing and advertising clearly knew that if they combined Frozen and tie-dyed tourist t-shirts, children were sure to beg their overindulgent parents to purchase such junk.

The amount of Native American paraphernalia in these gift shops never ceases to amaze me. I’ve traveled to western states and eastern states and southern states and northern states, and they all have gift shops filled with Native American moccasins, gaudy t-shirts with wolves and elk painted on them, dream catchers, beads, statues, feathers, wind chimes, satchels, etc. etc. etc. Yet they hardly ever have any tours or museums dedicated to these people. All of the brightly colored shot glasses and tie-dyed t-shirts seem to mock these “artifacts” of a people who were pushed out of this land to make way for those giant gorillas to fight giant octopuses.

Our second morning in The Dells we awoke, consumed some breakfast, and then headed out to one of the biggest attractions in The Dells: The Mount Olympus Theme & Water Parks. The entire Mount Olympus empire stretched for miles in all directions. There were campgrounds, motels, and hotels each named after a commonly known Greek god, along with multiple water parks and two theme parks. There was also a construction that looked like the Coliseum because apparently Greece and Rome are the same thing. We drove to the theme park, purchased our tickets (which were discounted, as the giant flashing billboard on the way into the park told us, TODAY ONLY, yet we became increasingly jaded as that same TODAY ONLY sign flashed at us from the roads each day that week), and headed into the park. The first roller coaster we came across was the Zeus Wooden Roller Coaster, and so we trudged up the stairs to get to the top of the structure where we would wait quite some time, moving inch by inch, as people entered the cars, flew along the rails of the coaster, exited the coaster, and the next set of people took their seats in the cars. Eventually, we came to a halt. No one



was entering the coaster's cars, and several employees were pressing buttons at the control stand while others fiddled with the cars. It became apparent that the coaster was malfunctioning, and just when we had come so close. We could see the cars, and we had already chosen which ones we wanted to sit in. Another patron of the park asked an employee what was going on. The employee gave a vague answer about how the coaster "wasn't working." When the patron asked how long it would be, the employee shrugged and said he wasn't sure. After a few more minutes of impatient waiting, many patrons huffed and headed toward the exit. We joined the crowd of exiting, annoyed patrons, and we all took it upon ourselves to announce to those poor souls farther down the line that the coaster wasn't working, and that the clueless employees neither knew nor cared to know what the matter was or when it would be fixed.

Luckily we found a second (operational) coaster nearby, and we waited in line to ride the Hades 360 Rollercoaster. The ride was great, but it jostled my still-slightly-unwell head too much, so I opted to sit out the next round while the rest of the family drove on the Trojan Horse Go-Kart Track. (Yes, here in the Greek-themed amusement park was a Trojan Horse. I suppose they dragged it back from Troy.)

Meanwhile, I purchased a wildly expensive bottle of water and sat in a nearby plaza at an umbrella-clad picnic table. I was not alone for long; I was soon joined by an overexcited mother, father, and young daughter who was perhaps 10 to 12-years-old. The mother politely asked if they could join me at the table, and I conceded. I do not normally engage in conversation with strangers, but because I was in a strange place I might as well chat with some strange people. The mother wore a swim cover-up over her swimsuit, and a visor peeked out of her mass of frizzy hair. The balding father wore shorts, a t-shirt, and a pair of dark sunglasses. The young girl also wore a swimsuit and cover-up, but she sported a pair of goggles around her neck as well. Between bites of her chicken tenders and fries, the young girl cheerfully chattered about going to the next door waterpark and all the slides she would ride on. The mother chattered about all the things the family was going to do while in The Dells, and the father mumbled under his breath about how expensive the family's lunch was, how expensive the park was, and how expensive this vacation was. I politely nodded along and answered the standard questions people always ask at touristy venues and cities: How was I doing? Where was I from? Who was I traveling with? What had we done thus far that we had enjoyed?

After consuming barely half of her pricey chicken tenders meal, the girl excitedly dragged her parents away toward the water park. Thankfully my sister Sharon took their place while the rest of the family opted to go on another ride. We discussed the absence of the majority of the Greek pantheon. Apparently the only gods and goddesses Mount



Olympus' creators knew included Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Apollo, and Hermes. Oh, and let's not forget about Aphrodite. There was a clothing store named after her, because women (even goddesses) are not powerful, and they only care about fashion. You can forget about Hera, Artemis, Ares, Athena, Demeter, and the rest.

After our initial confusion and then slight outrage at the ignorance surrounding us, (clearly it was all Greek to the park's creators ... hah hah!) Sharon and I sat in the shade and watched the people traversing the park. People-watching is always one of my favourite parts of vacations. It's fascinating to see the extremely wide array of folks from all around the world who are touring the same spots we are. From the different clothing choices to the language used, the people are just as fascinating as the surroundings.

After a day at the amusement park, the family took a slower day. We lounged around the cabin we had rented for our stay in The Dells, and in the afternoon we booked a boat tour of the Wisconsin River. The day was overcast and a little chilly, so we grabbed our jackets and headed to the meeting point for the tour. The river was especially low that day, so the eight of us – the family and the elderly couple who had also booked a tour at that time – hopped aboard the bus the tour company provided for us, and we were driven to a higher point on the river where we would begin our journey. We climbed aboard the boat and chose seats on the exposed top level where there were chairs set up in rows facing the bow (front) of the boat. Our tour guide – a charismatic older gentleman – joined us up top where he grabbed the microphone and took a stance at the front of the boat. As our journey commenced, he pointed out the local names of the bluffs and rock formations around the river as we chugged along. There were stories and lore about different areas – one area where a preacher tried to convert everyone, another area where someone dropped a piano off a bluff, another outcropping where one of the Native American tribes held trials. Our guide was a gifted storyteller, and he both knew and loved the Dells area and the river well.

Even though the day was cloudy and grey, the wind gushing around the boat and the churning of the water with us were peaceful. The locals fishing on the riverbanks raised their hands in salutation as we passed, and other boat tours hooted and hollered and waved enthusiastically. Even an eagle was spotted soaring above us. The scenery may not have been as spectacular as The Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls, but it was beautiful in its understated, undisturbed way.

It was on our final day of exploring The Dells that we stopped in a cheese and gift shop we had passed a few times while traveling to other destinations in town. It was inside this glorious shop that I found my wheel of cheese. There it was, sitting amongst its brothers Havarti and Gouda



and Swiss, propped up in a refrigerated display. I immediately ran to the cheese wheel, that wonderful, delicious cheese wheel, and grasped it to my chest. I had found my souvenir. It was the most clichéd item I could get from the land of Wisconsin, and I was overjoyed. My trip was complete.

While my quest for my wheel of cheese was mightily frivolous, the rest of my trip was memorable and not without depth. It is always an experience to travel to an unknown city and sit amongst its population, just watching people pass by. Tasting the local flavor, both literally through restaurants, and figuratively through historical monuments and museums, local flora and fauna, and talking to inhabitants, is essential in growing and learning as a human being and resident of the earth – expanding our own little corners of the earth.





Sergio A. Poveda



Don't You Remember?

Danyelle Pullens

It was a pretty day,
the sun was shining its
pretty pretty smile
and the clouds seemed to
glide from place to place.

Don't you remember, Daddy?

My tiny fingers held the fishing pole,
awkward and not yet strong enough
to cast it on my own. You wrapped
your hands over mine and together we swayed
back

and

forth

back

and

forth

until we let the line go.

Don't you remember, Daddy?

I caught a fish that day,
something small, blue, and new.
"We'll keep it," you said. And
I said no, because the fish was a baby
and I remember saying
"Babies need their daddies,
just like I need you."

Don't you remember?

Daddy?



Flatline

Blake Fields

Their rubber gloves are
beating on his chest
Now; I stand
Teeth and Fists clenched.
Pale yellow, his skin
is a waxy mold, misshapen
Over broken, weary bones,
No fight left therein
He flops under their blows
I need to say it, scream it
But I can't
"Stop!"
She utters
More croak than word.
She knows it's over, that
He wouldn't want to come back
Not like this.

I knew when I saw how he was
Breathing earlier
Shallow, restless.
Now there is
No breath left

Only silence
And tears
And frowns behind breathing masks
And the floor
Kicking at my knees



Vagabond Spirit

Hannah Lawson

The skyline glows. It's as if the stars themselves, burning brightly, have swooped down from the inky sky to rest on the pinnacles of the city. Sharp edges against the blackness define a cathedral to our near left, and farther from us, turrets made of stone. The structures seem to exhale a thousand stories of kings and heroes.

Here, at the peak of St. Stephen's Basilica, Niki and I huddle beneath the scattered snow. Her hands are in her pockets, while mine, fumbling, adjust my thick coat. Exactly eight hours ago, Niki and I shook hands for the first time. Over coffee, her broken English challenged my few words of Hungarian. Now we gaze into the misty night as friends.

The Danube runs faithfully below us, shaping the city into halves with its purple ribbon of water. Niki points out a long, dusky boat floating just near the bank and a shrouded hill meeting the horizon. "Soon, we'll climb it to catch the sunrise in our hands," she tells me, her translation lovelier than mine could be. This is Budapest; this is the city of kings.

Three-hundred seventy days and six airplane rides later, my spirit has been captured by the native drums of Port-au-Prince. Dust swirls around my legs in an endless fury. The noises are strange and assaulting: roosters and wild dogs, the chatter of twenty small, vivacious orphans, and a Granny wailing at the gate. All night long, the chants and drum beats carry on. A tiny girl giggles as I twirl her, and her pink dress flows around and around. "You have love for the children," the orphanage guard calls to me, his left foot plodding in front of the right. His jeans drag in the dust, designed for a taller man and longer legs.

I pull my draped skirt up to my knees and let the breeze dance around my feet, mimicking the native girls. In that moment, as we silently eat mangos in the shade, we are no different from each other.

This is Haiti; this is a country of faces filled with hope against the odds.

These are the places my heart has been both ravaged and made whole. My vagabond spirit cries out for the messiness of a world that is beyond the borders of my hometown. I crave dust in my sandals and the chafing of rough mountain wind on my face. The world is both imperfect and sublime in its glory, and I will not rest until I've set both feet in all its crooks and bends.





Isaac White



He Tells Me

Laine Johnson

We are sitting in his car
He leans forward, pushes back my hair,
Tells me I am beautiful
I shake my head.

He tells me he likes the way my hair
Falls down the small of my back.
I blush and say
Well, I like reading and playing my guitar.

He says my eyes are pretty and dark as the night
I smile and tell him how there are so many places
I want to see before I die.

He tells me my cheeks are rosy and pink,
I tell him I like people who challenge me,
Who make me think.

He says my smile lights up the whole room,
I tell him I'm most happy when
I am in a creative mood.

He tells me I am beautiful,
I shake my head again.

I cannot, will not,
Be his girl-next-door.
His words are kind, but
My soul is where my beauty lies.

These surfaces he mentions
Are only a fragment of me, not
What is inside my mind.
Filled with passion and curiosity;
Wanderlust and creativity.

He cannot be the doodles
In my margins,
If I am just a pretty frame hanging
On his walls.



Grecian Romance

Danyelle Pullens

Take my shrouded hand and get to know me
Let us dance up high and twirl through the stars
And leave behind the world with its old scars
Stop. Do not believe everything you see.
You told me once you wanted to be free,
To wield the power of your long dead czars,
Yet this desire left you behind bars
So sit back and listen, quiet your plea.
I leave in your hands my kingdom, my home
Sear into your naïve heart my true name.
Upon your brow lay kisses of garnet,
Join hands beneath this ancient ornate dome.
There's no going back, your essence I claim,
Who you love is what you fear incarnate.



In That Moment

Hanna Hollis

January 2008. I was sitting at the dining room table, staring at my pitiful attempt at a DNA model. As usual, procrastination had gotten the better of me, and I had resorted to cramming a month's worth of work into a single weekend. The double helix that I had suspended from a marionette stand looked nowhere close to the figure I had found in my freshman biology book. Meanwhile, my sister was sitting catty-cornered to me, whizzing her way through her seventh-grade math homework.

"Girls, your mom and I need to talk to you," my dad said, bringing me from my unproductive daze. His voice had that ominous "family meeting" tone which usually signified that one, or both, of us were in serious trouble. Here we go, I thought, buckling down for a four hour long lecture on whatever it was that we had done wrong this time and why it's wrong and that we must swear to never do it again so long as we live. I twisted around in my chair to see both of my parents standing in the frame of the wide entry into the dining room. *Of course they would choose now of all times to have a talk, because what was quite possibly the biggest assignment of the year, was due tomorrow.*

My parents didn't seem to take notice of my plight. My mom moved around the table to sit across from my sister. I slowly straightened myself in my chair, following her path the way plants follow the sun. My mom folded her arms on the table in front of her like some kind of protective barrier. My dad stood behind her with a supportive hand on her shoulder.

Something was wrong. I felt it in my gut. This wasn't the normal protocol. What was going on? Fear and a restricting sense of anxiety began to well up inside me. I stole a glance at my sister. She looked equally perplexed.

It was a long time before my mom broke the silence. "As you two know, I had a routine doctor's visit last week." She stopped. My sister and I waited apprehensively. "I..." Her voice cracked. "I..." Tears began to brim in her eyes.

I froze. I didn't know what to do. Mom wasn't supposed to cry. She never cried. All at once, every deadly disease I knew of rushed into my head and began to swirl around in a dizzying whirlwind. Whispers in the back of my head suggested that my mom had one of these diseases. I told them they were wrong, though something inside me told me that they were right. I pushed them aside. That wasn't going to happen. Not to us.

My dad picked up on his cue, as if he were once again an actor in the theater, and took over the tale. "In June your mom went to the regular doctor for her annual checkup. The doctor performed a mammogram.



Everything came back clear. But, when she went to the gynecologist last week, they decided to do another mammogram. They found a tumor roughly the size of a tennis ball. Your mom has been diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer. Because of how fast the tumor grew, the particular type of breast cancer your mom has is classified as an aggressive form.”

I zoned out as my dad went on about what that meant. The worst possible scenario played out in my head. What if mom died? Even entertaining that thought terrified me. I couldn't begin to fathom not having her around anymore. I was a high school freshman. I knew very well that breast cancer was a leading killer of women. Especially when it was severe. Like mom's. But surely I wouldn't be robbed of my mother. It was too early in life to even be considering not having her around. How would our family continue without her?

When I finally tuned back in, my dad was giving us the brief version of what the plan of action would be as we worked through the next few months. E-mails would be sent to all of our teachers and our principals, alerting them to the situation. He said it would be up to us, however, to tell our friends, should we choose to. He went on about how, on the days that mom was going to have her chemotherapy, and later radiation, treatments, it would be arranged for a neighbor or family friend to take us home. He told us that they were having house keys made for us.

“This also means that you will both have to pick up some of the slack around the house to keep it in order. All three of us will,” my dad told us.

My sister and I nodded that we understood, but really we were both just trying to take it all in. I wondered if she felt the same way I did. Like this was a nightmare from which we could not force ourselves to wake, no matter how desperately we wished for it. This whole thing simply couldn't be happening.

After what felt like an hour of sitting in silence, my parents left the table. Nobody had the energy, or the courage, to speak lest we break down. Besides, the dogs were begging to be taken out once more before bedtime. My sister left to get a shower, and probably to mull over all that had been said. I was left alone at the table; alone with the failed DNA model that was due tomorrow. Funny how only a few hours before, I had been fretting over pieces of wood and plastic. But, in that moment, it looked utterly insignificant. After all, what were a couple of sticks and strips of blue plastic, when life hung in the balance?





Emma Verstraete



Influence

Abby Edele

Let us sit on your lawn, Miss O'Connor,
Sipping tea in the shade,
Away from the harsh Georgia heat,
While your peacocks strut and roam,
And you'll tell me how folks are never
what they seem to be.

Shall we stroll down to Bath's spas, Miss Austen,
With arms linked as sisters,
Sharing gossip from our letters,
While ladies flirt and men boast,
And you'll tell me about romance, wit,
and independence.

Dance with me at a rich ball, Mr. Wilde,
With the utmost lavish
Trimmings in all of Londontown,
Gaily eschewing decorum,
And you'll tell me the importance
of study and dress.

Come, Mr. Twain, we'll hop aboard a boat,
River rippling below,
Laughing mercilessly as we
Observe humans and their quirks,
And you'll tell me about adventure
and opening eyes.



Hickory and White Paint

Emily Bounds

Thirty-eight cents in pennies and dimes,
Butterfly wristwatch who knows the wrong time.
Porcelain china doll, hair full of dust,
Safety pins, paper clips, hidden in rust.

Birthday cards from six years ago,
Frolicking penguins in globes of snow.
Old report cards, some praised and some shamed.
Broken wax candles who once knew a flame.

Remnants of glitter, a jingling elf,
Made when my tiptoes wouldn't reach the top shelf.
Pictures of sleepovers, bows in our hair,
With our footie pajamas and stuffed teddy bears.

Un-sticky Post-its, dried-up red pens,
One used-up glowstick, a pencil that bends,
Glittery lip gloss, a purple mood ring.
A music box dancer who no longer sings.

Paper pressed daisies from walks in the park,
Hid in his pockets after it got dark.

A torn scrap of paper, a number to call.
The chain and the locket I loved most of all.

In the front corner a small metal screw
From the round wooden drawer knob, laying askew.
A thin, golden key to who-knows-where.
Someday, I'll need this. I'll put it – there.



Black Magic

Blake Fields

I roll out of bed and plummet to the unforgiving floor below. In a tangled knot of blankets, I thrash in my room made black by the curtains so that not even the orange glow of the street lamps touches the walls. Salty sweat streams into my mouth as I scream out for help. Exhausted from fighting invisible adversaries, I pause. I was hallucinating. There is no swarm of yellow jackets in my bedroom; there is no buzzing but that from the ceiling fan. I can still feel the stings all over my body. The sites still throb like countless tiny little hearts dotting my skin. I untie myself from the blankets, fan them out over my mattress. I decide not to cover myself when I climb back to my pillow. I'm hot anyway. Hot like I was earlier that day.

It was one of those days in southeast Missouri when you debate even taking a shower; as soon as you leave the bathroom you immediately sweat so much due to the combined heat and humidity that you begin to suspect you forgot to dry yourself off. So I didn't. My 15-year-old body was used to staying sweaty from football practices anyway. Pops and I were going out to the deer woods to make a salt lick anyway, so there was really no sense in freshening up when a day of dirt and salty sweat were ahead of me. Besides, there was no time for a shower as I could already hear Pops calling out in his daily search for his "goddamn keys."

My father excelled in three practices beyond any other man that I have ever known: hunting, misplacing his keys, and cursing. Of all these, he was most talented at this last item. Roger Fields was always a true poet when it came to profanity. While most angry men simply strung together lists of random obscenities, my father drew his out in combinations of true sprezzatura that could make any sailor worth his salt blush as he cut him with each precisely placed syllable. He was a sorcerer, and these words were his black magic. After reciting these incantations, my kid brother, Kyle, and I were instantly silenced when we bickered too loudly while the latest episode of *24* was on television; his long lost keys, wallets, and tools would suddenly appear in places we had already searched. These words held a special, mysterious power; his powers never failed.

Nor did they this time. As I walked into the kitchen, he ordered me to go grab the pickax from the shed while he pulled the truck around. I wished I could master those incantations myself, for I knew the command of those words would allow me to harness the powers of fear and authority that my father held behind his teeth. Of course, like any teenage boy I practiced while I was out on the football field or with my cousins



feeding their hogs slop and throwing rocks at the longhorn bulls, but my parents were very traditional: Pops had made it clear with a hand around my shirt collar lifting me three feet off of the ground that his sons were never to speak like that in his house. So I never practiced around him.

With both windows down we spat salty sunflower seed shells all the way to our hunting spot nestled in a sharp bend in the Mississippi river. We rode in his big, blue Ford F-150 in our typical silence. When it came to hunting whitetail deer there was never much conversation outside of where he had recently found a new rub or scrape, or how the sheriff's boy had just seen a monster twelve-point stomping around nearby. We pulled into the clearing and hopped out of the truck and then trekked for what seemed like miles up the steady incline to the spot where we would eventually set up a tree stand in about two months; I could still make out the scars in the old abandoned telephone pole where the stand had rubbed into the wood the season prior. We walked about 50 yards more and he stopped, both of us sweating and panting in the July sun.

"Reckon this as good 'a place as any?" he gasped between breaths as he wiped his brow with the belly of his stained Bass Pro Shop t-shirt.

"Yup."

"Well, I'll sit here and mark the spot. You go on down and grab the pick."

I didn't understand why we hadn't carried up the equipment with us, but I jogged back down the long hill to the truck without question. I grabbed the pickax by its splintered handle in one hand and the bag of Swamp Donkey salt lick mix in the other and started hiking back up. With the added weight of the mix and the pickax, my travel was a bit more intense, and I realized why Pops wanted no part in carrying the stuff. I focused my eyes on his silhouette standing at the top of the hill and tried to power through each step.

Then the Earth and Sun vanished, consumed by a jet-black cloud. First there was a deafening buzzing noise that sounded like someone was firing up a chainsaw right next to my face. Not a second after, the stinging began. In my focus I had stepped on an underground nest of yellow jackets. At this revelation, I dropped everything and began to sprint back down the hill into the clearing, yelling as loud as I could. The bugs were everywhere; I could feel them stinging every inch of my skin. As I opened my mouth to scream they climbed inside to sting my tongue and cheeks. They stung my eyelids, and I felt their legs scratch as they wriggled under my clothes to violate even the most intimate parts of me to ensure I would be completely covered in their venom-wounds.

I couldn't outrun them, so I tried another tactic. I threw myself to the dusty earth and began to roll down the hill, hoping to crush those under my clothing with my weight. But the seemingly invincible vermin



held fast, stinging me time and time again. I resolved to strip down to my boxers as I reached the bottom. I ripped off my shirt and pants and sprinted as fast as I could far into the clearing until the buzzing and stinging eventually subsided. I bent over and gripped my knees in pain until my fingertips were white. After about five minutes my father came shambling up to me, his head swiveling on his neck, searching for the insects. He could see that I was holding back from showing any pain or rage. He knew I wanted to use his forbidden magic spells. He knew I was afraid to do so in front of him.

“Go on and say whatever you gotta say,” he looked at me and said, “it’s just us men out here.”

I couldn’t believe it. My father was talking to me like I was a man; he was permitting me to talk like a man, too. And I did. I emptied the book of all the words and phrases I had soaked up listening to him through the years. I swatted a few stragglers from the swarm that still hovered around me standing watch as I unleashed my long-kept power. The incantations I chose made the whole hive the illegitimate sons of whores, fornicators damned by God, eaters of feces, rotten motherfu-

“Whoa, whoa, son. That’s enough,” Pops caught me. I hadn’t realized I was marching back up toward the hive in my fury. “Let’s get on back and doctor you up.”

I realized in that moment that I couldn’t see out of one eye, and my vision in the other was just a sliver due to the swelling. The visor mirror in the truck revealed the damage. We counted about forty different sting sites. My blood was still boiling on the way back. I even had the nerve to break the sacred silence. I asked him accusingly where he had been the whole time I was being attacked. He explained that he started to run to me at first thinking I was snake-bitten, but when he saw me flailing my arms in the air he knew exactly what was happening. He explained that when he was my age he had flipped a hay bale containing a bumblebee hive. He was also stung about forty times, but he went into anaphylactic shock and his throat swelled shut. He had almost died in a hospital bed. He couldn’t come to my aid because just one sting could put him in the hospital. I felt in that moment that we understood each other better than we ever had, and I rather enjoyed the silence for the rest of the ride.

The next day we returned to the hill with a Mountain Dew bottle filled with gasoline. With still-swollen fingers, I turned it upside down in the entrance to their earthen hive, uttered one last incantation, and lit a match.





Mai Urai



Sing me Purple

Hannah Lawson

My soul is stained in purple,
(Twilight's colors of who
You are.)

My heart is bruised in black,
(An acquaintance with
Your scars.)

My smile is drenched in yellow,
(And crimson and turquoise, too.)

My journals are written in scarlet,
(Bold secrets that
You knew.)

So paint me crimson,
Sing me purple
The chorus will be black
And blue

My life is a canvas,
A splattering of paint
Color it what you choose.

Colors
contradict,
blend,
bleed,
splatter a canvas
with words I'll choose not to read.

My life is colored
scarlet,
yellow,
black,
blue

Dearest,
if only you knew.



One Last Song

Liz Arnold

I walk onto the stage with a faux smile on my face,
Stopping halfway for a bow at the applause.
I slowly slide onto the wooden bench,
Taking a deep breath holding back my jitters
As my fingers glide onto the ivory keys.
The first note sounds and morphs into melodies
Knowing when my song concludes I will not return.
A single tear journeys down the curves of my face,
As the notes rise and fall and the sounds intensify.
It's best for me to stop dreaming of notes, rests, lines, and spaces
And I must go on to new and better things.
One last note before my song concludes,
I must not lose composure, not on this stage—
The charade must last a few moments longer,
Before reality sets in and I step away from this life forever.
The final note resounds throughout the room;
In these final moments, I can't help but be happy.
I may never step onto a stage and show off this persona,
But I cannot deny myself, for the urge is too strong,
The joys of creating the bittersweet sounds
Of one last song.



Little Red

Danyelle Pullens

Everything in the forest seemed dead.

No birds were chirping to fill the afternoon silence. The sky seemed an endless blue with no clouds or sun in sight. The deer that usually drank from the nearby creek were nonexistent, as were the other various nondescript creatures whose names he never bothered to remember.

The wolf snorted from his relaxed position on the flat rock, the sun soaking into his thick black fur. His golden eyes danced from tree to tree, trying to remember the deep, calming green of the layers of leaves, the rich, passionate purple of the flowers that littered the forest floor, and the vibrant, obnoxious yellow of the birds that fluttered about.

None of it was coming back.

He turned his attention to his ever-constant companion. Her *red*, *red* cape the color of fresh blood covered her body in a thick blanket, hiding everything except her childish face from his view. Long, wild, midnight-black hair spilled from her hood, shifting with every movement of her body. Pale fingers danced along the wreath of flowers between them, seeming to glow in their own luminescence. Pink geraniums, blue hyacinths, white mock oranges, and orange lilies all came together in a large, interwoven circle.

Your level of stupidity is astounding.

The words seemed to echo from the empty trees surrounding them. The wolf snarled in anger at the insult, staring into the eyes that frightened him so much. Their color was a *dark*, *dark* brown that almost seemed black, making that eternally childish face seem almost demonic. They stared right back, unafraid; her pale pink lips curled into an almost indulgent smile that made her seem like a parent watching over her adorable, misguided child.

It pissed him off to no end.

Her *blank*, *blank* eyes continued to stare at him while her luminescent fingers continued to expertly dance around the crown of assorted pinks, blues, oranges, and whites. He watched the hypnotizing movements with a trancelike quality, ignoring everything but those pale digits.

I will always be here, my friend. A constant thorn at your side.

The phrase 'my friend' was spoken in a tone drenched in a contradictory mixture of sarcasm and sincerity. He never remembered agreeing to be her friend; she was just kind of...there.

He snorted through his extended muzzle as her smile turned mischievous, fitting into the contours of her face more naturally. She



always seemed to find him, he thought absently. No matter how far he ran or where he hid, the little girl in the *red, red* cape would always show up eventually, like an annoying little lady bug. Both are sure to taste nasty, he thought certainly. Disregarding this fact, he vowed as a pup to never eat a bug in his life.

You shouldn't deceive yourself, Mr. Wolf, she said with a small, humorless smirk. *You know I taste delicious.*

He snorted again before turning to his side, presenting her with his black-covered back. Trying to ignore her giggles that once again echoed around him in an endless orchestra, he refocused on trying to remember the colors that were once so prominent in his life. Absently, he listened to the soft, almost crisp crunches of the stems of the flowers as they fell prey to her restless hands.

They fell into the silence that had become almost comforting in its consistent presence. He tried to remember the details that had made his world so vibrant in the past while she focused on the construction of the colorful wreath.

You know, Mr. Wolf, I almost hate you. You are allowed to be wild and free to your heart's content, while I am stuck here. Why can't I be free, Mr. Wolf?

He considered her question, answers coming to mind but none of them the one that she wanted so desperately to hear. So, like every other day, he would ignore the glowing little girl with the face of an angel and the eyes of the devil.

Closing his dull gold eyes, the wolf with the *black, black* fur forced his tired body to sleep, knowing that when he awoke the ghost of his *precious* Little Red would be gone, leaving behind a wilted wreath made of folly, constancy, deceit and hatred lying atop a *red, red* cape stained crimson and worn with age.

He slept, knowing her memory would haunt him again tomorrow. Stealing the color and sound from his world and forcing him into the hell that was the memory of his only friend in his cold, lonely existence. Forcing him to remember the day that he had killed and eaten her in a fit of rage, the dagger of her betrayal lodged deep in his back. Forcing him to remember her last damning words. The big, bad wolf's lips curled into a toothy smile.

Oh my, the ghost said in mock innocence. *What large teeth you have.*





Isaac White



The Ashes of a Man I Used to Be

Devin Mitchell Durbin

Can I put the pieces together
in a coherent piece of poetry
and will they come out as a perfect representation of me?
Can I find the words
to put into a verse
that will survive the test of time? You see?
I've been getting lost on roads for years
traveling and sitting still.
I've been roaming these halls in my mind
till the days are done.

I used to have a hard time believing,
or maybe it was I just wasn't ready to be seeking
I think sometimes it's hard for me to pray.

What do you want me to say?

Laziness breeds contempt
and contempt leads to something else
running down a dark road
just to see where it might lead.
I think sometimes we need to know
what it's like to be weak.

What do you want me to say?

I regret the things I've done,
I hate some of the songs I've sung
because they were written in weakness
and I've come to realize I was wrong.

I had some undealt with emotions
winding through a raging ocean
I just learned to deal with hatred
breeding in my soul.

What do you want me to say?
I'm sorry?
What do you want me to say?



I've got a lot to atone for
I need to pray a whole lot more.
I've got a lot to work on, you see,
but there's someone bigger than me
and He saved me.

What do you want me to say?

I'm sorry for everything I've done
but that doesn't get rid of what was wrong,
and there's still so much to do
so much to say
and He's working on my heart every day
to change my ways.

By burning the past
and scraping away the dross
and melting me down into something new.
Leaving ashes behind
of the man I used to be.



The Debater's Clock

Stephen Hawkes

There once was a boy,
Of 10 plus 3
Who loved to study and talk.

A gifted debater;
Now or later,
His arguments would always rock.

But one day,
An opponent came
With little-to-no forewarning

A loud black box,
Called a clock
Argued with him one morning.

He argued with logic,
He argued with skill
He turned the clock on its head.

But with a great buzz,
The clock replied
It was time to get out of bed.



The Classics

Blake Fields

Vincent thought he would burst as he heard the gargantuan MacBook Pro laptop computer boot up. He couldn't believe that his great-great-grandmother had carried this clunky old machine around in her day. She must have had muscular arms. She had apparently used it when she went to *college*, a place where she was a *student* who had to attend class to slowly learn information over time. She was apparently also a part of a *sorority*, which was some sort of cult. How honorable she was for such hard work. Nowadays, Vincent and his friends simply had information uploaded to their Supplementary Cerebral Mainframe (S.C.M.) and they would know it instantly. He was sad that he never got to meet his great-great-grandmother; she could have shown him so much. It was a shame she died so young, only 113 years! Nowadays, that would have been time for her mid-life crisis.

"This was my mother's mother's brain back in the day," his grandmother had told him when she gave the old computer to him two weeks ago on his eighteenth birthday. "I've kept it for some reason all these years; I don't know why, but I know you like old things, so you can have it. Enjoy it, that is, if you can figure out how to make it work again."

He hadn't figured it out. For living in a time that was so driven by technology, Vincent was hopelessly lost when it came to any sort of computer. All he knew was how to make them entertain him. That's what friends like Zach were for. Zach could fix anything, and he really got thrills from making old machines run again. But that's where his interest ended; he didn't care for artistic things like Vincent did.

Vincent awkwardly fumbled around on what an S.C.M. upload informed him was called a *mousepad* on the MacBook as he searched through the relic's programs to find the classic music he craved. He allowed the cursor to hover over an icon that featured a pair of eighth notes. This had to be *iTunes*. He pressed the mousepad down until it clicked. His cursor transformed into a wheel that featured every color on the light spectrum. It spun in circles for what seemed like eons before the program finally opened. Tears brimmed in his eyes as he read the names of classic artists in the playlists: Miley Cyrus, Ke\$ha, Justin Bieber, One Direction. Zach muttered something about Vincent's being melodramatic as he packed up his things and left. Vincent didn't care. Zach was a stupid *pendejo*.

Vincent, still struggling with the mousepad, clicked on Miley's "We Can't Stop" and leaned back as the rich sounds of the past filled the room. He had heard the songs before from accessing digital public archives, but nothing sounded better than a vintage MP3. He couldn't



stand the sound of contemporary music. Mainstream pop music was nothing but mindless, repetitive droning. Miley and her contemporaries were so rich in their lyricism.

And we can't stop. And we won't stop.

He belonged with them, back at the turn of the millennium, back in the early 2000s. His current culture was a bland mess. He would give anything to be with the old artists. Even with the advances in technology, he could not travel back in time to join his fellow Beliebers at one of Justin's concerts or see ladies elegantly twerking along to Juicy J.

Can't you hear that boom, badoom, boom, boom, badoom, boom, bass?

"Ah, Ms. Minaj, you vixen," Vincent said to himself. He liked that word. "Vixen." No one used it anymore. A bright light flashed before his eyes. The world before him was replaced with a clock flashing the time, 7 P.M. It was his Internal Retinal Implant System (I.R.I.S.) alarm telling him it was time to leave for work. One conscious blink turned off the alarm. He powered down the ancient MacBook, hoping that it would revive again upon his return in the morning. He shambled over to the transport pod and jetted out onto the tracks of New St. Louis, the megatropolis he called home.

As he rode along the electromagnetic tracks high above the ground, he surveyed the massive city. It must have looked so different in his ancestors' days. He had a hard time imagining it being as small as it once was. He tried to visualize the old monument called the Gateway Arch in the place where it would have stood were it still present. Information he had uploaded told him that the Government of United Peoples had torn the structure down as it "stood as proud testament of contemptible deeds of cruel imperialism."

Vincent's pod slowed, and then stopped smoothly and opened in the docking station of the New St. Louis Museum of Technological Development. He loved his job at the museum. He was the nighttime custodian for the floor dedicated to the early 2000s. He was no techie like Zach, who helped run the 3D I.R.I.S. virtual tour system for the museum. He was much more content to be at the museum physically. It was a small paradise for him to be surrounded by relics of an era to which he felt he belonged. And to top it off, the job was in no way demanding. There was a much more convenient virtual tour available for all floors, hardly anyone ever actually showed up during the day, meaning his shifts were typically free of any real cleaning or maintenance work (drones did most of it if there were any messes, anyway). He was glad the Government of United Peoples had taken so many initiatives to eliminate unemployment. Everyone had a job. Everyone had a function.

He waved to Carlyle, his daytime counterpart. Carlyle did not respond. "*iAy, cabrón!*" Vincent whispered to himself. He never waved



back. He was probably watching some stupid reality show like *New Vegas Swingers* on his I.R.I.S. like usual. For someone who worked at a historical museum, Carlyle sure didn't seem to appreciate any part of the bounty that surrounded him daily. What a waste. However much he wanted to continue to chastise his colleague for his ignorance, he couldn't continue as he knew he would soon be passing the long hours of the night shift watching shows on his own I.R.I.S., but his time would be spent much more rationally. Instead of wasting time on those awful shows, he would watch something that was actually worthwhile: those more wholesome and thought-provoking programs of the early 2000s. Perhaps he would search the museum's public media archives for more episodes of his personal favorite classic programs like *The Bachelor*, *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, or *Jersey Shore*. He decided he shouldn't be so hard on Carlyle; after all, it wasn't his fault that his mind couldn't keep up with the complexities of those shows. Sometimes even the expansive capabilities of the S.C.M. couldn't help the simple mind.

Before he started on his nightly session of binge-watching loads of classics, Vincent needed to complete the one part of his job that actually required him to leave his desk—the round. He usually completed this task once per night at the beginning of the shift. Essentially all he had to do was go around and check every display case to make sure everything was locked up and in its proper place. Sure, a drone could have easily done this task, but the Government had to rationalize his job somehow. He walked through the aisles of old technologies, jiggling the sliding crystalline door of every case to check the resistance of the locking mechanism. He strolled past lines of huge, flat LCD televisions. Apparently people were once limited to wherever these giants were anchored. He shook his head in awe and admiration for his ancestors who had faced and survived such odd depravity. Vincent recognized the white Apple logo on the old iPhone 5 in its case as he passed, which matched the one on the MacBook Pro at home. To have to carry that around everywhere would be a pain, especially in today's society. It would be so painfully obvious on the skintight clothing of today.

Vincent continued on with his task, dreading what he knew was imminent. Eventually he reached the rows of empty, darkened display cases. This section was dedicated to the period from the early 2230s to the late 2240s, a dark age in the timeline of technological development. It was in the 2230s that the Neo-Luddites rallied against the Government of United Peoples and their use of technology. The Neo-Luddites attacked technological centers through acts of terrorism. They wiped out immense quantities of cyberspace, destroyed machines, assassinated entire development teams at major technological contributors like SensoriCorp, the master inventors of hardware like I.R.I.S. It was all a reaction of fear that the Government would use technologies to spy on them, to



control them. Vincent was just glad that armies of archive defenders had managed to protect some sectors of digitized culture, like the songs he loved so much.

He had lost some members of his extended family in the wars, aunts and uncles he never met, but he was told they were “proud defenders of technology, science, and truth.” Sure, he had never met most of them, but he was still terrified of the history this display represented. Some nights he could continue to displays beyond this point in his round. That night was not one of them. Vincent spun on his heels, ducked his head, and shuffled quickly out of the dark area in the direction of the archives, toward the light. He needed something to take his mind off of the display. Snooki and The Situation would surely do the trick.





Isaac White



The Four Changing Seasons

Jaymie-Rae Martin

All the colors dance
On everything that I see
A cold breath still strays

The colors turn green
The heat intensifying
It is hard to breathe

I can see fire
But nothing burns on these trees
Just a homey smell

Always cold to touch
Softly caressing my face
Melting into tears

Seasons change again
Every four months of the year
The changing beauty



The Missing Poem

Emily Bounds

It isn't so much that I *miss* you.
It's that you are missing from me,
As they say in French.
Present tense, because it's constant.
Not me, but you doing the action of missing, because I am patient.

Many moments a day, *tu me manques*.
Many a small detail reminds me
That you are in the current state
Of missing from me.

When I listen to a hymn,
When I drive past a pretty blue house,
When I play piano in the air,
At least once in every prayer I say,

When I'm speaking French,
When I read certain verses,
When your mother sends me letters,
As I try to forget you haven't sent one,

When I color in the book we shared,
When I'm between dreaming and waking,
When I read Shel Silverstein,
When I drink chamomile tea with honey,

When any of our places come up in conversation, like Biloxi, Alaska,
Georgia, and Springfield, of course,
Mostly your California,

When I take a nap with that giant bear,
When someone asks if I'm ticklish,
When any of those songs play,
As I remember and hum along,

When *Godzilla* happens to be on TV,
When I'm scrolling through my photos,
When someone orders a calzone,
When I run daily to the mailbox.



But the most important moments
Happen when I picture you:
In your mountains and rivers,
In front of listening travelers,
With your guitar in hand,
With truth pouring from your heart,

And I am glad for the miles that separate.
Because all the joy, all the good,
All the teaching, all the wandering
And the wondering that you do
Could not be done at all
If you were not missing from me.



The Ebb and Flow of Sir Jacques DePluntaine

Courtney Cox

For this tale, I've taken inspiration from the Kula Exchange, which is a traditional symbolic material exchange that helps maintain and define the social relationships in the Trobriand Islands. In this Exchange, bracelets and necklaces were exchanged clockwise and counterclockwise as a sign of trust and respect toward one's neighbors. The networks of exchange are intricate and massive, and the trips between the islands are often long and dangerous. The value of the jewelry is symbolic, and for an outsider who was not familiar with the tradition, it could be easily misunderstood.

Sir Jacques DePluntaine sailed into the Trobriand Islands a man blessed through the danger, odds a thousand to one, but with the insight of none. On board *The Merry Seafarer*, he was the last survivor. The year was 1491, and he had traveled many leagues from his humble abode in England. He began his journey on *The Merry Seafarer* a lowly sailor, instructed to clean the upper deck and prepare the daily gruel for the rest of the crew. Now, Jacques was not a strong man, nor was he attractive or articulate. As the lowest ranking man on the crew, he was often the butt of jokes and pranks. Night after night he woke up with his prized heirloom, a golden bowl from which he ate his daily rations, hidden around the ship. Although he was, as they say, the underdog of the crew, his inability to stand up for himself and fight for his honor was glaring. To say he lacked pride was but an understatement, and with each prank performed against him, Jacques felt himself sink inward, begging for a sign that his life was worth the pain. He saw, himself, little reason for his existence. Although his fellow seamen did not comprehend the extent of the pain they caused the young sailor, each morning when he awoke to find the bowl once again removed from underneath his cot, he prayed each day could be his last.

Of course, as bullies are oft to do, the rest of the crew stared through Jacques transparently, doubting that a man of such outward simplicity would be marred so completely by their pranks. As they saw Jacques drag his weary body to the top deck in search of his prize possession, the captain exclaimed, "That boy has got to grow a sense of humor. He certainly isn't growing anything else!" Jacques heard these insults as he picked up his golden bowl, yet again cast aside under a pile of ropes and filled with the guts of a dozen rotting fish. He reached into the tumultuous sea, washing the bowl in the salty abyss. As he gazed down, watching the guts release themselves to a watery grave, he caught



his own reflection in the wavy mirror below. Jacques saw himself all too clearly: his small frame weak, clothes tattered, mouth in an all too familiar frown, not a friend to his name. And slowly, simply, his self revulsion led him to climb over the edge, jumping into the sea, obliterating the reflection that he so abhorred. It was easy, letting go, and as Jacques sank to the bottom of the sea, he had no happy images flash before his eyes.

He closed his eyes to the water around him, accepting his watery grave. Yet, unbeknownst to Jacques, he was being watched. The eye of the whale was enormous, bluer than the water that surrounded them, but lit with a spark of life that Jacques so severely lacked. Touching the sinking man with his fin, Jacques was resurrected by the power of the whale. In that instant, he was spirited back to the deck of the ship, dry of the salty seawater, holding the golden bowl in his hands.

Imagine the shock of dear Jacques, to lose track of time and space and his own actions! Jacques looked down into the water with a mixture of shock and amazement as the fin splashed up towards the rising sun, and the eye of an untold beast came in line with his own. The man grasped the edge of *The Merry Seafarer*, his gold clanking to the wooden floor as he held on for dear life. He waited for the waves of the giant whale to rock the ship, eyes closed. "Maybe this is what dying feels like...I must be hallucinating, but soon this will be over!" the dazed sailor assured himself, although the thought was in vain. The seconds dragged on, and through tentative slits of his eyes, Jacques peeked down at the water below him, now seeing only the calm, blue water. He released his death grip on the side of the ship, turning his back on the sea, intending to put this moment of madness behind him when he heard a voice. The noise was quiet at first, a whisper muted by the clatter of the men on the deck below preparing for their day.

"Jacques...Jacques..."

The desperate sailor teetered to the edge of the ship, longing for the assurance of the cobalt waves pulling him under once again. The fin reached toward the sky once more, a shimmering gray, and the eye soon appeared once more. In the expansive pupil, Jacques somehow knew he could trust this creature, the being so large that the entire ocean was his home. And as he gazed, still, the voice returned, quiet yet strong as he instructed the shaking man of his plan for a second chance, of the accomplishments they would achieve together.

The whale had seen Jacques, watched his struggles as he saw the tricks performed in his honor each dawn. Despite the ploys against him, the whale felt Jacques' sadness, and was inspired by the vulnerability of his spirit.

"I have saved you, Jacques, so that your life will not pass in vain. The sea is a cemetery to many, but your fate is now intertwined with mine, the master of these waters." The enormous sea creature now coughed



up a small glass container of poison onto the deck, a salvage of another unfortunate ship, its cargo floating free in the timeless sea. “One drop is all it takes. Do it slowly, and soon you will be the king of this ship. I will lead your way, just as I have taken control of your destiny.”

It began the next day. A man dropped. There was no struggle, no scream for help. The crew, trusting and brutish, never thought to point their dying fingers at the lowly chef or the extra ingredient he added to their gruel, taking just enough to overdose one man a day. Jacques felt the fire of revenge light within him, and with each death he orchestrated, he felt himself crave his newfound control. In the early morning light, Jacques would sneak to the top deck and consult with the whale. They planned their voyage, constructing imaginary maps of their soon-to-be dynasty in the waves of the sea.

Each day, as a new man took his last breath, Jacques feigned concern and sorrow, the mirror of innocence that he lost within the great depths. But, amidst the claims of plague, he smiled a secret grin. With the help of the murderous ploys of the whale, Jacques alone held the fate of the ship, the fate of his own life. Soon he was the captain on an abandoned ship, bound for destiny and wealth. In the morning, Jacques awoke, master of his own craft, looking across the high seas and beyond the silhouette of his companion for land and the gold the natives on these backwards islands surely possessed. He would pillage them, the whale instructed; his success would not go unnoticed. He knighted himself, an uncharacteristic act, alone on the deck, within the gaze of the whale. For Jacques was changed, his mind rearranged for his second chance at life. Sir Jacques DePluntaine: master of his own destiny, more fortunate than any other. He had been tested, and he stepped forward victorious. He washed his bowl in the high seas, full from a double helping of gruel when he saw it...land!

The Merry Seafarer met the sand gracefully, that is, if a ship could possess grace. And in his craft, he watched. The island was small, and the people were few. “Savages,” said Jacques to himself as he saw their tan skin and skimpy grass skirts through the spy glass he had taken from the captain, his final victim. With the help of this device, Jacques remained hidden from view, looking upon his future subjects with increasing interest mixed with boiling disdain. From his observations, Jacques understood little. Their activities reminded him of his past life, the place he had left behind. They lived as families, prepared food, played with children. He watched for days, with such intensity that he felt as though the spy glass may crumble in his eager hands. And then, one day, he saw it.

There were boats, still out of view, but closer this time. The beloved spy glass was held to his peering eyes, and Jacques, who now considered himself the expert master of these lowly people, was filled with



shock with what he saw. “The savages...the savages...they’re trading... is that...jewelry?”

He saw it then, dear Jacques, his body covered in the wealth of these people. His tattered clothing would be cast aside and instead he would adorn himself in the riches of his conquest. His small body would become grand, shimmering with untold jewels. “This is just the beginning,” Jacques negotiated with himself. “Tonight! I must go and collect what is mine. I will take those bracelets and then I will go to another island and take more and more until I have robbed the world of its treasures!” With an amused laugh, Jacques tossed his golden bowl into the sea. “Like this will be any use to me now...if only the crew could see me now!”

Darkness came, and Sir Jacques watched as the savages made their way to their homes, leaving the bounty in the center of the town. “How silly they are!” he marveled, “It’s like they want me to steal from them. These beasts deserve what’s coming to them!” The silence of the night remained as Jacques made his way to the center of the village, unprotected and unprepared. At the center of the village, he grabbed the bracelets, obscured by darkness as they were. This was only the beginning, he was sure.

While he was collecting the bracelets and necklaces in his satchel, he saw her. She walked through the darkness unafraid, evidently unaware of the stranger who had intruded her village. Although he could not call her beautiful, not in his sense of the word, Jacques was drawn to her. Like the other women, she wore a grass skirt and even in the darkness, the absence of the rest of her clothing made him blush. He approached her, overcome by the loneliness of a man without a human in the world to call a friend. Yet, in his thick-soled boots, a stick cracked and the mysterious woman screamed immediately, with words he could not understand and a fear he did not recognize.

Yet, the thick soles that prompted his discovery began to flee; with such speed and agility that soon the torches and yells that pursued him were but flashes of light and murmurs in the distance. Jacques would take no more subjects, for in the darkness the bounty and the whale would be his sole companions. From humans, through their unexpected nature and propensity for fear, he was now removed.

He pushed the ship from its sandy embankment, and all the sea seemed to rise in his honor, pulling him in as the vessel poised itself for its next grand adventure. Yet, without the whale in sight, Jacques stood with the highest confidence; certain he possessed the skills to navigate his own ship without the all-knowing guidance of his magical companion.

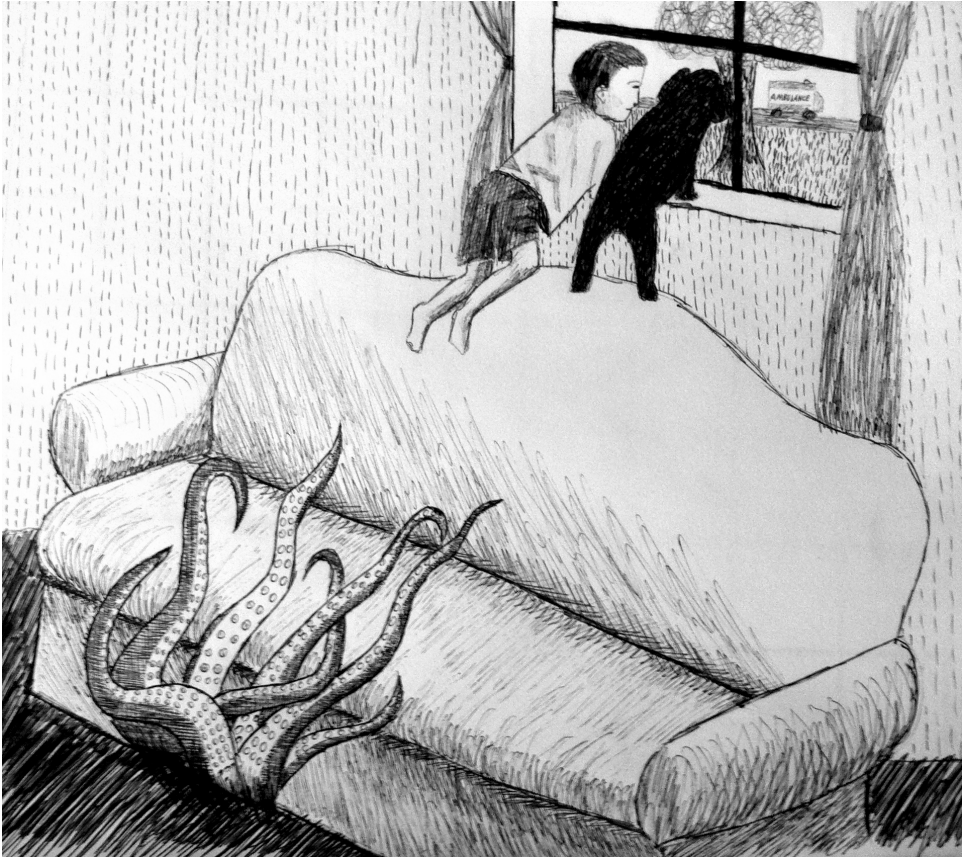
The whale watched from below, amused by the transformation in the man that he had seen. Yet, without his continued help, Jacques was as vulnerable as he had been on the day they met, eyes closed



to the depths. And to the depths he would return, the marred mess of humanity fingerprinting its way through the precious waters of the whale. The revenge would be sweet, yet the knowledge of his ultimate control propelled the creature forward as he swam off, to the darkest corners of his territory that were yet unmatched by the black of his own soul.

That night, a great storm shook the ship, and off the edge Sir Jacques fell. He, too, made his grave in the fluid darkness, with his bounty in hand. Foolish Jacques took his last breath the king to one, with grave goods of relic, of worth to none.





Kristine Wagner



The Mouth

Emily Bounds

The mouth laughs in sun,
But frowns in rain.
It questions what other mouths
Don't explain.

A mouth insults
The weakness of a stuttering reply.
And holds desired power
To choke out a burning lie.

A crooked smile can hold a stare
That's silent at its peak.
While holding back the sentences
That hurt too much to speak.

When flames increase in size and strength
In a throat of angry state,
The mouth produces poison sounds
That prey on rage and hate.

But above all, two rosy lips,
Lay down a gentle kiss.
For love can say the word and phrase
That our mouths seem to miss.



The Spinning Top

Hanna Hollis

At first still,
balanced with ease
by a single fingertip.

A quick snap
and whirling she goes.
She holds her own
careless and free.

Then, dizzy
she begins
to weeble and wobble;
at first just a little
then more and more.

She gives in to gravity.

She falls on her side.
Spinning begins to still.

At last stable again
something is missing...
She waits to be picked up
by that hand again.



The Hatching

Kristine Wagner

There it is: the offspring of a living being, a capsule of life awaiting its moment to live. It lies there, its shell hard, smooth, and shiny. It gleams a caramel color in the light. This shell is invincible, or so it would seem. It can be dropped from untold heights and never break. But once subjected to heat, a strange miracle begins to occur. From within, the shell begins to shatter.

But a creature does not emerge to leave its shell behind as is common. This is not new life; this is irreversible damage, an occurrence that will forever rob the shell of its purpose of birthing a living thing. What comes from the shell is not alive, nor does it leave the shell behind. It swells convoluted, the shell still attached to its new soft form as it forces its way out in bizarre, senseless, asymmetrical shapes. This is not new life; this is an atrocity, an event which would not occur in nature but was rather devised by man. But man does not care. It happens in a mere instant, this demented hatching. I look at what was once so small and shiny, now swollen with pieces of its shell embedded into it. I consider it for a moment, and then pop it into my mouth.

Popcorn is cool.





Haruka Kawata



The Story So Far...

Devin Mitchell Durbin

I remember yesterday
and how you cried to me
over static
the airwaves dripped with sadness.
We both have a complex,
and we've fought so hard
to get here.

I ask myself each day
as I'm lying on the couch
half-awake in darkness
"How did we get here?"
and I half hope to hear an answer
come from behind
the white noise of my fan.
I guess it would be
because I am not a fan.

I remember stories
where the guy gets the girl after years
but I don't think any story
matches the oddity of ours.
How 7 years, 108 miles
ten broken relationships
a couple of fights
a university and the Church
separated us and the future.

I remember when we both were innocent
as innocent
as one can be
from the Ville.
How willing we were
to find ourselves in other people
and spill our own blood
in different ways.

It's amazing
how much our lives can change
when we're willing to let God



take the reins.
It's amazing
how much life can grow
when we let the waters flow
like the rains.

Our story so far
is filled with beauty
and love and life.
There's so much beauty
and where we're going
I can't wait to see the future,
and write about
the story as it goes.



The Librarian

Abby Edele

For generations parents have told their children, “Do not cross your eyes. They will stay like that!” For generations children have continued to twist their grins into ugly grimaces, grab their ears and pull them forward, wrinkle their noses, and cross their eyes to create absurd faces for their friends and parents. But they have always heard their parents’ voices echoing in the back of their minds, “Your eyes will stay like that ... your eyes will stay like that ...” and so they have released their eyes from their strained, crossed positions. The fear was too strong and too ingrained in them.

Except for one small child who had no fear. Sybil was the smallest of her friends, but she was the bravest. Her long, dark hair was usually in a ponytail that was constantly awry and coming loose from its ribbon. She nearly always wore sneakers so she could better run and climb. Sybil would clamber up the tallest tree while her companions gazed up at her skinny, ten-year-old legs dangling from the high branch she sat upon. She would walk directly toward the roaring lions at the zoo and determinedly stand face-to-face with the largest one while he stared at her from behind his cage’s bars. She would carefully pick up the spider that her mother had shrieked at and shied away from, and she would place him on the doorstep outside their home.

With Sybil’s bravery came a powerful imagination. She was not simply climbing a tall tree; she was climbing the tallest tree in all the land in order to see the path of charred villages a mighty dragon had left in its wake. She was not simply staring down a caged lion in the zoo; she was making peace with the King of the Jungle so she could continue her quest to find a lost baby elephant. She was not simply removing a disgusting spider from her mother’s presence; she was rescuing him because she could hear his pleas to save him and allow him to return to his family.

One sunny afternoon, after school had ended, Sybil and her friends were playing tag in the neighborhood park. Sybil noticed that one of her sneakers had come untied, so she called, “TIME OUT!” to her fellows as she bent down to adjust her laces. “I NEED TO TIE MY SHOE!” she shouted as they raced around her. Seth came rushing toward her and tapped her on the head as he sprinted by.

“TAG! You’re IT!” he yelled gleefully as he dashed away from Sybil.

“SETH! That is NOT fair!” Sybil told him angrily as she stood up. She placed her hands on her hips and demanded that he take it back. She could see him laughing as he ran, dodging the swings and the slide. He circled around her, sticking his tongue out and making the other



children laugh. Sybil stamped her foot in frustration and lunged at Seth. He pedaled backwards and missed Sybil's outstretched arms. He stuck out his tongue again, this time accompanied by his outstretched hands placed beside his ears, his fingers wagging. Sybil made the same face back at him, but she crossed her eyes to make her mocking face a bit better than Seth's.

Another little girl, Madeline, had paused in her running to stop and laugh at Seth and Sybil's funny faces. Her laughter broke when she saw Sybil's face contort. "Sybil!" she gasped at her friend. "You can't cross your eyes like that! My mom says that they'll STAY that way!"

Sybil straightened her face and looked at Madeline. "I don't believe that," she told her.

"It's true," Madeline insisted. "My mom said that when she was little one of her friends did it, and she STILL has crossed eyes even though she's really old now."

Sybil crossed her arms defiantly. "I don't think so," she told Madeline, Seth, and the other tag players who had gathered around them now. "I think your mom made it up just to scare you."

"But my grandmother says the same thing," Julia chimed in. The other children nodded along in agreement, and soon everyone was chiming in with stories their parents and older family members had told them. Sybil's eyes narrowed, and her frown deepened.

"I'm going to do it!" she announced to the horror of her friends. "They're not going to stay crossed, you'll see!"

"No, no! Don't do it, Sybil!" they all chattered – except for Seth.

He took a step towards Sybil and studied her closely. "Go ahead," he said. "I dare you."

Sybil took a deep breath, looked around at the crowd of children surrounding her, and crossed her eyes. The crowd silenced and stared at the skinny ten-year-old girl.

"See?" she told them after a few seconds. "I can put them back in a second if I want."

"Then do it," Seth demanded.

"Okay, I will. In a few more seconds. I'm gonna break a record," Sybil proudly told her audience as the crowd began to count down to the release. "Ten! ... Nine! ... Eight! ... Seven! ... Six! ... Five! ... Four!"

Sybil gasped. Her eyes snapped back to their normal positions and the crowd groaned.

"You only had a few more seconds!" Seth said, and the crowd began to chatter furiously. Madeline noticed the look of alarm on Sybil's face.

"Sybil? Are you okay?" Sybil did not respond, but instead stared past the circle of children surrounding her as if she could not see them, but instead saw something much more frightening. "Sybil?" Madeline



asked again, this time stepping towards her friend and grasping her hand. Sybil recoiled from the touch, but she seemed to burst back into reality.

“I ... I have to go home,” Sybil said quietly before she turned her back to her friends and their abandoned game of tag. She raced towards her house before anyone could stop her.

Sybil had seen something rather shocking while her eyes were crossed. She had seen the double vision of her friends standing around her that comes with the crossing of one’s eyes, but that, of course, wasn’t the shocking part. After having crossed her eyes for a bit of time, the double vision of the world around her had begun to fade and turn to greys and then to black. Sybil saw nothing for a moment—complete blackness. A moment later another picture began to take form, but not in the warped way of crossed eyes. It was a clear view of a large room with wooden paneling, high ceilings, low-lit lamps on rich wooden tables, and rows upon rows of empty shelves. It looked like a library.

Just as the picture was sharpening, a figure began walking forward from the shadows of an aisle of shelves. It was then that Sybil gasped and forced her vision back into its normal position. The brave girl who never turned down an adventure or challenge was scared and confused.

Half-formed thoughts tumbled around her brain as she rushed to her home a few streets away. At her doorstep, she inhaled deeply and took a moment to compose herself before she saw her mother. After a quick hello and a drink of water, Sybil found herself sitting on her bed in her room.

“I have to do it again,” she told Dolly, her German Shepherd, who had followed the girl into her room. “I have to know what that was.”

Dolly cocked her head to the side as she tried to understand Sybil’s words, sneezed, and then lay down on the rug beside the bed. Sybil sighed and fell back onto her pillow. She lay there for a moment before she clasped her hands loosely across her stomach and crossed her eyes.

The double vision of the girl’s ceiling soon faded into grey, then blackness, then the scene of the library. This time Sybil was prepared for it. She looked down and her body was there; she moved her hands in front of her face and she saw them clearly. She was not simply gazing into the scene—she was physically there. She looked around and took a step forward into the cavernous room.

“Hello?” she asked. She both did and did not want to know if anyone or anything else was present. There was no response, so she asked again, this time louder. “Hellooooo?!”

“Shhhhhh!” a voice came from the shadows to her left. An older woman emerged from the dark. Her grey hair was twisted into a tight knot on the top of her head, and she wore glasses on a chain around her neck.



Her clothing consisted of a high-collared, cream-colored button down shirt, a straight navy blue skirt that stretched to her stocking-covered calves, and an oversized light pink cardigan embellished with wildflowers and imitation pearls embroidered around the neckline.

“Who are you?” Sybil asked.

“I’m your librarian,” the woman said as she walked toward the girl. Sybil took a step back. “No need to worry, Sybil, dear,” the woman smiled and said. “I mean no harm.”

“Oh, okay,” Sybil said cautiously. “Well, where am I, then? And ... wait ... how do you know my name?”

The woman’s warm smile broadened. “We’re in your library. Few people know how to access their libraries, but I am glad you have done so. Each individual has a library, and each library has a librarian who keeps the stories.” Sybil looked around her. All the bookcases but one were empty. She walked toward it. It was labeled BIOGRAPHY and there were several numbered volumes on the shelves. She reached out to touch one.

“Sybil,” the woman said, and Sybil paused. “You must not touch them.”

The girl frowned and left her hand outstretched towards the volumes. “Why not? It’s my library, isn’t it?”

“Those are the rules,” the woman said simply. “I do not question them, and neither should you. Should you choose to disobey them, it would be ... a tragedy. And I certainly don’t want to have that on my hands.”

Sybil considered her options for a moment, and decided that she would rather stay. She lowered her arm back to her side.

“Thank you,” the librarian said. She motioned toward a thick wooden table with two chairs on either side. “Please sit and we can chat for a minute before you must return.” She pulled the chain on the small lamp that was sitting on the table, and it lit up as she took a chair and sat down. Sybil glanced longingly once more at the books on the shelf, and then joined the woman at the table.

“Why aren’t there any books here? If it’s a library, there should be more books,” Sybil told the old woman.

“They’re still being written, Sybil,” the woman told the girl. “As I said before, this is YOUR library.” Sybil considered the statement for a moment, and then glanced back over to the volumes on the BIOGRAPHY bookcase.

“So those are my biography books?”

“Yes.”

“Who writes them?”

“Well, you are the author, technically speaking. You choose your actions. I just record them.”



“Why are there so few books? I’ve made up tons of stories in my head. Can’t you write those?” Sybil asked. The librarian laughed.

“Sybil, dear, you’re only ten years old. There is a lot of writing to still be done. I’ve included some of your better stories, but they are tiny compared to the adventures I’m sure you’ll experience outside of your head. Soon you’ll have volumes and volumes sitting on the shelves here. Mostly here on the Biography shelf, but I hope you’ll give me a chance to write some Romance. Or a Western! If you travel, do go west. Or Horror! But then again ...though Horror would be fun to write, I hope for your sake I don’t have to.” She chuckled at her musings, and again when she saw the look of disgust on Sybil’s face.

“I don’t WANT a romance. And maybe I’ll go EAST instead of West!” she retaliated, her face scrunched up in a scowl.

“I’m well aware,” the librarian said quietly. She looked at the small silver watch she wore on her wrist, and then looked up at the young girl before her. “Now it’s time for you to get going. Although you’ve only been here for less than ten minutes, in your world it’s been close to twenty. Nothing you have said here has been said aloud in your world, but you do appear to be sleeping quite deeply. It’s best to be sure you won’t be disturbed in your world when you visit the library and me. People, mothers especially, sometimes become panicked when they see their loved ones in such a state.” She pointed towards a large EXIT sign and continued, “Just go through those large doors there, and you know where you can find me again. Goodbye, Sybil. Until next time.”

Sybil took one last, long look at the old woman sitting across the table from her before she stood up from her chair and walked towards the large double doors illuminated by the glowing sign above them. She glanced back behind her where the old woman had pulled down a large book and had begun scribbling away in it with an old-fashioned fountain pen. Sybil pushed open the heavy doors, and found herself staring back at her bedroom ceiling.





Michelle Gilligan



Wanderlust

Devin Mitchell Durbin

The wind calls so coolly.
You hear it in her voice,
“Come along my darling
there is nothing to fear.
All that’s left’s the falling.
The sky it breathes so clear.”

She speaks so calmly,
like a siren.
She lures you out to the ocean.
Before you know it, drowning,
looking up from underneath the crest.
As the waves toss you
and break your bow.

The wind calls so coolly.
You hear it in her voice,
“Come along my darling
there is nothing left to fear.”



Good Things Bad People

Zachary M. Alley

The sanguine sky does little to alleviate the somber mood below. Underneath the crisp blue is a dark splotch amidst a sea of green. The gathered, an ensemble of friends, family, and those unable to ignore a sense of obligation, are dressed in black. Vehicles spread for miles through the twisting cemetery roads like fiberglass tentacles reaching out from the great mass of mourners.

In the front row, the family of the deceased is transfixed on the coffin as the reverend speaks. The mother, by all accounts a strong and vibrant woman, is unrecognizable in her current state of uncontrolled weeping. Heavy ugly sobs shake her frame while her husband holds her tight, as if her trembling form might crumble at any moment. She does not feel his tears drip into her tightly bound hair. He is on the brink of a complete collapse himself, but struggles to be strong for her.

Beside them sits a young boy. If the casket lid were pried open, a face similar to the boy's could be found. The boy's hair a lighter shade of blonde. His cheeks slightly more round. He stares blankly at the coffin before him. His reaction, or lack thereof, to his brother's death is assumed to be either complete shock or a deep grief that could rush to the surface at any moment. The boy perfectly understands the finality of death and what the loss of his brother means. Perhaps more than most there. No one truly understands death, but he has a unique relationship with it. He ponders what the funeral would look like if they knew what he knew.

Near him, another loudly weeps. Even with eyes red and swollen with tears, and strands of hair broken out of their neat formation, she is beautiful. Her gloved hands work to gingerly dab her chocolate eyes with a cloth, bits of mascara clinging to it. As she rocks forward, a woman rubs her back lightly with one hand. Her other hand moves across the beads of her rosary with the agility of years of practice, whispering Spanish prayers her mother had taught her. She briefly breaks from her prayer to console her daughter.

"Everything happens for a reason, my love. Even something as terrible as this."

The girl faces her mother. The woman is troubled by the unfamiliar glaze in her daughter's eyes.

"That's what you tell people to make them feel better about how terrible the world is. It's not fair and pretending there is a reason for this, whatever the hell this screwed up situation is, isn't going to make me feel better about it. Nothing good will come of this. Sometimes bad things just happen to good people."



Outside of her comfortable suburban home, Patricia watched her eldest son, Julian, hang an absurd amount of plastic grocery bags from his arms. The bags swayed heavily on his limbs, the tight plastic seemed to slice into his flesh. Looking from the trunk full of bags to the determined grimace on her son's face, it appeared as if he intended to fit the entire load onto his arms. Her head cocked to the side as she stared at her haughty son.

"Why do you always do that? We're ten feet away from the house. Just make another trip."

"You sweet...simple...woman," he responded between heavy breaths as he further encumbered himself with even more bags.

"Excuse me?"

"Taking more than one trip is ridiculous. That's giving up. No one respects multiple trip takers"

"No one is going to respect you when they see you get beat by your mother in the driveway for calling her simple."

"I called you sweet too."

"Uh huh. Where's Jake? He should be out here helping so you don't drop all of my groceries on the ground."

"He is finishing up his game. I told him I would handle groceries."

"My sweet simple son. Just don't drop anything or I'm making you go to the dinner with us tonight."

Jake walked into the kitchen as his brother and mother were putting away groceries. As he looked at the forest of plastic, he was glad he didn't have to help carry any of them inside. He was grateful that his mom didn't trust him to put things in the right place so he didn't have to worry about getting roped into helping unpack them. She moved with a sense of urgency that reminded him that they would have to leave soon for some adult dinner thing that was sure to be super boring. If he was helpful and did some last minute sucking up, he hoped there was a chance he could still get out of going. Besides, he had gotten frustrated with his video game. Before the familiar rush of anger overtook him, he felt it was best to take a step back and help his chances of getting to stay home.

His brother was putting something away in the cabinets while his mother was organizing stuff on the counter to go in the refrigerator. Jake went over to the still-full bags and began rummaging through them to find an item he could help put away.

"Give up already?" Julian paused for a moment to look over his shoulder at his younger brother.

Jake stared at him for a moment. They were not supposed to give up on anything. Their dad was constantly reminding them of the merits of hard work and perseverance. This was usually in reference to sports



and not getting stuck on a video game though. Julian never gave up. He was good at everything he did. It made everyone very happy when he did well. Jake never thought it made his brother happy. His brother did well because he had to. It's just what he did. He did all sorts of things and did them all well, but it didn't seem like he got to do what he really wanted to do. Whatever that was. At first, Jake felt bad for his brother because of this. These days he wasn't sure how he felt.

"I didn't give up. That game is just stupid."

"That's why you spend hours a day playing it?" his mother asked. She always had something to say. His mother was compassionate, and everyone thought she was funny, but Jake didn't like arguing with her because he never won. Julian won everything from his high school football games to family trivia night. Jake was only half his brother's age, but already felt far behind as far as accomplishments went. Even Julian knew better than to try to beat their mother in an argument.

"We'll get past that level tomorrow. I'll help you out, bud."

Of course he would. His brother was always helping people. Sometimes Jake liked to figure things out himself.

"I love when you two work together. So much that I'm going to let you finish putting these away while I get ready."

"Are you sure I have to go? Why is Julian getting out of it?"

"So he doesn't get in trouble with Sofia. He is almost as scared of her as he is of me."

"Why would he be scared of his girlfriend?"

"Because I taught him well."

Jake didn't understand. He thought it was dumb that his brother could make plans with his girlfriend instead of going to some charity dinner. If Jake wanted to hang out with his friends instead of going, he wouldn't be allowed to.

He began clearing a stack of flyers off of the kitchen counter to make room for groceries. The words "Lost Dog" hung above a photo of a bright-eyed beagle. Their home telephone number was listed below, as well as a reward that Jake offered to fund with his own allowance.

"Oh, did anyone call about Rosco?"

He stared at his mother for a moment, caught off guard by her question. Julian told him not to be so upset about the dog and explained that he wouldn't be coming back. He said a bunch of weird stuff and asked questions about how losing his dog made him feel. It made Jake uncomfortable. He looked at Julian somberly while his brother gave him an odd look.

"No." Jake set the flyers down, hoping to move past the subject.

"I'm sure he will show up soon. We can go hang up more flyers tomorrow."

"No, thank you."



His mom paused for a moment. She looked confused as she bent down closer to him. Her hand rested on his shoulder as she looked at him.

“Why not?”

“No one is going to find him. We should just forget about it.”

“Why wouldn’t anyone find him?”

“Something probably happened to him.”

“Why would you say something like that?”

“All finished. You guys should start getting ready.” Jake didn’t even notice that Julian had put away the rest of the groceries.

His mother seemed surprised by Julian’s fast-paced work as well. She lost track of the conversation she was having with Jake and checked her watch. A small frown formed when she realized that the charity dinner was fast approaching.

“Right. Jake, please put something decent on the first time so I don’t have to make you change.”

“Sure thing. I’ll go pick out one of Julian’s pretty dresses.”

Patricia’s youngest son suddenly adopted a rather light-hearted mood as he flashed a mischievous grin and scurried out of the kitchen. She was confused about his reaction to Rosco. Just a couple of days ago he had refused to let the matter go and insisted on them searching for the lost dog constantly. The dog often ran off, but never for too terribly long. She did not have time to reflect on Jake’s sudden shift in attitude.

The dinner was fast approaching and she still had to get ready. More than likely, she would have to supervise Jake getting ready as well and then have to rush her husband when he got home as he was as problematic about these sort of things as their youngest. Normally, she would also have to worry about Julian, who always took longer than her to get ready for any event, but not tonight.

She was disappointed that he would not be attending, but for mostly selfish reasons. Julian was a bit bold with his sarcasm at times, but she found his company entertaining. Frankly, she was expecting to be a bit bored herself at the event that evening, but could not let her husband or Jake know or else they would double their efforts to convince her to allow them all to skip it. Under normal circumstances she would force Julian to suffer along with the rest of them, but his girlfriend had personally asked if he could be free to join her for dinner then some party since it was their seven month anniversary. Something she knew Julian likely cared little about. He would go out of his way to help anyone, but he was not exactly a sentimentalist. Sofia was a sweet girl though, so she gave Julian permission to go.

Patricia and Julian watched Jake dash upstairs. Julian exaggeratingly shook his head before speaking to her about the joke Jake



had made before his escape.

“That little jerk. Mother, I don’t know how to tell you this, but you raised a monster.”

“I know Julian. I raised two of them. Anyway, we’re hopefully leaving as soon as your dad gets home. Try to tidy up a bit around the house before you go out. He is going to be grumpy after having to sit through this thing all night and it will be a nice surprise for him to come home to a clean house.”

“I can handle that. I’ll start with my room.”

Julian locked his door behind him. He then quickly browsed through some playlists on his computer before selecting one titled “Preparation Playlist”. Big band horns blared from his speakers as he took a moment to get into the mood. From a drawer, he removed some rubber gloves and nimbly pulled them over his hands. His shoulders bounced to the music as he made his way to his closet. After a few moments of shifting various items, he pulled a black gym bag from its hiding place. He wiggled his door handle to make sure it was locked, then set the bag on his bed.

He carefully removed a surgeon’s mask, a taser, a box of rubber gloves, a hand towel, origami figures folded in a variety of shapes, an icepick, and organized them on his bed.

Finally, a moleskin sketchbook. He turned the pages of the notebook carefully, studying them as if deciphering profound literature.

He paused on a page and smiled.

There were blueprints drawn in crisp blue ink. A map of a house and the area surrounding it. Notes were scrawled in small neat writing in the margins. Clearing his throat, he then began to speak to himself in his best reporter voice while being careful to avoid being audible to potential eavesdroppers over the music.

“A grisly murder took place at 1353 Maple Drive last night. Karen Meyers was found dead on her back porch. Early autopsy reports suggest that the woman’s brain was destroyed using some sort of sharp object forced through the nose.”

Julian turned the page to a diagram he had made of mummification techniques. Great detail was shown in a sketch of a small hook being used to scramble the brains before pulling them out of the nose. He reached for the icepick and rotated it slowly in his hand as he continued to give his mock report.

“It seems that the victim was somehow subdued and executed at her own home while her family slept inside, unaware of the terrible crime that happened right outside their door. The only evidence found so far is a small piece of paper folded into the shape of a bird, presumably left on the body by the killer. The bird figure seemed to be a folded doctor’s note



of sorts, where the killer left a note prescribing death to the victim. No arrests have been made as the murderer remains at large.”

It was a poor reporter imitation, but a pleased smile played on his lips nonetheless. He turned the page to another diagram, satisfied with his mock report on his future actions. Switching to a different reporter’s voice, he ran his fingers over another hand drawn map of a different home.

“Another victim of this unidentified serial killer. Another origami animal was found with a victim that seems to have been killed by a single precise puncture wound in the skull. No connection has been found between the victims so far. Citizens fear for their safety as victims continue to be found dead in their own homes while police appear to be no closer to finding any suspects.”

Julian turned another page and adopted an authoritative reporter’s voice.

“Another disturbing murder by the Serial Surgeon.”

His phone vibrated loudly on his desk. Julian closed his book, set down his items, and turned off the music. He let out a sigh before answering the phone in a friendly voice.

“Hey babe,” Julian answered.

“Anything else?” Sofia replied.

“Um...no?”

“Are you sure there is nothing else you want to tell me?”

“Damn. I didn’t think you would find out. I’m so sorry, but it’s true. I’m...I’m pregnant.”

“You have been looking a little plump lately.”

“Plump? You’re insane. Do you know how many women have told me that I have a body that would make the gods themselves weep?”

“Probably zero since nobody actually talks like that. And if they did tell you that, you should remind them that today marks exactly seven months that your amazing girlfriend has put up with you.”

“I remember. I was actually just telling some of the guys about how I couldn’t believe it has been seven months already and how lucky I am.”

“Really?”

“No. No one cares about that stuff. When we hit a year, I may acknowledge it. Maybe get a plaque made or something.”

“Shut it. So what time are you going tonight?”

“Probably not until a bit later. The family is leaving in a few minutes, so I’m going to enjoy a few rare moments of peace before heading over to the party. Plus, mom wants me to clean a bit. The party is so close that I’m just going to walk. I’m not in a huge hurry.”

“Sounds good. And be careful. There are creeps out there. Don’t want anyone snatching you since apparently you are such a hottie.”

“I appreciate your concern, but that’s just my cross to bear.”



“My brave man. See you when I see you.”

“Okay. Happy seven months my precious butter dumpling.”

“You’re ridiculous. Never say that again. Love you.”

“You too. Later babe.”

Julian hung up the phone and returned to his notebook. This page had a timeline on it. He began to play with an origami bird while reading it to himself.

10:00: Arrive at party. Be seen by everyone. Plenty of alibis. Hide kit in dryer.

11:15: Leave party. Take prepared route to 1353 Maple Drive. Wait behind tall bushes on west side of back porch until victim goes out for her nightly smoke after putting children to sleep. Remember gloves and mask. Execute as practiced. Taser first. Once down gain control of body. Place towel in her mouth. No screaming. No noise. Swift motion with icepick at correct angle through nose. Smooth swirling to scramble brain. Leave origami. Swan this time.

12:00: Be back at party by this time. The sooner the better. Drop supplies back at my house first. People should be drunk by the time I return and no one should have noticed my absence.

“I’m home!”

Jake opened his door and stepped into the hallway upon hearing his father. He was hardly ready for the dinner, but knew his father would be understanding since they were both being forced to go to the dumb event. The sound of Julian’s door unlocking caused Jake to look towards it. His brother leaned out of the doorway. Then he lifted a paper swan. By tugging on its tail he made the figure flap its wings. He remembered when Julian made one that looked like a dog.

“Hey dad.”

“Hi dad,” the younger brother echoed.

Their father began to walk up the stairs as Jake watched his brother toss the paper figure back in his room and take off his gloves. He then stepped into the hall to greet their father. The large man hugged them both and chuckled when he saw that Jake was still not ready.

“You’re going to get us both killed, bud. Which might be better than sitting through some stuffy dinner. I should go get ready though.”

Jake watched his dad walk down the hall before looking at his brother. Julian smiled at him. Jake quickly retreated back into his room.

Later that night, Julian strolled across a small bridge. His black gym bag was firmly clenched in one hand. Music played from his headphones. He would be at the party in less than ten minutes, though his mind was going over plans that would be executed later in the



evening.

Headlights passed over him from behind. Initially, he thought nothing of it. He quickly realized that the vehicle seemed to be directly behind him even though he was on the designated walkway on the side of the narrow road. He dove to the side. It was a moment too late. The car struck him mid-air. His bag and some blood went into the river. His body collided with one of the steel bars of the bridge's frame before bouncing back onto the road. Lifeless.

The driver awoke as his vehicle struck the boy. He slammed on his brakes and skidded into the side of the bridge. In his rear view mirror he saw the broken body in the road. The man rushed toward the boy and collapsed to his knees. He did not need to check for signs of life to see that he had killed him.

He struggled to dial 911 as his hands shook. His mind raced to his own daughter; his little girl still in the hospital he was traveling to. After getting very little sleep the past week because of his time visiting her in the hospital, he had driven back to their home a few towns over to retrieve one of her stuffed animals she kept asking for. The toy was still buckled in the back seat of his car, as his daughter had always insisted on.

The dispatcher's voice coming from his phone summoned his thought back to the present. He had realized that he had not said anything to her yet. It was not too late. He could not go to jail. His daughter needed him. He could not let this boy's parents suffer either.

"Hello. I...Oh God...I...I need an ambulance. I just hit a kid with my car. He's dead."

The entire town attends the funeral. To mourn the young high school football star. The bright student. The caring son. The loving brother. The loyal boyfriend. The compassionate volunteer. The supportive friend. To mourn all that was left undone.

The reverend clears his throat before continuing to address the crowd. He had known Julian well. Most of the community did. Every loss is devastating in its own way, but this is a true tragedy. People would struggle to make sense of what seemed like random and terrible circumstance. They would look to him to help with the healing. Never a simple task.

"Julian will be missed. He was so heavily involved with our small community that it will be impossible to ignore his absence. He truly cared for everyone and embodied the spirit of loving thy neighbor. He had so much potential and was looked up to by so many. Imagine what he could have accomplished if only he had more time."



What's In A Word?

Brian Thomas

What's in a word?

A certain measured amount of duress,
Used by authority and those under stress.

What's in a word?

A coalition of blatant lies,
Through communication are used as many of our spies.

What's in a word?

An implied force or ascertainable weight,
Of emotions, commands, or desires that we want to state.

What's in a word?

A collection of letters all logically arranged in a row,
A fact not followed in text messages though.

What's in a word?

An invisible hand to guide the eyes and the ear,
To help analyze meanings and intentions so they become clear.

What's in a word?

A stroke of a key or brush of a pen,
That once started must finish to begin once again.





Rachel Schuldt



Contributors

Zachary M. Alley no longer has any outstanding arrest warrants at this time. He is a Creative Writing major and a member of Lindenwood's improv team, The Nick of Time Players. One day, he hopes to be a single father.

Liz Arnold hardly considers herself a writer, but when the urge hits she cannot deny herself the need to put the words on paper. She is currently working on a series of superhero stories with her friends and a couple of plays when she isn't going crazy planning her wedding.

Emily Bounds is pursuing a Christian Ministry Studies major with minors in Music and Religion. She deems herself a logophile, francophone, songbird, and bookworm. When not studying, rehearsing, or leading worship, she can be found in a quiet corner with lots of espresso and her journal.

Daniel Coker is a student at Lindenwood University.

Courtney Cox loves asking questions and people watching, so she is attempting to warp these passions into career prospects. She will enter the real world in May and is plotting a trip to never-never land. She also hopes Zack Alley won't end her.

Devin Mitchell Durbin has been a poet for more than three quarters of his life. He has written well over one thousand poems. He draws inspiration from pop-punk, Sci-Fi, Broadway, folk music, classic poets, as well as his relationships with friends and God.

Abby Edele studies Creative Writing at LU. She was once described as "tolerable." She spends most of her time in pajamas, and she enjoys judging people while she eats ice cream. Her dog Ellie is her favourite little minion and TV-watching companion.

Blake Fields exists in some realities, but is absent in alternate universes, depending on one's disposition on the theory of supersymmetry within the Standard Model. For those of you who have not met him, it is likely that this book is in the wrong universe. Please return it. Thanks. –MGMT



Michelle Gilligan is really tall, and even though she is a Chemistry major, she likes art and stuff. She used to have a horse, but he's probably dead by now. She is also profusely sorry that she ever skipped any of Spencer Hurst's World Lit 2 classes.

Stephen Hawkes studies English and Philosophy at Lindenwood University. His favorite poets at the moment are Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and William Butler Yeats. And he fights with his own alarm clock on a regular basis.

Hanna Hollis is a senior English major studying both Literature and Creative Writing. She has always had a fascination with stories, and she enjoys learning about the mechanics through which they are told, whether it be through poetry, playwriting, or prose. This is her second year to contribute to *Arrow Rock*.

Laine Johnson is a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Art History with minors in Studio Art and French. In addition to her artistic pursuits, she is proudly dedicated to her sorority, Sigma Sigma Sigma, and the Art History Association at Lindenwood University.

Haruka Kawata is a sophomore student at Lindenwood University who is originally from Osaka, Japan. She is now studying Studio Art and Psychology, and she has taken a digital photography class in 2014. She admires Mika Ninagawa, a Japanese photographer and film director.

Hannah Lawson is a senior English Creative Writing major with a passion for adventure and an addiction to coffee. After graduation, she plans to publish her work and pursue a graduate education. Her favorite and most often pursued genres of writing are poetry and the short story.

Jaymie-Rae Martin has written stories and haiku since a young age, but she has never had the confidence to submit any of her work until she came to Lindenwood. She is a Creative Writing major, and she's from the small island of Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands.

Sergio A. Poveda is a soccer freestyler and graffiti-maker originally from Quito. He holds poetry as a first-need item. At this moment, he believes in Nicanor Parra's conception that the poet does not keep his word; rather, he changes the names of things. Experimenting, humor, and recycling can turn nothing into something.



Danyelle Pullens is currently a senior at Lindenwood University studying Digital Cinema and minoring in Creative Writing. Her hobbies include reading, writing, watching Marvel movies, and occasionally plotting world domination. Unfortunately, none of these has proven to be very lucrative, but soon. Soon.

Rachel Schuld likes pugs. And Pinterest. She is a shallow and boring person who happens to draw stuff. Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Stahlman has recently graduated Lindenwood with a B.A. in Interactive Media and Web Design and is currently working on her M.S. in Project Management. She very much enjoyed working with the *Arrow Rock* editors in creating this journal but still despises all aspects of reading and writing.

Brian Thomas is a Saint Louis native who graduated from Lindenwood University in December of 2014 with a Bachelor's degree in English.

Mai Urai is a freshman at Lindenwood from Japan. She started taking photographs when she was fifteen. She studies pre-engineering and music, and she works at *The Legacy* as a photographer. Also, this is the first time for her to publish her artwork to the public.

Emma Verstraete is an Anthropology major with an emphasis on Archaeology. She enjoys taking photos and focusing on the smaller details that can be captured with film in a digital age.

Kristine Wagner, R.I.P., died in a freak knitting accident, and is mourned by all, except strangers and awkward acquaintances. Kristine studied English at Lindenwood, and had a job completely unrelated to her major. She loved her loved ones and the hobby which killed her so horribly. Truly a remarkable woman.

Isaac White is a graduating senior Digital Cinema Arts student. His award-winning work has been featured internationally, as well as commissioned by a national internet celebrity. His work stems from an amalgamation of philosophical discussion and aesthetic form. He prides himself on simple design accompanied by natural beauty and color.



Arrow Rock is currently accepting submissions for Issue VII. Please email your poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, plays, photography or artwork to

ArrowRock@Lindenwood.edu

To view previous issues of the *Arrow Rock* literary magazine visit

www.lindenwood.edu/ArrowRock.



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Arrow Rock would also like to express our gratitude to this issue's contributors for their fearlessness and honesty.

Finally, we'd like to thank our readers. *Arrow Rock* now belongs to you.

We hope you've enjoyed issue VI.

***Arrow Rock* Literary Journal Mission Statement**

Arrow Rock is committed to promoting and providing a mature environment for Lindenwood University students to publish quality fiction, nonfiction, poetry, essays, plays, and artwork, while showcasing the integrity and the individual talents of each writer or artist.

The staff and contributors of *Arrow Rock* strive to produce a literary journal that interests and inspires.



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