



ELEVEN AND A HALF
EUGENE LANG COLLEGE
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Eleven and a Half is an entirely student produced literary magazine from The New School's Eugene Lang College. The following works are almost all sourced from within the college and are curated to represent the zeitgeist of the current literary moment therein.

A great deal of work went into the production of this magazine, and its editors have a great many thanks to dispense. Foremost, to Albert Mobilio, who has continued to guide groups of young writers through the taxing editorial processes required to produce such a magazine. A thousand thanks for his leadership.

Also thanks must go to Simona Schultz, of The Print Center, without whom we couldn't have assembled the following pages. Thanks must also go to Rob Spillman of *Tin House* and David O'Neil from *Bookforum*, for their indispensable advice regarding

Eleven and a Half will be accepting submission beginning at the start of Fall 2014. Remain alert. Never waver. Read the rest of this magazine, please.

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*the art, which appears throughout the magazine, is all the work of Lindsey Devers and Olivia Schwartzman, both of whom also have written work published within.

EVEN THE TREES

DIANA RAMIREZ MIRELES

even the trees know they are not air
and the flower petals stay in-line
in sight,
of symmetry,
keep it in mind,
as they reach for beauty

HOW I LEARNED TO NOT BE AFFECTIONATE
THOMAS FUCALORO

They say, "The heart is an organ best served cold."

Actually, I said that.

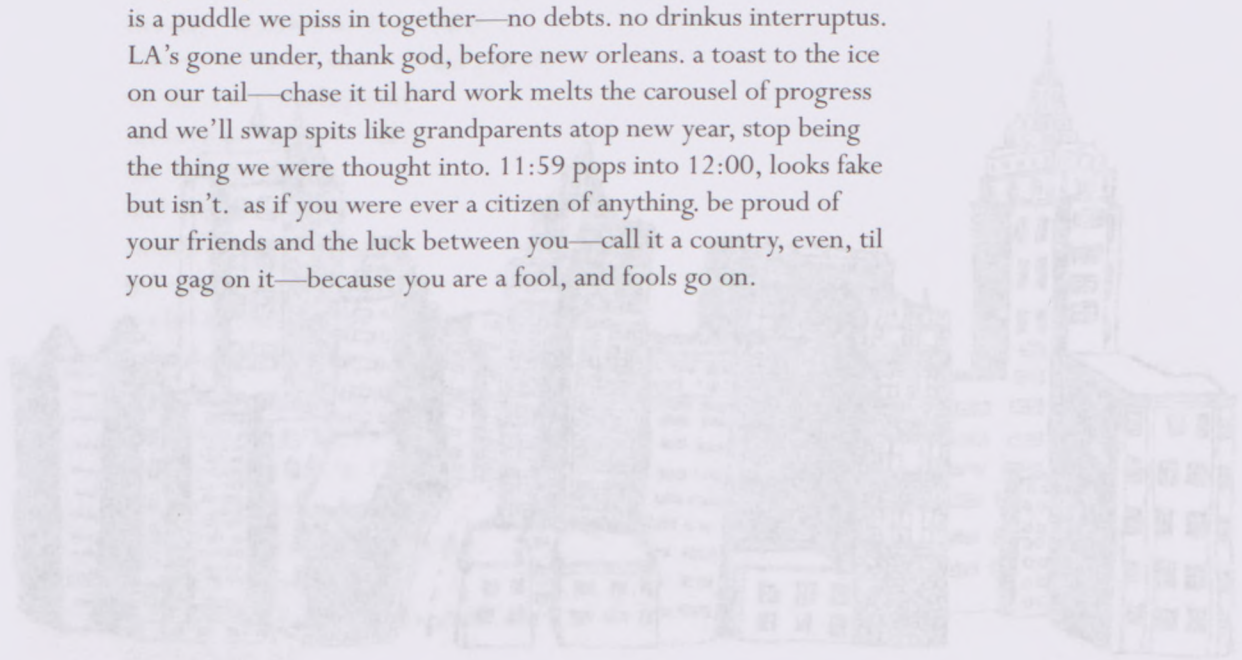
She makes love to the freezer.

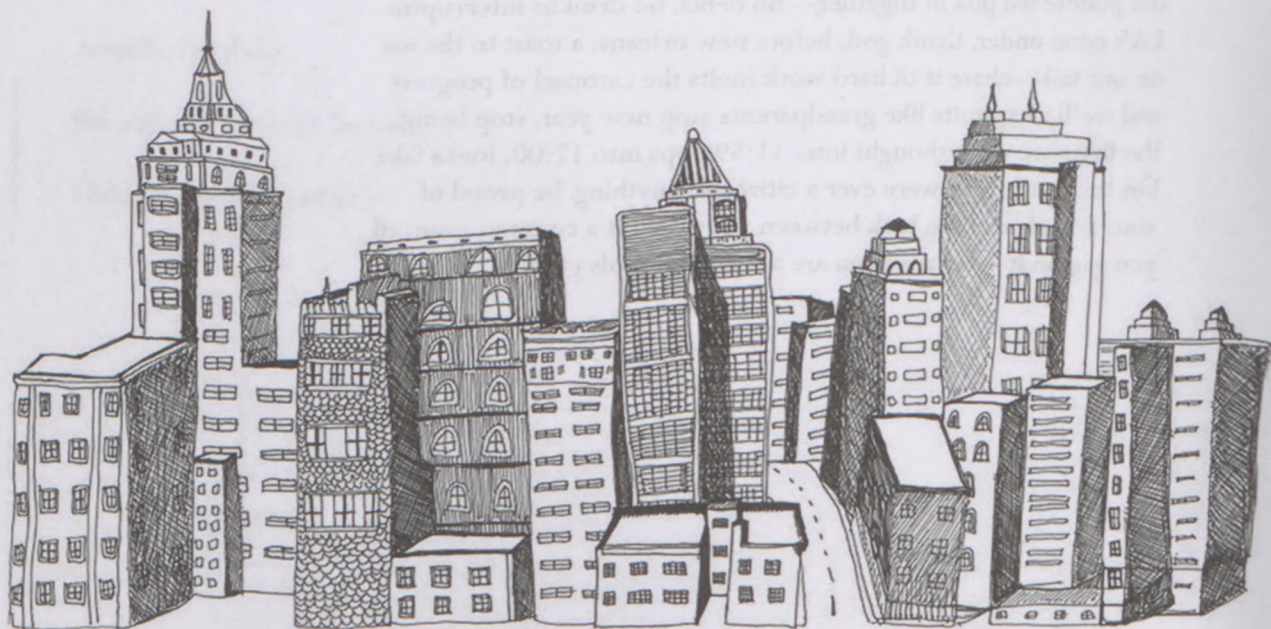
I keep blaming my father.

CHASE SCENE #7

RYAN ECKES

why does your milkman whistle in the morning? because church is a puddle we piss in together—no debts. no drinkus interruptus. LA's gone under, thank god, before new orleans. a toast to the ice on our tail—chase it til hard work melts the carousel of progress and we'll swap spits like grandparents atop new year, stop being the thing we were thought into. 11:59 pops into 12:00, looks fake but isn't. as if you were ever a citizen of anything. be proud of your friends and the luck between you—call it a country, even, til you gag on it—because you are a fool, and fools go on.





THREE AMERICAN CITIES
MARSHALL MALIN

It rained around Portland
the day I decided to drive there.
Never had I seen such vibrant greens
on the sides of a highway
on such a dreary wet day;
the sky was gray,
and the gloom
reminded me of the day
my second boyfriend
set his kitchen on fire
because he was more attentive to the TV
than the pasta he left on the stove.
His sister's favorite sheets,
purple turned black, charred, stiff
because the water faucet
wasn't sufficient to out the fire.
It rained in Portland
as I drove past the two smashed cars
on Highway 84.
I always thought that rain would be enough
to put out a fire.
Just as I reached for my phone,

BRUISE

MARSHALL MALIN

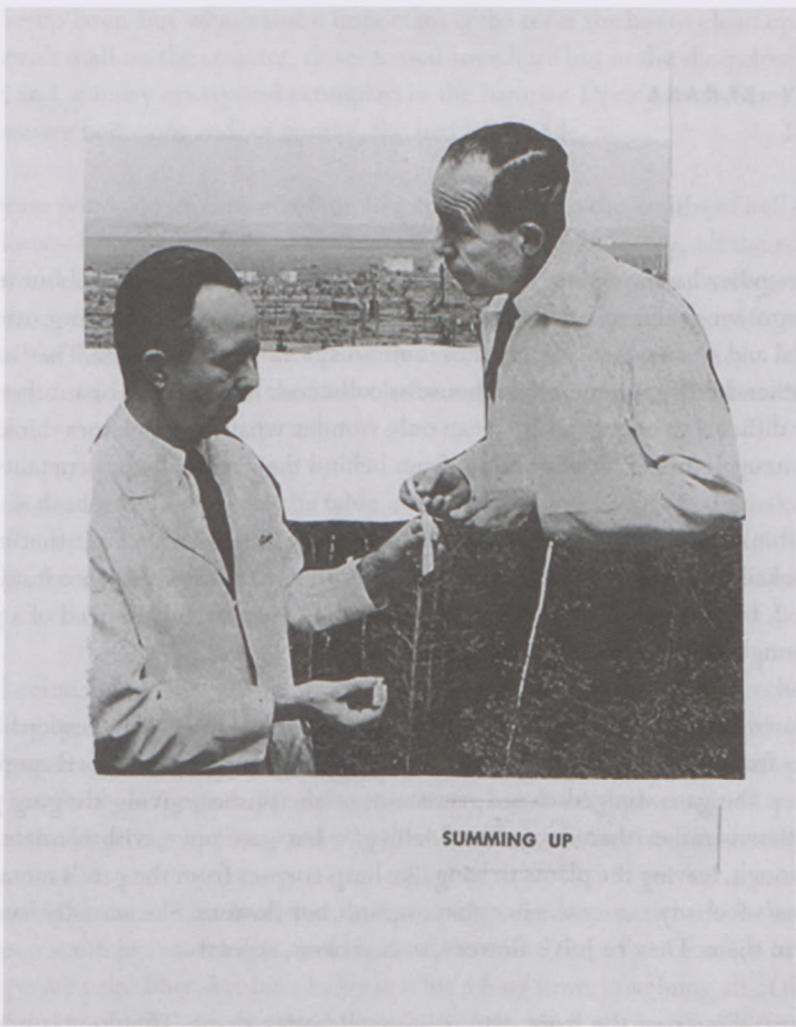
A bruise yellows around the edges
stays purple in the center,
its own lackluster galaxy,
no points of light to feign grandeur.

Yellow centers an iris;
purple petals flow from the sun of the stem,
range in its own little world,
not a representation at all.

His left eye looks like an iris,
a bruise, a rotten plum
sunken into his face, marred
leaves of green eyes and rain

When they found him,
peaceful and serene, situated like a saint,
his skin was glassy, smooth
white like marble.

Looking up to a greater place,
looking up to another galaxy,
dead and still, his skin blooms irises,
projects the galaxies he's seen.



SUMMING UP

BLUEBERRY BANANA

TIANA BUI

She didn't remember having a gate. But it's likely that everyone's forgotten about it, judging from the overgrown greenery and leaves poking through gaps and wrapping over all that was once metal and sturdy, birthing a bed of mutinous flora-life in its place. The flowers and bushes have either died or conquered the house as collateral. But one way or another, the gate is particularly difficult to open, and June can only wonder what the neighbors think, secretly watching her struggle to get into her home from behind their second story curtains.

She honestly thinks they have every right to judge, really. It's her own fault that home was like this, unlooked after and abandoned for months until she now stood before it, tanned and self-deprecatd. It's her own fault that her house is rebellious, terribly in need of a gardener, or possibly a jungle guide. A Sherpa, or something.

Amidst the glaring heat and her strained breathing, June reluctantly takes responsibility and rips tight vines from their bodied places. The few remaining, vengeful nettles respond resentfully. They keep the gate wedged closed, resistant, as she pushes, giving stinging pinpricks from unseen thorns rather than entry. She finally gets her gate open with consistent shoves and pushes, though, leaving the plants to hang like limp corpses from the gate's metal railings. But June doesn't feel any remorse since they weren't her flowers. She actually hates plants. She's allergic to them. They're July's flowers, or had been, at least.

Thankfully, everything past the front gate is in much better shape. The door is pristine, reminding June of how the gate once looked, with bronze railings and glass windows. Above

its space is the cool shade of the over hanging roof and the carcasses of weaker, sun-starved plants, hunched over with their heads wilted as if sobbing in grief. June knows she'll have to clean these up later. But what's more important is the mess she has to clean up inside. Inside, where there's mail on the counter, shoes tossed anywhere but in the shoe closet, plates never put away, and laundry crusty and crumpled in the hamper. Dirty towels from July's showers line the master bedroom and, of course, the bed is unmade.

The staircase winds down instead of up, like an entryway to the depths of hell – one of July's observations – because the heat of the second floor is so unbearable. All the rooms perspire, the hardwood floors sweating out toxins of coated dust and absence, walls gasping out stale air from unopened windows and overstuffed daylight. It's humid, too. Humid and untidy, trailing to the backyard where the pool was drowning leaves, patio table sat trashed, and ground remained littered with used towels from sporadic swims and other random articles of things.

Breakfast is dead and decaying on the table, molded over. But June can still make out what was once blueberry and bananas on her plates. There are brown stains marring the coffee cups, and she flinches, knowing it'll take much more than good scrubbing to get what remains out.

Scattered remnants of magazines, papers, and written notes sit torn. Scorched black plant carcasses lay lacerated, listless, whilst those who have survived hover menacingly, chained to their hedges. Everything is a mess, a scattered and mindless mess. A product of July's touch that now inevitably belongs to June down to every last crack and tear. It all belongs to June, except for the large black video camera, which stands in the corner by her usual chair at the table.

The tri-pod it's balanced on is rented, and probably overdue, but what's more disconcerting are the deep scratches marring it, making it all the more out of place in the bright sheens of sun and opaque paint blue sky. June looks at it for a long time, imagining all of the home movies filmed on it, and the chrome finishing which looks alien among all of the plants. Despite the contrast, though, it stands defiantly, tauntingly beside June's own seat across the patio

table, as if challenging her to take it, Sighing, she ignores the urge to knock the camera over as she crosses to it, flipping the hinges of it open with a tiny creak.

"The weather is nice today, isn't it?" July murmurs.

Starting, July sees July look up from across the table, sitting with legs comfortably folded and crossed underneath her self. The sunlight around her rests in bright swaths about her head and shoulders, bathing her in a fierce glare. Behind her, her plants seem to still at the sound of her voice, the fangs they bore receding into a gentle sway.

June doesn't even know what to make of it, but she realizes then that July's probably been there for a while, which wasn't surprising, but also astounding. July always had that way about her, becoming invisible when she didn't want to be seen. It's a wonder in itself that she even revealed herself.

Cautiously pulling her chair out to sit down, June watches July return to her magazine as she adjusts her chair towards the table with a scrape. Leaning forward, she smells immediately the medley of different scents, various forms of rotting, with the nauseating scent of perfumed pages among it all. She scoffs and wrinkles her nose at them. She hates magazines. But she knows July loves them. July loves all the things June doesn't. It's how they stand each other, acting like North and South even though they never quite figured out who was exactly which direction.

"How long have you been out here, July?"

June asks, searching July's face for any signs of the same destruction that the house has seen. But there is only her mouth set into a firm line as she reads, her brow creased deep, with her hair shrouding her in a fiery veil, making it almost hurt to look at her. It actually does hurt, and it makes June angry, because July is gone once again, absorbed into her magazine, leaving June to wait for her uncertainly.

They had never necessarily liked each other. July was a barraging force, volatile in all direc-

tions like a sudden wave of heat that inevitably led to the hottest month of the year. June was more aloof, yet grounded. She kept her nose to the grindstone, and worked tirelessly whereas July's presence, barreling here and there with the fiery quality of a meteor sent to destroy countless galaxies, was always somehow welcome to contrast June's own slim yet poignant earthliness.

July always got turned out from every place she went, eventually. People couldn't stand her, in the end, because she was too blunt, maybe a little too shallow, and deeply sad for no reason. Granted, she was deeply fascinating, playful at times too, but she had a penchant for losing it all in the end. She always lost even when she wasn't trying to win. But at least she had June. June, who always put up with her sloppiness, her procrastination, her stubborn resolve to never be a responsible person, a good person, a stable person.

June always let July do whatever she wanted, in the end, which is probably why July seems so pleasant now, dismissive even though she's left a catastrophe for June to clean up. And when she finally looks up, she smiles happily, too. Like June weren't fuming in front of her for everything she's done.

"The weather is so nice today. It makes me want go swimming."

"Isn't the weather always nice?" June snaps. She wants to smack the girl for leaving plates of spoiled food around, piling reeking, used towels and stale cigarettes among all of it. She wants to strangle the girl for abandoning her rabid plants on her. And then she wants to kill the girl for the fact that-

July doesn't answer and smiles into her magazine. The sunlight looks nice on her hair. It sweeps thickly over her shoulders with her as she cranes her neck, and June can't help but quiet down to think about it - her hair and how much of a bitch she is for looking so charming - for a second, before suddenly they're both quiet for a long time until July finishes her article, undoubtedly some speculative something about someone's life. June hates those. July knows it.

When July starts lifting dirty plates and napkins, June finally stops thinking about July's dyed blonde hair, curled into careless, messy locks, and her disapproval eases out of her.

"What are you doing?" She snaps again, because emotionally she's a broken record, snapping and snapping when July was really supposed to be the one that's on repeat. But July turns out different every time. Even when her words are simply rewound, she always has something new to say.

Finding a stubby pencil near a sugar dispenser filled with liquid instead of crystals, July lifts it up, grinning as if she's found the best kind of prize. "I'm writing you an IOU right now," she laughs, and June grudgingly smiles back, because they both know July has no money. "It's for the mess I've made. If you haven't noticed it yet, I've left everything all over your house. It's going to be a bitch to clean, I guess."

"You guess?"

June glances at a bug, floating dead in a cold cup of coffee, "you son of a bitch."

Eyes focused on the scrap paper she's dug up from somewhere, July pointedly doesn't respond, scribbling furiously. Her writing is that aesthetic kind, words with tails and charm, and thought even when she isn't really thinking. It's a long message for an IOU.

June doesn't bother waiting for July to finish and notices her good wine glasses on the table instead, stained red with something. Oh god, cheap red wine. She picks it up, frowning in despair and July's writing picks up to a frantic scrawl.

"you've stained them," June moans, hands trembling, "you've really left a mess for me, haven't you?"

"I'm going to miss weather like this," July responds, looking up, but not seeing June's furrowed brow. "The weather is just lovely today. I haven't gone out enough to enjoy it."

"I really wish you would just talk to me," June replies.

"I've left you a little note with my IOU."

"July, I'm here, you know. Look at me."

The words are pointless, because June already knows that July won't look. And the crease is still there on her forehead as her shoulders sag, weighted at the sight of July looking up towards the sky, heaving a long sigh. July's frame is shaking, the angles of her shoulders shifting up and down in tremulous uncertainty. The dazed look of contentment still pulls up the corners of her lips, though. A stained coffee cup is in her hands and she soon reaches across the table, to the sugar dispenser.

"July."

June's stomach sinks at the sight of it, the substance of the shaker swishing around as July's hands fumble with the glass. July looks across the table, but she doesn't see June's tensed shoulders or roaming eyes. She doesn't notice June's words building traffic in her throat, struggling for the right thing to say. Her face is blank as if she sees nothing, nothing except her precious flowers. They're lulling back and forth as her hands shake and unscrew the dispenser's cap, and June leans in with them, wanting so badly to snap at her, but fighting it back and watching stiffly instead as July casually pours it into her coffee cup, adding milk and a pink packet of sugar soon afterwards.

"Coffee in such nice weather is essential," July murmurs, but her voice comes out thin, echoing the useless advice columns she so voraciously read.

"Stop saying stupid things. Please say something to me," June begs. Begs, only because she knows what is going to happen, knows what's going to happen a thousand times over. Yet she still wants to July to listen. June wants to shake her, to hit her, to hold her, to ask and plead and do anything possible for her, just as long as it means she listens, because maybe for god-

damn once, July needs to stop being wrong about something and just needs to listen. Maybe there is an answer beyond petals and leaves, and she just needs to listen.

And, luckily, July finally does listen. She finally looks and sees June, too, and the flash of her eyes has June's whole body nearly clambering on the table, knocking over all of the stale and rotting things to try and reach her.

"July, listen to me."

July's eyebrows quirk and she smiles knowingly. Everything is silent. The plants are straining and listening intently. The sunshine is seemingly frozen, curious.

"The weather is nice," July offers,

"July," June hisses, "talk to me."

"It's one of the few things I enjoy."

"July, please, I'll do anything-please-"

"I enjoy you, too," she says, as an afterthought. "I've always enjoyed spending time with you. You're... Great."

"But your plants. Think about-"

Suddenly, July lifts her cup and tilts her head as she takes a quick sip from her coffee, and June lets a strangled cry finally escape her, the backup of words in her throat racing into the air with a horrific thunder.

"I've always enjoyed spending time with you," July repeats, leaning back into her chair. June doesn't hear because she's suddenly sobbing. Hot, salty tracks of tears stream down her face,

and her shoulders hunch and heave, gasping for air. She looks away from July's smile. She can't take anymore when the girl grins wider and chuckles a little to herself, "You'r great, June," she murmurs.

"You're absolutely, wonderful. The thing is, though.... I don't know you. And I wonder if you know me, and why you're here if you do."

It only takes several moments before she closes her eyes, yawning and settling into herself sleepily. "The weather is so nice," she says. The words strain her.

June falls back into her seat, unable to do anything else but watch July's head gradually lull. She has no words to say, nothing that she could possibly do. She can't reach July. She can't pierce her insides and grasp hold of the light, the heat, the girl she thought she knew. "I love this weather," July sighs, "but the heat. It makes me so tired. No wonder I don't go out..."

The rest of the film goes on for hours. The sun slowly burns out. The plants shrivel and grieve. July sleeps for hours and hours, and people come and go. But June doesn't even bother watching July sleep, finally burnt out for the rest of her life.

July's left a mess to clean, a scattered and mindless mess. A product of July's touch that now inevitably belongs to June down to every last crack and tear.

RED TOOTSIE
CHARLOTTE SCOTT

All of the sudden, dad.

I got to sit in the front seat of dad's old white Mercedes.

I opened a new red tootsie pop, in dad's old Mercedes and clicked its shell against my teeth.

Dad didn't like that sound!

The warm highway on either side, I was only five!

First memory, my dad, my Ralph Lauren dad.

All of the sudden,

Dad grabbed my hand with his and threw the tootsie out of the window.

And now I wonder why; I aim to please men.

ANATOMY OF A BEE
XENIA ELLENBOGEN

1.

He stings with a different capacity.
honey stomach, salivary gland, poison sac.

2.

But those are bees. And these are men.
The anatomy of a man goes like:

3.

Bone marrow, veins, sting
Large intestine, small intestine

4.

On the third floor of the haunted ex-brothel-
now-fine-dining-restaurant (where the footsteps were)

5.

The men would come, present their anatomy
and present their currency.

6.

Now they just drink beer.
and present their currency

7.

the bees hum about on the roof:
brain, wing muscles, sting.

8.

The men jest of the whores:
brain, muscle, willpower.

9.

The bees pay in honey
the men pay with cold, hard—

WAKING UP IS HARD TO DO
NIA NOTTAGE

when i woke up
i wimped out
pretended didn't matter and
i tried to go back to sleep.

descending
my bed now
naked, covered in dry cum from
jacking off to
get to sleep

naked walking
to the kitchen
mother's home
i'm alone
it's sunday then.
glory be

fridge for something
halfway eaten
television covers
sounds of birds
sounds of peace

getting more annoyed than sad
getting angry at the
television
at disney
and the media
at change and technology

-
click forty six
the rugrats
movie from my childhood
if i'd finished it
no memory

and over last night's taco bell
i watched the end
and cried like hell
when chuckie told his sister
that he missed his old mommy

ORAL HYGIENE

JOSHUA SEGEL

When she said that, He said this: "I'm not sure exactly, but I do know that it's been a few days."

When he said that, She said something that I don't remember, to which He said: "But you used my tooth brush. It was sitting there, caked in disgusting tooth paste, which is something I never do, leave the tooth paste on the tooth brush, and there's no one else who uses this bathroom, so it had to be you. It's weird too because you have your own tooth brush. It's literally right next to mine."

To which she apologized: "I'm sorry. It won't happen again."

But he said: "Why did it even happen in the first place?"

She then asked: "Wait, when was this again?"

He, confused: "A few days ago. Have you done this before?"

She, defensive: "No. I don't know. I'm often very drunk when I brush my teeth."

He: "Don't use my tooth brush, okay? Now I have to buy a new one."

She: "Have you not brushed your teeth since this tooth paste incident?"

He: "No, because my tooth brush was too gross to use. I'm going to buy a new one right now." He put on his coat, gloves, hat, tied his shoes and walked out of the apartment he shared with She.

She said to me: "Has he really not brushed his teeth in the past three days?"

To which I said: "I don't know. You guys have mouthwash too though, right? Maybe he's been mouthwashing."

Which seemed to put She at ease a little: "Yeah, he must have been mouthwashing. You know, Listerine kills like 99% of all the germs in your mouth. It reaches places that

brushing alone cannot."

I: "I did know that."

He called She on the phone from the drug store. From my end, I heard this, from She's mouth: "You definitely want soft bristles. You have weak gums, especially after not having brushed for-- Oh, okay, no, that one sounds good. Tongue scrubber? Can't you just use the brush part to also scrub your tongue? No? Oh, get one that vibrates. Can you pick up some of those floss things, too? Yeah the individual ones that look like-- Yeah, slingshots. Thanks."

I and She, a few minutes later, heard some keys jingling outside the apartment door. He walked in, holding two plastic bags from the drug store. He said: "I had some trouble picking out a tooth brush. I'm very particular about these things." Then his foot caught on the edge of the Persian rug that marked the dining area off as separate from the rest of the living room which caused his body to fall to the ground in an awkward and violent kind of way, spilling various Crest and Colgate oral hygiene products on the ground.

She: "How many tooth brushes did you buy?"

He, still on the ground, clutching his tail bone, didn't answer.

She, reaching down to grab the box of individual flossers, said: "Thanks for picking up the flossers. Oh, and I see you got some more Listerine. As well as, what is this, forty-five tooth brushes? How much money did you just spend?"

I, observing the multitudes of tooth brushes on the ground, thought that forty-five was a pretty good estimate and said: "Forty-five tooth brushes at an average of, what? Four dollars a tooth brush? Comes to about \$180."

She: "Thanks, I."

He, still sitting on the ground and clutching his tail bone, said: "I'm in pain. And I had a very difficult time picking a tooth brush. This way, I can see what I like and don't like, and we'll have left overs. Next time you get drunk to the point of not knowing whose tooth brush is whose, we can just open a new one."

She: "Is your butt okay? Can you stand? Would you like a drink?"

He: "I'm not sure if I'm okay. Yes I'd like a drink."

She picked up the Listerine and passed it to He. She said: "That's 43.2 proof."

She walked into the kitchen and I followed. She went over to their little, well stocked

bar in the corner and took out a bottle of Campari. She mixed it with soda water over ice, reached for an orange, sliced it deftly, and placed one in her drink. She: "Would you like one?"

I: "Yes, please. Campari was my grand father's drink."

She: "It is mine, as well."

I: "He had a rule — never more than two glasses when he got home. Of course, that doesn't count whatever he drank before he got home, but when he was home, only two more glasses. The rule was never broken, just circumvented. He started with rocks glasses before moving on to high ball glasses and, this is all according to my mother of course, eventually switched to pint glasses. By the end, it was gallon milk jugs."

She: "I don't have any rules. It's much easier this way."

She and I walked back into the main room, the dining room and living room combination where he was still on the ground, and he said: "Seriously? I'm stuck on the ground in pain, with the Listerine, and you guys get real drinks? You couldn't make me one?"

To which she said: "This is what happens when you spend \$200 dollars on tooth brushes and various other oral hygiene products. You get stuck, on the ground, with the Listerine. Drink up, it'll make you feel better."

He took a swig of the green liquid, made a retching noise, and said: "That's disgusting. I just vomited in my mouth."

She took the bottle from his hand, put it to her mouth, drank — chugged almost — for a few seconds, removed the bottle, and said: "Aaah," as if she were refreshed, put it back in his hand and kicked him in the tail bone.

He groaned. I asked: "Why did you do that?"

She shrugged and said: "Whatever."

To which he said: "Excuse me?"

Which caused her to reply: "Oh, I'm sorry," and kiss him on the forehead.

The next day, I went back over to She and He's apartment. When I rang the doorbell, He said: "It's open."

I opened the door and saw him, still sitting in the same place on the floor, and said: "Have you not moved since yesterday?"

He: "No, I have not."

I: "Are you — okay?"

He: "No, I don't think so."

I: "Does She know?"

He: "Yes."

I: "Where is she?"

He: "I don't know." He seemed very upset by his ground-dwelling situation and started calling out to her: "She! She! I need you."

I: "Is she here, though? Have you seen her today?"

He didn't know, or at least didn't answer. He reached for the Listerine bottle, which was now close to empty, and took a long swig. It went down smoother than it had the day before.

I walked around He to the bathroom, where I could hear her television from her bedroom. I opened the door: "She, do you know what's going on outside?"

She: "Have you ever heard of that bird that cleans hippo's teeth?"

I: "I always thought it was crocodiles. He's still on the ground out there, you know that right?"

She: "Well it turns out that it's neither. There are birds that sit on hippopotami but they do not clean their teeth, they just eat insects. There's a myth that the Egyptian Plover – that's a bird – cleans crocodile teeth but it's never been documented."

I: "Okay."

She: "Did you know that hippos kill more people in Africa every year than any other large animal? Other than humans, of course. And they don't fear humans either. Whatever you do, don't get between a hippo and her child."

I: "Good to know."

She: "I've been watching a lot of National Geographic. Is he okay in the living room?"

I: "He seems to have acquired the taste for Listerine, so that's something."

She, while rising from bed, said: "Good." Then she added: "Let's go check on him."

I and She walked out into the living room, where he was lying on the ground, and he said: "There she is."

I: "Yeah, I found her in her room."

She said: "How are you doing?"

He: "I have very fresh breath."

She: "Will you get up now? I think you've made your point."

He: "I cannot get up."

Exasperated, she looked at me: "Will you tell him to get up already?"

I: "He, you have to get up. This is ridiculous. Here, let me help you." I reached out my hands, and grabbed him by the shoulders to pull him up, but he shook me off.

He: "I've been sitting here, on this floor, for almost twenty four hours, I think. I've grown accustomed, attached."

She: "I will not help you if you do not want to be helped."

I: "What's wrong with you, anyway? I mean, physically."

He: "My butt hurts, I. How do you not get this?"

She: "Would you like us to move you to the couch?"

He started to say something but cut himself off. He paused, thought for a moment, and said: "I will move myself to the couch, thank you very much." And he stood, slowly, leaned over to grab his bottle of Listerine, almost fell, and quickly walked to the couch. He, Listerine-drunk, said: "Now can I have some Campari please?"

She: "You can obviously get the Campari yourself."

He, annoyed, said: "No, I can't. It's thirty two steps to the bar in the kitchen from this spot on the couch, I've counted before, and thirty two is the same number of teeth in the average adult human, as well as a multiple of eight, which is my least favorite number. If it was twenty seven steps, or thirty six, I would be happy to get it."

She: "I thought you only liked prime numbers."

I: "No, it's multiples of prime numbers."

They, together: "Thanks, I."

He: "Thirty two is a bad number."

She: "Thirty two is the number of ounces of Listerine you've drank in the last day."

I: "Actually it was 33.8."

THE BEGINNING

NICK AMARA

at the beginning (it begins i write its column in the
hive) i caved wordlengths skyward embracing the
blank slate A different story with the glow of un
kempt embers A surface ungiven to vices
or the long neon night I had never pleaded
for high roads I only sought to bury with bottles
and breakwater So I plead these high roads (the
only elevation worth of giving a damn) your voice
The only influence to structure:

I called shock.

A warning sign self installed
to breathe out the bad
but still live in the memory The
cut is all I had Empathy seeped
out generously The rules of
gravity cut in two and bled
all over my bed The light always
on in the trophy room of regret
too long Its life everlasting

I cut through the dark Heard the
reverberations of your chords Digging deep in

the waves I unhinged the reasons and took
them with me Turned off the lights
and believed for once So I'm
told by kids caught in lap statures
in a frame from fourteen years
old In kid caresses and unsunk ships
Smothered by flowers My

own heart beating under
wraps to love's long
winded stab

Love is sweet and
is a song Will turn
old but never lose
verbosity It lets
and lets Never
a wrung spool

so every empty crevice
floods with the voice Every
bird is flat under the sound Only
the sound itself manifests You're
breathing slowly The air is thin I'm
only breaths

this is only after
the sand is sifted
and you and i are tired
and we rest alike
to small salty branches

in the afternoon An
incantation A song
only we know Meet
my words in that state
only we know Can you
hear it Can you hear it
and sleep now Can you
hear it Over that border
we made? I know
this is the end, so
I open my eyes

buried deep

in which you sleep

in mixed emotions

wandering notions

It's not me, it's you

GEOMETRY

ANASTACIA ANASTASCIO

It comes in many different shapes and forms. You never quite know if the substance will maintain its shape over time. Its variation could fall into the form of a square; binding you in the center of four corners with nowhere to run. Triangles could result in a change of substance—those are never good. They produce options, forcing one to rank interests creating selfish bitterness. The circular form of substance is the kind of material that we long for—a continuous, never-ending affection that can often be overwhelming, and that's when some people take the easy way out, running away from happiness. If these shapes and forms have the capability of functioning in any way at all, they allow a person to shift their perspective on their individual being and in some cases; it even has the ability to change who you are.

WAVES

ANASTACIA ANASTASCIO

We spoke about the waves in the ocean. The way each motion thrusts itself upon the shore, startling at first. A loud roar until it washes up against the dry sand and becomes a soft sound of tranquility. I wondered why we spoke about the waves and failed to mention the fact that he was moving away and I was going to be alone. I thought about the times we shared and the moments that he told me that I would be his forever. I asked myself if there could ever be a forever because forever is a long time and I did not know if forever was the time we were allotted in life. I supposed I would just take his words with a grain of salt and believe it to be true because I believed that we could last, just like the waves hitting up against the shore, down by our feet that rested upon moist sand.

"Do you think waves last forever?" I asked, as I lifted my head from Gabriel's shoulder to catch a glimpse of his eyes. The sun was hidden by nimbus clouds scattered across the blue-gray sky above where we sat on that gloomy day.

"I think anything lasts forever if you want it to last forever," he said. I mumbled whether or not he thought we would last forever, but he did not seem to hear me. My mind wandered to the time Gabriel and I went to a carnival to see the Starving Man—a freak show artist, loosely influenced by Kafka's "Hunger Artist." The difference between this man and the hunger artist in Kafka's story was that he could only go three full days without eating. Somehow it was still entertaining to watch the man pretend to be fragile and near death. There was something incredibly amusing about the advertising sign:

"COME SEE THE STARVING MAN. NEAR DEATH! SKIN AND BONES!"

I thought about all of the times in high school that I went three days without eating, puking my way into slenderness. I told Gabriel this every time and he laughed, telling me that I was a liar. I told him that I'd do it again if I had to. "Anything to avoid the potential embarrassment of waking up one day to pudgy cheeks, cankles, and a muffin top," I'd said. He'd shake his head and thank God I'm not as reckless as I used to be.

After the first time I told Gabriel of my past instances of bulimic behavior, he turned to me and said, "This is why I love you. You say silly stuff like 'cankles' and 'muffin tops', and you've grown so strong from your past. I wouldn't even recognize the girl you describe yourself to have been." That was the first time he told me that he loved me. The first time that I blushed so hard that my golden tan cheeks turned a raspberry red. The first time that I looked deep into his soft, gentle brown eyes and felt truly enamored. But that was sixth months ago when we were happy and he was not leaving the country. Back to Catalonia. Back to his home. Back to a place where I did not exist and he had a new life—without me.

There I was, listening to the ocean's waves, reflecting on the time that I was not with Gabriel. The time where I was fucked up in the head. I thought back to when I believed it was okay to not eat for three days straight and did not like ocean waves because the sound was so sentimental and I did not like sentimental things. I reflected back to the time when countless metaphysical questions about life laid heavily on my mind, nauseating each step that I took from the moment I woke up to the moment I crawled back into my twin sized bed late at night. Some nights I found myself in one of those queen sized beds that weren't even mine and squeaked so loudly. I thought about the sickening amount of sex that occurred on those unfamiliar, noisy beds.

I wondered if Gabriel leaving meant that I would have to go back to those days. "I'm going to be fucked up," I said. The ocean waves stopped reaching our feet. It was then that the silence and reminiscence was forced to end. There was no longer anything to divert us from what needed to be said and done.

"No, you won't," he said.

"What makes you so sure?"

"Well you've lasted this long, haven't you? You have to know that forever is not a long time. It's only your lifetime. I want you to believe that we can last forever and you will last forever because waves never stop hitting the shore. Even when the waves stop roaring and depart to mingle with the ocean, they're still whispering to the sand, waiting to return to dry land again," is what I wish he said.

"I'm not," is what he said.

FOOD REVIEW

LAUREN EARLY

Right now I'm eating pork and plantains alone. Actually my food hasn't come yet, no one's food in the whole restaurant has come what if it's a trick?? Everyone has beer though. Me too I have my favorite: Negra Modelo. When I order it I slur the end of the words like "Negruh Modeluh" because I can never remember is it Negra Modelo or Negro Modela? I finished the beer and still no food so I have to order another. I only got this first beer because there's a ten-dollar minimum and the ATM is the price of a beer, so it was economically smart.

The food came and it's really good. Not even because I haven't eaten all day/I'm buzzed it's just really good food you have to trust me. It's the best and I feel like a happy cat, back to the ground and paws to the air, purring.

Behind me there's a window to the street. It is tinted purple and framed by long tubes of purple neon light. There are paintings on the window, which are backwards to me and just right to people outside. The paintings are a shining crucifix and a smiling rabbit head. I look at this and think about how obscure the paintings of the crucifix and rabbit head are and how cool they look framed by the neon purple. When I turn around and face the street, I look through the rabbit. The paint is translucent and it's as if I am the rabbit looking onto Wyckoff forever, smiling. I have a sudden realization. An epiphany. The crucifix and the rabbit head aren't obscure it was just Easter.

There's an old wrinkly baggy man sitting alone at the bar with lots of beer. He's watching me and trying to get my attention and I tell myself don't let him buy me beer, no matter how much I like beer and free things! There's this toddler girl who leaves her family and walks

over to me just to stand there and stare and smile. She's the best and I stare back and smile back and wonder if I'm creepy. I don't think so because her family is watching and look at me like they're saying "Isn't she great?" and I look back at them like "She is! She is!"

I chose this restaurant because it smelled good and that made me remember I was hungry. My choice was confirmed after I saw the "B" Sanitary Inspection Grade. "B" is my favorite sanitation grade because it means it's real. When sweet old Spanish ladies drop pork chops on the the dirty floors of their Spanish kitchens in Spain they do not throw them out! They do not wear hair nets! I am not afraid of a little hair in my spaghetti! "C" is terrifying though. It's probably really easy to get an "A" – like standardized testing in high school or a driver's license test, expectations are shockingly low because every idiot is suppose to be able meet them. A "B" is charming though, like people who drive with reckless abandon but are good at it and never crash.

Montazo is a lovely family restaurant three thumbs up.

OFFICER CANDIDATE

LAUREN EARLY

Mr. Chen was shorter than half the girls in his sixth grade American History class, and taught out of a bungalow in a parking lot in the San Fernando Valley, which was the school's response to a simultaneous budget cut / expansion. A big room slapped together with linoleum floors and corkboard walls. It wasn't grounded, instead supported by four wheels like a big, funny car. Back then it was a classroom, but now it's gone. Relieved of duty, blending into the landscape of a freeway, it was carted off at eighty miles an hour into a new life as another crummy version of something someone needs but can't afford.

Like the bungalow, Chen could also be grabbed from the sky and pulled into another life — he was on reserve for the Marines, and we were at war in Iraq.

Chen is short and just as wide as he is tall. All muscle in such an obvious meat head way. He'd be in front of a class of little kids, rubbing his biceps, talking about war; lecturing with arms crossed and palms tucked tightly into his armpits, squeezing his pecks. It wasn't on purpose, just a back-brained habit. Comfort you give yourself without even asking for it, like thumb sucking. Crew cut hair and military issued clothing with the exception of a pair of Oakley sunglasses he wore in any weather. And when he was inside, he'd still wear the sunglasses - backwards, hanging off his ears and squeezing his meaty neck as if it had eyes. He had a scar on his right upper arm — the size and shape of a banana. Inside the banana, his skin was a different color, pinker than people. And on top of the pink was a shiny, clear film, like Saran Wrap that was almost stretched perfectly across but not quite, so it was a little wrinkly. It looked as if he cut out a piece of some pinkish person and scotch taped it onto himself. It wasn't ugly at all. It was badass and I've always wanted one just like it¹.

Girls like me would admit, "Chen's kind of cute actually, like the muscles and also that scar is so mysterious", and girls like Yvonne, who were leagues ahead of me in life and would talk about things like Angel Dust² and anal, would be like, "I'd fuck him. If it's worth it, let me work it. I put my thing down flip it and reverse it." I liked her and I liked that she liked me.

Chen brought a girl along on a field trip to Knott's Berry Farm. He was eye level with her massive boobs and she wore low cut jeans and a wife-beater with he said loudly "you look fuckin' hot, babe". I remember thinking this was inappropriate but also who cares and also this was so fitting of his character. He led the group of students into the theme park, girl by his side, holding her with one hand in her ass pocket. The boys were impressed and I realized I probably wasn't his type.

I never had Mr. Chen as a teacher. Instead, he was my Commander in Chief and every school day at 5th period, the bungalow became "Cadet Headquarters". Before heading out for P.T. (Physical Training), or drill practice³, or uniform check, or whatever, fifty kids would pack into the bungalow and stand at attention – back straight, chin up, eyes forward. Face tight, concentrating on concentrating. Arms down tense and flexed, hands in fists. Fingers tucked under thumb. All of the tight fists loosely grabbing the hem of pants on each side, until I stood in front of the classroom and commanded: At ease. A lot of weird power for a fourteen year-old girl.

For a minute everyone would chill out and find a seat on the floor or stand – it was definitely against fire code, it was definitely illegal, but that was part of the magic. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, education is sifted through pasta strainers of beauracracy, potential lawsuits, money, dumb parents... The California Cadet Corps is a shining diamond. Run by people with edge. People who are not afraid of law. Soldiers run it.

In middle school I had to have a permission slip signed in order to watch Mrs. Doubtfire in Math class (don't see relation to math but I did learn to love Mrs. Doubtfire), but then also, for class, I routinely found myself a hundred miles away from home in a military issued field

uniform fit for a grown man, hair reluctantly tied in a rubber-banded high-bun, alone, lost in the woods, sleep and food deprived, overworked⁴ and exhausted emotionally by slightly older kids with power who projected all types of deep angers⁵. With camouflage painted on my face, hiding from a pretend opposing army. This was rare and weird and everyone liked it so we let it feel real. These were monthly three-night gatherings of all the Battalions in our region – five different schools. They were called Survival Bivouacs and I was an Officer Candidate in the advanced group – advanced survival.

While marching the cadets of the 232nd Battalion to the school bus on every third Thursday, I would call the cadence Mr. Chen taught me, straining an especially little-girl sounding voice. With each line, an echo of kids convincingly sounded like an army:

If I die in a combat zone (If I die in a combat zone)

Box me up and ship me home (Box me up and ship me home)

Pin my medals to my chest (Pin my medals to my chest)

Tell my mom I did my best (Tell my mom I did my best)

Sound Off (One! Two!)

Sound Of (Three! Four!)

Sound off One Two

(Three! Four!)

When we got to whatever California woods, a drill sergeant would hop on the bus and walk down the aisle and scream at us. I can't remember what they screamed about, but they were the type of noises some people make when other people do something really, really wrong. The type of noises people make when they know someone needs to be fixed and they can't fix them but they want to try anyway. Like we were all ten and pregnant and on Maury. Only no one on the bus did anything wrong. It wasn't about that. When we got off the bus and had a moment to ourselves, I would chat with everyone, the kids I was "commander" of, and be like, deng that guy has issues.

From the bus, we separated into squads based on rank and position. I was in the advanced

group, where they announced they were upping the game and we were each given one M.R.E. for the entire three-night trip. M.R.E.'s (Meals Ready to Eat) are field meals. Soldiers carry them on their bodies and eat them when there's no coming home. They're cardboard paper boxes the size and shape of a novel, packed in heavy non-translucent silver bags. Inside the cardboard box are a bunch of smaller, heavy, non-translucent silver bags. Vacuum packed. Unmarked and mysterious with different, unsettling textures. Usually there's a packet of "peanut butter", a pack of cardboard crackers, some weird fruity goo, and a main course. All the M.R.E. main courses are too ambitious. If I'm eating gruel I just want gruel. Grey, slimy, chunky, tasteless gruel. Not Cajun Shrimp Jambalaya flavored gruel. But that's what you get.

I remember marching through camp on the last day feeling so hungry it was novel. This is what it's like. We marched right through everyone else's lunch. They all got two hot dogs and Kool Aid and unlimited knock-off Lays and a big mess of baked beans. The man in charge of everything, Colonel Morten, an old, stout ex-marine now-English-teacher with a messed up face walked up to our famished squad with a big cartoon pot of beans big enough to feed an army. He asked, ANY YOU CADETS WANT SOME BEeeEAAAAAANssSSSs and waved a ladle full of steaming grossness in front of our faces. Everyone was quiet because it seemed like a trick but I said yes, sir, and held out my hands pressed in a cup as if to drink from the river. He stared into the cup of tiny dirty hands. Actual hunger. If he poured hot beans into the hands of a girl he starved, it would look too much like real war, so he didn't.

Notes:

1. When students asked how he got the scar he said it was a shark bite. So when I asked him how'd you get that scar and he said it's a shark bite, the scar was a shark bite. Then some kid was like no you idiot that's a lie. This was the first time I realized I could be stupid and wrong about everything and have no idea. From that point on the scar creeped me out.

2. I thought this was a nickname for Pixie Sticks but she was like nah girl that's street for PCP

3. Like in the movie Cadet Kelly, which conveniently came out at this time. Kids who weren't Cadets thought it was cool and likened me to Hillary Duff, which was a long shot.

4. From all day P.T. led by retired Marines who don't know the difference between their bodies and the body of an 80 pound 4'10" girl.

5. Kids had the option to stay with the Cadets through high school. High school cadets were drill sergeants at Bivouacs — their job was to scream at us and make us do push-ups. These kids all looked and sounded like dogs. They always reminded me of those episodes of Maury where they bring in TV drill sergeants to yell at some sorry guest — as if screaming at her is going to get the poor ten year old girl unpregnant. The high school cadets usually joined the Army.

I AM THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO HAS SEEN THIS
LOOK ON BOBBY'S FACE
WAYNE TROTMAN

for Norhan Hassan

I will submit a poem on your behalf
In exchange for another cigarette. You
Bring me chamomile tea, and happiness,
sitting in that wooden chair. You are
watching Korean soap operas,
in the Versace scarf I stole
from my sister and gave to you.

On the shelf behind you are all the books
I yearned to read: Hegel and shit, but never did.
Too stoned. Out the window is the backyard,
filled with cats you wanted to adopt. I was
a cat once, scuttling around subways,
and you took me in. Thanks, girl.
Remember the day we crossed the bridge?
On 145 st? to go to Bushwick? The L was down
and I needed to sell my XBOX to cop an eighth.

I took a picture of you on the bridge.
Remind me to send it to you, it's beautiful.
You had a yellow flower in your hair that
we found on the sidewalk.

The gamestop was only giving me 20 bucks
for my XBOX and we made a fuss, having
walked all the way from Harlem to East Bushwick
to that spectacular new loftspacemall. Dayum!

We met Freddy in the line. Remember?
High school kid, wavy hair, with his
cute girlfriend. We gave them college
advice, he gave us a dub. We walked
back home over the bridge, real cute.



LINDSEY DEVERS



LINDSEY DEVERS

KENNETH (WAX PARAFFIN)
MATTHEW KIM-COOK

a coma, a smear of vaseline
dew in these moments
i was only fifteen
when what shook stiff tense
gave like glycerin
as you said my full name
clear, emollient, crystalline
and i was only fifteen



OLIVIA SCHWARTZMAN

ON THE RIVER
GRIFFIN SHERBERT

It was cold as hell down by the water. The canoes were just getting pushed in. The wind came howling down through the trees as the older boys knocked around by the boats in the water. They were all holding beers and laughing loud in the morning air. The women and children stood waiting on the shore, making sure sandwiches had been packed and lifejackets were fastened. It looked like it was going to rain and the air around us was thick and blustery. Our leader, Uncle Jack, stood on the shore watching the boys goof off in the shallows while smoking. He smoked Marlboro Reds and had a full bushy mustache that jumped when he spoke. He stood silently watching and when he had finished he threw down his cigarette and walked to the boats.

"Come on y'all. S'bout time we get moving."

The large group all moved to their canoes and pushed off down the river. It was going to be a long trip, round the time of 7 or 8 hours. All the canoes held two people, 'cept for the ones with babies who sat in the middle. I was riding up front with my friend Darrel behind steering. We were in good spirits despite the weather. We'd snuck a few beers away from the older boys and planned on drinking them once we put some distance between us and the herd. We were paddling down the river at a good speed but the cold was starting to get at us.

After an hour and a half of straight paddling we were a good distance off. We passed by clay cliffs and dense brush followed by an opening with a meadow that had burned down recent-

ly. It was still smoldering in some places. We were now moving through some big bends in a deep part of the river. As we maneuvered through and reached the end we came upon a slow, open area of water, perfect for drinking beer. Daryl and I put our paddles down inside the boat and sat facing each other. Daryl took a couple beers out from under the stack of lifejackets and threw me one. We cracked them open and silently 'cheersed'. The beer didn't taste that good but it felt right going down. We were men now, floating down the river and drinking beer.

"Feels good, don't it?"

"Hell yeah it does. Whoja take these from anyway?"

"Bobby." Daryl said smiling.

"You took these from Bobby? Aw man, he's gonna kill us, Daryl."

"No he ain't. No ones gonna know. It's just you and me out here. He ain't ever gonna know."

Bobby was Daryl's older brother and one mean sonovabitch. One time the year before he and Daryl were having a scrap about something and he straight punched Darryl in the throat. I thought he was gonna die. His face went all red, eyes bugging out. It was terrifying. I didn't want to be drinking Bobby's beer but Daryl was right. There was no one around. You could look up and down the river and couldn't spot a soul.

We relaxed and laid back. We both finished our first beer and threw the cans into the river. Daryl got out another two and cracked them both open. He smiled again and threw me one.

"Damn it Daryl!" beer spilling all in my lap.

He laughed heartily and stomped his bare feet against the metal bottom of the canoe.

"Serves you right for being such a pussy!"

"I'm not being a pussy. If Bobby finds out we drank his beers he's gonna kick our asses."

"He ain't gonna find out! Jesus, Turner. Even if he did find out what could he do to us? We're on the river."

Daryl was right. I needed to relax. I brushed the standing beer and foam off my trunks and laid back against the canoe. The second beer tasted even better than the first one. That's something that's never changed. The sun started to come out from behind the clouds and warmed us both. It was the most comforting sunlight I've ever been under. I stuck my foot out over the edge and let it drag in the water. My buzzing head fell over to one side and I saw a fox slinking in between some ferns on the shore and wanted to tell Daryl but I became very sleepy drinking in the sun and closed my eyes in the gift of sleep.

*

"Turner! Get up! Get up goddamnit!"
"Wha... I'm up, I'm up, was happenin'?"

I could hear Daryl hitting the water fast, jerking the boat left and right with each stroke. I rubbed my eyes and saw terror and determination on his face. I got to my seat and picked up my paddle and started working. I thought we were in rapids or coming on some rocks or something but it seemed like smooth water up ahead to me. The wind had picked up and my arms were covered in goosebumps.

"What's the matter?"

I turned around to look at Daryl and saw Bobby and the cousins, paddling hard about half a clip down the river. They were laughing and yelling and I knew we were in trouble. I started paddling like a madman, thrusting hard into the water. Left, right, left, right, right, left. Daryl was breathing hard behind me. I couldn't see any trees or wildlife anymore, just the cold hard water and my paddle switching hands. I looked behind me to see where Bobby and the cousins were at. They were about 200 ft. away and closing. I whipped around and kept paddling. I could hear them laughing and whooping in the background with the splashing of water and the pumping of my heart. I looked around again—100 ft. There was no way to outrun them. No matter how hard we paddled we couldn't match their pace. A few minutes later they were almost on top of us.

"Boys, boys! What's the rush?"

Bobby and the cousins were sitting in three canoes behind us, all smiles and looking around at each other to see who'd make the first move. Daryl gave up paddling and turned around to face them, holding his paddle like a weapon. The wind was blowing hard on us and I wished I had brought a sweater. Bobby's canoe ran up next to ours and his cousin, Mike, grabbed hold of ours so we couldn't escape. Bobby smiled at the both of us, knowing full well he was in control.

"So cats, whatcha been up to? Been paddling awfully fast this whole time. 'Fraid you might get sprayed?"

Mike let go of our canoe for a second and hosed us both down with a water cannon. It was freezing. The water bit into our arms and faces and made our shirts stick to our chests. All the older boys laughed and jeered.

"Fuck you, Bobby. Just leave us alone."

All the cousins 'ooood' as Bobby looked around and smiled. Daryl kept on staring at Bobby in defiance.

"Fuck me, eh? Fuck me? You know, you really shouldn't be using such bad language there, Daryl. Maybe you need a cool down." Daryl got another water blast right in the face, soaking everything that was in our canoe. The cold water ran around our bare feet and made the little things float. Bobby's eyes lit up as he put one foot in our canoe. "Whose beer can is this?" he asked. Daryl looked down and rung out his shirt.

"I said, whose beer can is this? Cause I know it can't be yours. Whose is it, Daryl?" I looked around at all the faces, all waiting to see what would happen. Linda, Daryl's cousin, and her friend Mandy, were giggling toward the rear wearing bikinis and sunglasses. I didn't like

that the girls were here. It made the whole thing more embarrassing. Bobby stomped his foot down in our canoe almost tipping it.

"I ain't gonna ask again, whose fucking beer is this?"

"It's no one's, alright. Just leave us alone."

"It's no one's? Who's no one?"

"Bobby just stop. Leave us—"

"Whose beer is this you little shit? You been drinking our beer, haven't you?"

There was silence on the water. Just the sounds of the river running through. In the silence, the last two beers floated up from under the soaking wet lifejackets into full view. "Look what we have here. Two beers. Same kind as ours, boys. Seems like we know whose beers these are, huh?"

"We only took a couple, Bobby." Daryl pleaded.

"Whoa whoa whoa, slow down there killer. Looks like you're a bit drunk. Looks like you could use a cold shower. Flip em."

Mike and Bobby grabbed the sides and flung us over, water rushing in over the sides. I hit the water hard. Cold lightning bolts ran across my body as jumped up toward the surface. All I could hear was laughter. Life jackets and paddles floated around me as I swam next to Daryl hoping to flip our canoe back over. We both grabbed the side and began heaving it upward but it was too heavy. We dropped it back down into the cold river, the rocks at the bottom were sharp and stabbed at our feet. We swam back up together and finally got it to flip over. The whole goddamn thing was full of water. We sat in it shivering and began bailing it out with our hands while all the cousins laughed at us. "That's what happens when you steal our beers boys!" shouted Mike.

We kept bailing and paddling and made our home near the back of the group. The wind had picked up and it had started to rain.

We paddled in misery for over an hour, stuck in the back with constant jeers and laughter

at us from the front. Now and then an older boy would splash us or shoot us with a water cannon and the rain kept going.

After another hour the rain and cold had started to wear on everyone. No one spoke and the only sound was the crashing of paddles. It became more of a job than an adventure then. Everyone was soaked and upset, fighting over the stupidest things imaginable.

"Throw me a beer, Mike."

"We're all out brother."

"..."

"..."

"Whaju just say?"

"We're outta beer."

"..."

"..."

"No we ain't."

"Yes we are."

"You guys said we had at least a sixer left."

"Yeah and that's for me and Bob. We bought the lot."

"Who cares if you did. Your beers are full and mine's empty. Throw one over."

"No way. We're almost back."

"Throw me a beer, Mike!"

"You want one? Then come and take it. Cause these last four are for me and Bob."

"..."

"..."

"Fuck you man. You said we were sharing em."

"Yeah, I did. I also said I bought the damn things. You wanna pay me for em? Huh...huh?..."

Then shut the fuck up."

The rain poured on and the river was getting tense. There didn't seem like there was anyway outta this. Just hope to get home without getting beat up. The two girls were up in the

front of the pack talking and giggling. It was making the rest of us guys upset. I looked back at Daryl and his face barely had life in it. All hope seemed to be lost. Linda turned around and looked at the lot of us.

"Would you lookit all those sad faces," she said smiling.

"Like a bunch of sad puppies," Mandy said.

The girls laughed again and talked quietly between themselves. We paddled onward hoping soon to be back at camp, though never really believing it. The end is never easy. Mandy looked around at us again.

"Look at em, Linda. Ain't they the saddest thing you ever saw?"

"They are. Like a bunch of convicts, the lot of em."

"Instead of chattering on about how sad we all are why don't you do something to make us happy."

"Like what?" Mandy asked, eyes shining.

"Show us your boobs!" shouted Mike.

"No!" squealed Mandy, a little too exuberant.

"Come on, show us." Bobby pleaded.

"No!" Mandy said, smiling.

Mandy was a very voluptuous girl. She made boys stare wherever she went. She liked when men looked at her. It made her feel warm and special. She hadn't had a boyfriend ever but she had kissed many of them and liked how they smelled. The older boys all looked at each other and softened. They had to play this right.

"Come on Mandy. This river's terrible. Give us something."

"Yeah come on, Mandy."

"Show us."

Mandy looked over at Linda who now had her eyes down at her feet and was kicking around a piece of wrapping from a potato chip bag. She looked again at the pack of sad boys and smiled.

"What do I get then in return?" she asked.

"We'll all love you."

"Yeah, yeah."

"More than we already do, Mandy."

There was again silence on the water. I looked to Daryl who was now even smiling himself. We all looked at Mandy for an answer... Mandy closed her eyes for a moment and sighed. She felt the eyes of men on her body and it made her very happy. She slowly reached up behind her neck and undid the drawstring of her bikini. Her large breasts fell out and stood there proud, ready for all to see. 16 eyes stared as 8 mouths gaped. Nothing more delights a man than the surprise view of a woman's breasts. I couldn't even believe what I was seeing. How could such beauty and truth feel so dirty and raw? The moment seemed to stretch and last an eternity until it abruptly stopped. Mandy lifted her bikini top back over her head and covered herself. The show was over. The men were pleased. Inside me, a voice spoke from some unknown source.

"This day just went from sour to sweet."

With that, everyone erupted with laughter. Everyone agreed and smiled. People began talking again. The whole crowd was one. Bobby looked at me and smiled.

"You the man, Turner. You the man," and threw me a beer.

I looked at Daryl, who was smiling, and cracked it open. I tilted her back and drank its sweet innards. Beer never tasted so good in all my life.

A POEM
ASHLEY BEAM

This weekend was a poem.

It began with carefully placed hands and lips and tiptoeing around the back porch. Camels and Marlboros, cherries lit.

I looked at you, silently expressing words and feeling. A glance, a smirk—a stifled smile?

Drunken slurs and conversational tones surrounded the living room. The drumbeat rose and fell modestly. The rhythm: footsteps.

Buzzed from red wine, we danced and swirled like smoke to the back porch, craving cigarettes as final exchanges were made.

The guests were gone and all was still; alone with you, in tunnel vision.

SPLIT PERSONALITY
ASHLEY BEAM

Then, I sat up—
Roaring and whirling around so fast
In that routine way you notice the color
Of somebody's eyes.

I let myself lean with both hands
Against the bathroom door,
Meditating the idea of taking a cab
And running away
To the furthest street corner,
Or even out of state

Perfectly sober, but slightly swollen,
I was appalled to see how wrinkled
and used up I looked—
Almost like there was no soul left to save.

I let myself smoke;
Comfortable and buzzed off nicotine,
I remembered you,
Standing at the left of our window
balancing,
A time bomb
Hidden in the shadows of night.

I could still see the lights of the bridges
Whose names I didn't know.
The silence depressed me as the city hung—
Glittering
And blinking
Through the window,
The warped reflections crawling between the bed sheets.
I remember the texture of the ceilings,
High up
Over the push of New York.

I guess I will never really know
How or why,
But the memories flow in and out,
Suffering from split personality,
Raging with unpredictability
and hard to control as the city dissolves
And the memories fade once more,
Slipping away
From sight, from mind

Into the ground
Caving in,
Destroying what was once a strong foundation,
Leading the way out of this mania
And into the dull, sunless heat
towards salvation
and my own dirty nature.

PAPER ROSE
ASHLEY BEAM

The tomb-like morning gloom shined, pale orange until two lips met, speaking to me like
water in a
glass that was unsteady and too full; she told me she “only wanted what I wanted,” but I
didn’t know.

They suggested a book of poems inspired by an unclipped, long-stemmed, single paper
rose.

PRENATAL HEADRUSH

JAKE GULLIVER

BLUE CACTUS HEADLIGHT IN LOT OF PV LOUNGE;
SIPHONING AQUADUCT FOR EXPECTED RESULTS
CHAINLINK MEMORIES ONE BY ONE; SWELL OF A SKIRT AND PREMIUM CASKET
NEED TO DRAW ON/FROM THE RECESS OF YOUR HAIR,
AT HOME HAIRCUT AND BLANK COMMA
BLOWN BLUES BLISS /// BLOWN BLISS BLUES
WALKING AROUND EPCOT AT NIGHT IN SOLID-WHITE-HEADACHE
WALKING AROUND NEW YORK WITH BROKEN-DRESS-SHOE-FEVER
STRIPPED SHIRT VISION SWIRLING AROUND INDUSTRIAL ROOM
LETTING THE GUARD DOWN,
PICKING IT UP AGAIN,
HOLDING TIGHT TO YOUR ICED COFFEE TRAUMA,
THE HIBISCUS CONUNDRUM



WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN
ROLWING-MONTES

The silence was loud. It rang in her ears, it echoed. They drove on. A blur of trees and cornfields and other cars seemed to cry out, but the inside of the rental car was silent. She wanted to scream, or at least say something, anything, but there were no words she could find.

She looked over at her father, in the driver's seat, who held the steering wheel in place between his knees and balanced a full McDonald's meal in his lap. He had a small piece of lettuce floating on his beard, and a smear of ketchup on his lower lip. He always had something on him which didn't belong. He would walk out of the shower with soap suds bubbling out of his ear, and then go out in public like that too. He never seemed to notice. When she was little, every time she caught him asleep was an opportunity to give him a makeover. She would wipe her mother's blush and eyeshadow on his face, and cover his head in short, stumpy paintbrush pigtails. She wasn't sure if he didn't notice or didn't care, but when he woke up he would walk right out of the apartment, looking like that. Maybe he did it just to make her laugh. But that was a long time ago. Twelve years is a long time.

He tapped his thumb on the inside of the steering wheel, while moving it quickly side to side. "Well," he sighed, we're making pretty good time now." That's something else he was always doing. Small talk. He was the kind of person who actually wanted to sit down with you and talk about the weather. What bored most people fascinated him. He was a bird-watcher. He knew every call and could identify any bird by catching a far away glance out of the corner of his eye. He would nudge her ribs more forcefully than he intended to do, and point a stubby finger out of the window, to a tiny speck of a bird visible only to him. Anabel did not care for birds.

She smiled at him in reply, and returned to looking out the window. She still couldn't think of anything to say. What are you supposed to say when someone passes? Aren't you just supposed to be silent? They turned onto a new interstate behind a few cars. He raised his hand above the steering wheel and formed it into the shape of a gun, "pew, pew" he pointed and shot invisible bullets at the red car directly in front of them. "Pew, pew, pew", he aimed at each of the remaining cars.

He had heard of his mother's passing just three days prior. They were already planning to go to Wyatt, because she had turned so ill, but she passed just before their arrival. Francis did not seem bitter about that. I would be, Anabel thought.

He leaned over her to slide a CD into the player. He probably felt the deafening silence as well. Each throaty Johnny Cash song turned the sky a deeper shade of pink, and by sunset they had arrived quietly at Thompson's Bend.

The sky was violet now. The swamp in front of them was silent, and the purple clouds swam on top of the thick water, undisturbed. "You know, the ole muddy Mississippi used to run through these parts", Francis sighed.

Yeah, you tell me every time we come here, Anabel thought, but just nodded and continued to look out at the water. "It switches courses every now and then. You know, that's why we have farmland over the river, because that same land used to be on this side of the Mississippi", he continued, as he trudged to the edge of the water in his cowboy boots. His southern accent seemed to turn on as soon as they left the city. He started saying words like yonder, and calling everyone sir and ma'am.

Anabel didn't know why they came to Thompson's Bend. They always stopped here when they came to visit. He seemed to have certain rituals, certain ways of doing things he wouldn't ever give up. Like the way he always had to switch into his worn leather cowboy boots as soon as they entered Mississippi county. She had never seen him wear them once in the city. Not once.

She stood and walked to the water's dark edge. Submerged halfway into the water was an old car, the kind you see in black and white movies, but so old it was all rusted over inside and out. She hovered her hand over the crusted orange and then let it rest on top. She had been told by her grandmother, Geneva, that her grandfather had driven it into the swamp, back in the fifties, to oxidize the water or something, she wasn't sure. She looked at the driver's seat and squinted her eyes, trying to recreate the silhouette of a man she'd met through old photographs. She imagined him, brave, driving it into the old swamp. She had never met her grandfather.

*

The next morning, Anabel awoke alone in the motel room to a knock on the door. The motel was dreary and unfamiliar, but since the family house had burnt down last year, they didn't have anywhere to stay in town anymore. There was only this one motel by Wyatt, and it was now booked full, probably for the first time in its history, thanks to all of Francis' family. The alarm read 9 AM. He had probably left a long while ago. He liked to wake up early. Like, really early. 5 AM early. Anabel usually slept in to what Francis thought was an abominably late hour. Another knock, louder this time.

She stood up to walk to the door, tripping on Francis' bag. A silver flask slipped out. Cautiously turning the top off, she breathed in and took a sip. Whiskey. Opening the door, she saw her two Aunts leaning on the side of a car, waving for her to join them.

Her Aunt Celeste stood tall, her hair wrapped in a pale blue headscarf, with dark sunglasses. A real southern Jackie O. To her side was small Aunt Julia. She was wearing an oversized t-shirt with a waving American flag in the center, the shirt hung so low it almost touched her knees. In her hands she tried to balance a bucket sized drive through soda and her constant companion, a long Marlboro cigarette.

"Hey doll, how're you holdin' up?" Aunt Julia looked up at Anabel with glistening eyes. She spoke like her grandmother. "Come here, sugar", and Julia swooped her in for a hug, patting her back, hard. It was something they did here, back patting. They didn't give kisses, or give

a full hug - they wrapped one arm around your back and thump, they patted it hard. It was meant to be comforting.

"We're cleaning out mom's room today, come on, sweet". Aunt Celeste opened the door to the car, an old model from the 80's maybe. It took a while to get started and wheezed as they made their way across town. "Look at her hair, Julia! Doesn't it look just like mine when I was her age? I've just got to get out some senior pictures, I'll bet you we're identical." Celeste was always saying that they looked alike. Not just to be friendly either, they really did.

The few blocks that made up the town square were like a ghost image of a town. As if everyone had just got up and left sometime in the 60's. Almost every building was abandoned, yet in mint condition. Broken windows, maybe, but that was it. Faded ads for 10 cent Coca Cola were painted on the sides of the brick buildings, the old McCutcheon's movie theatre advertised a showing of Splendor in the Grass for some Friday night that wouldn't come. It had been frozen still, as if the whole town had been so tired one night it never woke up again.

They stopped, and Julia slid out of her seat to refill her jug extra large jug of Coca-Cola. Anabel rolled down the window and stared at the sleepy McCutcheon's sign, the missing T and O letters must have fallen down a while ago. In its prime the baby blue letters must have been bright, like they were proud to be there. Her grandmother used to take the kids to the theatre on special occasions, she would always tell Anabel about how she brought a 5 year old Francis to the theatre to see Gone with the Wind. She had left to go to the bathroom in the middle of the movie, that scene where Scarlett O'Hara shoots a soldier. When she walked back into the theatre, Francis was jumping up and down in his seat, "Mama, she dun shot herself a yankee!!!".

She pictured a young Geneva walking out of the theatre, maybe using one manicured hand to fix her auburn hair, or maybe using another to grip the seam of a pleated skirt that hung past her knees, holding the hand of a little bucktoothed blonde boy that had gotten too much sun in the summer. But she blinked, and the glamorous McCutcheon's was in shambles again.

They made a turn past McClain's grocery store. They were on the big block now. Aunt Ce-

leste was the first to tell her about the big block. Francis and his friends would drive around and around the big block on weekend nights, drinking and whatever, because that's all there was to do. Even Anabel's cousins that lived in Wyatt still went out around the big block. One of those nights when Francis was still in highschool, him and his friend were leaving the big block, going back out to the country, and somehow something happened, the way some things always do, and there had been a big crash, his friend had died. Aunt Celeste also told her that he had a mighty deep scar down the side of his face from it, but Anabel hadn't ever noticed it before. She started noticing it after that, but she never asked him about it. Maybe one day he would tell her about it. One day when the talking was easy and the silence was easy too.

They pulled up to Wyatt Manor, a nursing home that did not resemble a manor in any way. Anabel took a deep breath before going in. The smell of detergent and baby powder was overwhelming, and the way the bright fluorescent lights reflected off the polished linoleum tiles made her feel dizzy. It was lunchtime, and the common room was filled with the old, curled over in their wheelchairs, telling stories of sometime a long time ago when the world existed only in sepia colours.

In this town, there were more people in the nursing home than in the graduating high school class. Anabel looked around. She recognized some old characters. A long woman bent up in her wheel chair, with circles of deep purple underneath her eyes - she carried around a doll in her purse, and would try to introduce her to everyone in her stuttering, stammering english, fighting so hard to get her words out. And there was Barnabas, he was only 40, so he didn't stay at the nursing home, but he was always there, day after day visiting his senile mother. Barnabas had the mind of an 8 year old but a heart of gold. He never forgot a face, and when he asked you how you were, he actually wanted to hear about how you were doing. And then the quiet ones, they were the worst to see. Silent folds of skin sagged over, purple bruised, dry, with varicose veins crocheted around their thin bones, staring out at nothing. Like they were already ghosts.

Geneva's room had already been cleaned out. All her clothes were piled up and her photos, jewelry boxes, books, knick-knacks were all shoved into moldy cardboard boxes. She had a

matching pants suit in every colour it seemed, pale green, dark purple, anything. They rummaged through all of her jewelry, her many make up bags, mirrors, combs and lipsticks. She had like ten tubes of the exact same lipstick, the "Really Red" colour from Revlon. She had worn it everyday. She wouldn't leave her room without having it coated on. And she was constantly reapplying. Her hair was dyed an auburn orange hue weekly, along with a fresh manicure, usually a daring red colour to cover her long nails. Even at 90 she had been like a movie star here. She always wanted everything to look good. Even when Francis was a grown man of forty years, she would make him sit down and comb his hair if it looked slightly disheveled. And if she was in a bad mood, she'd get a brush and try to sort out Anabel's hair. Geneva didn't understand curly hair, and she would make Anabel's hair stick out all frizzy, looking like she had just been struck by lightning.

"For you," Julia placed a crown on her head, the cheap plastic kind you get from the dollar store. In her hand was a photo, of Geneva being crowned the title of Wyatt Manor Valentine's Day Queen. In the same box were a few cards, love notes really, from an old man who lived down the hall. She had been a real casanova of a woman.

Her silver boxes were filled from different collections of matching gold jewelry to fun little sets of colourful earrings and necklaces, to match her vast collection of outfits. She liked to wear earrings so thick and heavy they made her earlobes stretch into a thin line, and of course there was always a necklace to complement it. Everytime Francis came back to Wyatt to visit, he brought back his mother a matching set of earrings and a necklace. She must have come to expect it, since it was the same gift visit after visit, but through her big thick rimmed glasses her eyes would light up, and her painted red lips would break into a huge smile, showing her perfect white dentures. Her crooked knobby hands would grasp onto the necklace in an awkward clench, and fiddling with the clasp in her long fingernails she would place it around her slender neck.

Melissa, one of the caretakers, knocked on the door to pick up the clothes for charity. "Sure is sad about Miss Geneva, isn't it? Guess that's just the way it goes."

"Well, where d'you wanna eat?? Boomland?" Francis offered.

"Sure," Anabel clicked her buckle in, and sank into the car seat.

"Alright," he grunted, "Just 'cause there isn't anything else to get 'round here anymore anyway."

Anabel's phone buzzed desperately on top of the dashboard. "Who's calling??" he asked, annoyed, probably worried it was her boyfriend, or someone else he didn't like.

"Just my mom," Anabel slid her thumb over the ignore button. She didn't like talking in the car, the way she had to tiptoe over her words.

"Why is she calling again? You see her everyday for Christ's sake." Despite them having broken up before Anabel was even born, her parents still had contempt for one another. Anabel's mother criticized Francis for being too down to earth, cold, too frugal, too logical, thinking everything through objectively. He could be objective about anything. He was detached, she said. Without a second thought, he could tell you honestly if your dress made you look too fat, or if your new haircut was a disaster.

Of course, he thought she was illogical, too impulsive, too radical, vulgar, and wild. And he worried she pushed all of her opinions of him onto Anabel. Conchudo, she would say, que tal barato, she muttered whenever he did something wrong. Worst of all, he worried she had raised Anabel to think like her, to be like her. "Don't believe everything your mother tells you," he would warn her.

"Don't text," Francis looked over his shoulder to the screen glowing from the passenger seat.

"Oh right, sorry..." Anabel surrendered her phone back to the dashboard and rolled her eyes out the window. It was strange, how she had to get reaccustomed to her father's demands every time they were together for a prolonged visit. She was going to be in college next year, but she still listened to all of his petty demands. It really just wasn't worth the fight anymore.

They pulled into the driveway. It looked like an old warehouse, but had "Boomland" painted in big red letters across the front, with homemade paintings of fireworks going off. Some great great great uncle of theirs had once started selling fireworks from a stand on the side of the road, and it had eventually grown into the largest fireworks store in the whole country, accompanied inside by a restaurant that offered "homemade cooking".

A woman flashed a toothless grin and served up some black eyed peas and hush puppies on Anabel's plate. She balanced her red tray and sat down underneath the taxidermy of a cross eyed bobcat, probably since it was the most humble looking one. The whole place looked like a hunting cabin that had been turned into a high school cafeteria. Suppertime candles appeared on each table, and illuminated the huge watchful faces of the bears and deer that lived on the wall.

Francis sat across from Anabel and took a gulp from the large styrofoam cup. He squinched up his face. "Ugh, sweet tea", he muttered as he rose to get a cup of cold bitter tea instead. Raised on fried chicken and cornbread, Francis rejected his upbringing and in the city he only ate the healthiest food he could find. The "healthy" German bread he got was a weird dark brown colour, and was so hard even a saw would hardly cut through it.

"Why are you wearing lipstick, we're at Boomland for god's sake, it looks dumb" he thought out loud, frowning in Anabel's direction.

"Some people like it..."

"Those people are lying," he smirked. Anabel She was going to tell him it was one of the lipsticks left behind by her grandmother, but decided not to. She had long ago learned to not take anything he said to heart. He said what he thought, and his thoughts never changed. He spoke to be heard, but never listened. Francis was a Capricorn.

He raised his clear blue eyes to meet her brown eyes for a moment, and they both looked away, digging into their meal.

"You know, there was a pretty bad fire here some twenty something years ago," he told her, raising a fork of collard greens.

"Really? What happened?"

"Well," he began, smiling, "me and ole cousin Cliff were the only ones over here, the place'd been closed for hours, then we realized there was a fire in the kitchen! It rolled through fast, you know, right around there," he pointed his green fork over in the distance, "and we had to put it out mighty fast before it got to the fireworks," he recalled, excitedly. "That woulda been the biggest explosion Wyatt's seen for sure, if we hadn't got to it so fast" He got quiet for a while.

He circled his fork around his mashed potatoes, "It is sad, you know...real sad..." he let his eyes drift back to the spot where there had once been a fire.

"But," he continued, "these things happen."

"Yeah, I know, you're right," Anabel nodded softly, wanting to say something more.

"93 years is a long, long time. Longer'n you 'n I will be alive, prob'ly," he added, looking down at his plate, empty now, except for a stroke of grits painted across the middle. "It was just the right time, I guess...what'd you think?"

"Yeah, it must've been the right time," Anabel took a sip from her sweet tea.

"It musta been," Francis continued under his breath.

Anabel let her weight rest on her elbow, with her face in the palm of her hand, and watched the candle flicker out.

The reception was a cold pale blur. The entire family had never been together all at one time before. Geneva's seven children with their husbands and wives, and her twenty one grandchildren with their fiancées or toddlers or other loved ones, and her thirteen great grandchildren, who didn't even know where they were. The family stood in the front of the room while the town flowed in to drop off flowers and anecdotes and then flowed back out. Men with big noses and deep voices gave their condolences in firm handshakes. Round women with small eyes and far too much rouge on their cheeks gave those pat-pat hugs, as if they were trying to save you from choking. After sharing restrained smiles with old childhood friends, Francis hid his pink face behind a handkerchief. Anabel had never seen him cry. Maybe this was the first time he had ever cried.

The murmurs and low whispers were broken by a howling sob from the corner. A little woman, whose height probably reached most people's waists, was squeaking and crying all folded up in a chair. "There j-j-just idn't none of us left now, you know" she said in between gasps. "G-g-geneva was my oldest friend," she blew her nose into a napkin, "we seen this town through to the end," and she let herself go once more into hysterical howls.

Anabel meandered by the entrance, looking at old photographs that had been scattered around. She found a photo of her six year old self giving a buck-toothed smile at the camera, and a plumper grandmother with her arm around her. It had been the first time they had ever met. She had questioned it even then as a child, why someone would meet their grandparents at such a late age. Francis was probably embarrassed, having a daughter but being unmarried and all, and maybe he wanted to tell them, but he probably just kept the secret going on too long. Anabel couldn't remember it all now, but when she asked, her mother told her about writing a letter in a frenzy to Geneva. She told her that Francis had a daughter. That she was five and her name was Anabel. That it was hard to raising her alone for the most part. She told her that Anabel was smart and sweet, the kind of things parents like to think about their young kids. To top it off, she included a photo of a little dirty blonde Anabel showing off her teeth, a spitting image of Francis. Then things changed. There wasn't a week that went by without a phonecall from her grandmother. Every few months Anabel would get hand me downs from her older cousins, long ballgowns and loose velvet dresses she would wear to

elementary school everyday. Francis even started coming around more often. Geneva had grown up in a broken family, and maybe that's why she cared for Anabel so much. If sometime Geneva saw Francis wasn't letting Anabel get her way, no matter what the problem was, she'd tell him to go right to hell and let her do as she wanted. But, maybe she just did that with all her grandchildren.

Anabel moved on, to a black and white photograph that showed Geneva with an unfamiliar man, and five boys around them. The first time she saw the photograph she had been just 8 years old. Curious, playing in the closet, when a box of old photographs came crashing down. Her grandmother hobbled over, and despite her lack of strength, bent her cracking knees to sit down on the ground beside her. "That was my first husband Ulysses," she said, pointing to the man in the photo. "It's the only photo I have of him...he died a year later, don't you know it" she had told her. Anabel looked up at her with surprise.

"We married in 1938, I was just 19 years old. I was in the hospital, had just had your Aunt Julia. Him and the boys were driving over to come meet their new sister, and well, the roads back then," she paused. "It was a bad crash, all over the papers. Little Julia never met her daddy, your uncle Phil was in a coma, and well, I'm sure you've seen the way your Uncle Joe's eyes don't really look in the same direction..."

Anabel thought about that story as she walked outside. She wondered if Geneva had ever had to tell anyone that story before, or how she knew that Francis hadn't ever told her. In the familiar silence of the car the old Cash CD started playing again. I was standing, by my window, on one cold and cloudy day, when I saw that hearse come rolling, for to carry my mother away. And so they stayed quiet.

At the entrance of the church, all of the boys in the family lifted the casket up the stairs with firm arms. The girls stood inside, practicing how to curtsy properly for the bearing of the gifts. Most of them had never been to church before. An Uncle, Johnny, stood at the podium and told stories. Stories of how Geneva's name hadn't been her real name at all, but Captola Geneva, and how she didn't even know until she tried to get a passport when she was fifty.

Or how she had walked two miles to school every day during the Dust Bowl era, and survived the worst hunger during the Great Depression. Or how when she was widowed at age 30 with five kids, the town priest would come by every evening to do the dishes and sweep up the house. And how she had always liked to tell it like it was, and how her biting sarcasm had earned her a name in this town. He was choking up now. Or how her second husband, John Francis had really been in love with her for years before they married, that she was the prettiest woman at the town dances. Or how she had been so busy with the children, one morning baby Francis walked right out of his house at 2 years old and been found by the sheriff in the town square, and how Geneva hadn't even noticed his absence. Stories that would be forgotten.

I said to that undertaker, undertaker please drive slow, 'cause this lady, you are hauling, oh lord I hate to see her go, it played. They drove slowly through the town, a procession of vehicles blinking lights, past the old McCutcheon's theatre, past the boarded up grocery store. Mothers waved from their lawns, holding their children by the wrist and making them wave too. If cars were driving on the road they stopped driving and waited on the side of the road for the procession to pass. On the edge of cornfields, farmers bowed their heads and held baseball caps to their chest.

Oh I followed close behind her, tried to hold up and be brave, but I could not hide my sorrow, when they laid her in the grave. A thousand yellow roses sat on the casket by the end, until the sky had turned pink once more, and it was time to leave.

By dusk, the family had gathered in Wyatt. "Probably for the last time ever, you know" Francis sighed. He had no reason to come back. Neither did anyone else, really. There were no remains to the old family house, just a broken down tree house in the backyard, shadowed by tall pecan trees. I went back home, my home was lonesome, missed my mother, she was gone, all of my brothers, sisters crying, what a home so sad and lone. They stood over the ghost of the house a moment longer, until the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren went off, each driving off in a different direction. "I'm sorry," Anabel whispered to her father. Now

it was Francis' turn to be silent. He nodded and got in the car. Anabel slipped in the Johnny Cash cd, and leaning her finger on the play button, they drove away for one last time.

Will the circle be unbroken, by and by, Lord, by and by, there's a better, home a-waiting, in the sky, Lord, in the sky.

THURSDAY NOV 14 2013 12:40 PM
MACKENZIE GREEN

my mom asked me about a brita filter and i sent her a really long distressed response about how i do not trust them and think they are dirty and how drinking water that comes into contact with the sink is obviously contaminated by how dirty the sink is and then when you put the brita thing in the fridge it just gets worse because it is exposed to fridge air and all she said in response was "ok" so now i look like my weird grandma who sleeps on the floor and and told me she wakes up so early because it's "more time to be alive"

one time when i was 17 my mom picked me up from this girl's house and asked me if i was on drugs i was but i told her i wasn't so she was like oh ok your pupils are really dilated though and my excuse was that i had been staring at the sun all day but when we got home she made me do a bunch of chores that involved making decisions for three hours at that point i had somehow convinced myself that i was going to die in my sleep so i tried to write a note for her while laying down on my bed by reaching onto my dresser and scribbling "i'm sorry" when i woke up it just looked like i had sort of drawn worms but not really

going to start adding my method of being born to all of my social networking about me descriptions

i'm compiling a list of all the rude things a former friend wrote about me on the internet when we were 13/14 that i can still find through google searches very funny and weird experience i am having fun

okay so you know those kids who walk around with a cat on a leash on their shoulders ok just listen to me for a second here what if i did that with let me finish a tortoise

*nsync performed ZERO christmas songs absolutely NONE

how do i become part of kidz bop in some way i don't care what it is i will do their laundry i will teach them how to tie their shoes let me be involved in this the greatest cause

from here on out i will only respond to the title of "that woman"

you haven't heard an actual sound until you hear the sound of a thousand white boy dreads thumping against the empty seat next to you because he is a junkie and is on too much heroin and keeps slamming his head on the metal arm thing it is 7:30 am

i think everyone is convinced that some part of their life is tuned into some paris/nicole dynamic which is probably true but in all my years of living i have never seen or experienced anything more simple life-esque then the time when one of my roommates broke the mirror off a uhaul van by hitting a pole and ended up getting money back from them

i've been sitting in front of this computer with two books, tender buttons and everybody's autonomy: connective reading and collective identity, open in front of me with the tab sky ferreira arrest google images open just... considering™

somehow i cut off my foot's circulation with my bong i am human garbage

we watched khloe and kourtney take miami last night and it turned into a 1998 godzilla situation very quickly only much more positive

really into the part in hunchback of notre dame where the guy with the hat sings about how ugly hunchback is

i feel computer clicks in my toes

at some point it will be acceptable for me to not know you

i watched the music video for butterfly by crazy town 28 times tonight also i have become significantly less nervous about putting two thats next to each other

HAT TRICK

LINDSEY DEVERS

We all had the nauseous smell of low tide and
the irritating call of the gull.

The pond lay stagnant all season
and mosquitos, birds, and butterflies would
hide and hover in the ammophila grasses which ran
from pond to ocean like hair on bare shoulders.

Mom and Dad never made breakfast, but if we
were lucky by 10 o'clock our hands and lips would be covered
in the sticky sugary goodness of fresh baked powder donuts.
And if not, we might get a salami sandwich with mustard by 12.

Our skin would bronze and freckle moist with the distinctive smell of sun block
while sand would plaster our damp feet
and eventually wedge themselves in the seats of our Jeep Wrangler
on the way home.

The sun would beat down hot and humid
and a Jimmy Buffet cassette would play on repeat
in the car, in our house, in our mind
with the wind whistling in the background.

Dad would wear an embarrassing straw hat
while Mom would dance along the widow's walk in almost nothing.
The boys would run around out back playing wiffle ball
and sometimes when my parents weren't looking, would
sneak beers from the fridge, then throw the cans into the poison ivied brush.

Around 3:30 the house sometimes fell silent into sleep
and then would re-awake to the pink sunsets which burnt the sky
into layers of color like a sedimentary rock cut open.

We'd all put on our sweaters to ease the island breeze
and then gather ourselves for dinner plans.
Sometimes we'd eat out for lobster and a change
and come home with butter stains and drying tears.

Other nights we'd grill pancake-battered bluefish and
choke on charcoal exhaust.

The boys would wait outside and set fireworks off into
the half dark night and then build a fire in the Mexican fire place.

We'd all eat standing up, while guests and friends played their
last rounds of Bocce and badminton before nightfall.

The house aged each year, with storms and time.

Moss and mold grew on the unpainted shingles and
bird poop collected on the black tar roof.

Mom and Dad got separated one summer
and the boys eventually grew out of playing ball

and sometimes in the late afternoon a
faint smell of marijuana would linger in the air.
mom went on lots of walks
with the dogs down
to the beach and would come back
with smooth quahog shells which she sometimes painted
or used as decoration around the boisterous hydrangea beds that
surrounded our house.

When dad was there the house was lonely
and each day he'd disappear leaving only
the faint echo of his shoes crushing
the fragile seashells which paved our driveway.
I imagined he left with a beach chair and a
book to some place we'd never find him.
But I never was awake to watch him go.

I didn't so much mind the bareness of the house.
Some warm afternoons I'd climb up to the widow's walk in barely anything
and gaze out over the pond, onward to the ocean,
while my friends tried on my dad's straw hats
and tanned along the porch.

Maybe
through the fog,
through the clear blue summer skies,
I hoped to see something off in the distance

like the flicker of a firework or my father returning home.

Maybe I hoped the sky would peel open
and each layer of color would reveal to me

some truth of the past.

But as the sky shattered

into small pieces of sea glass, I was left

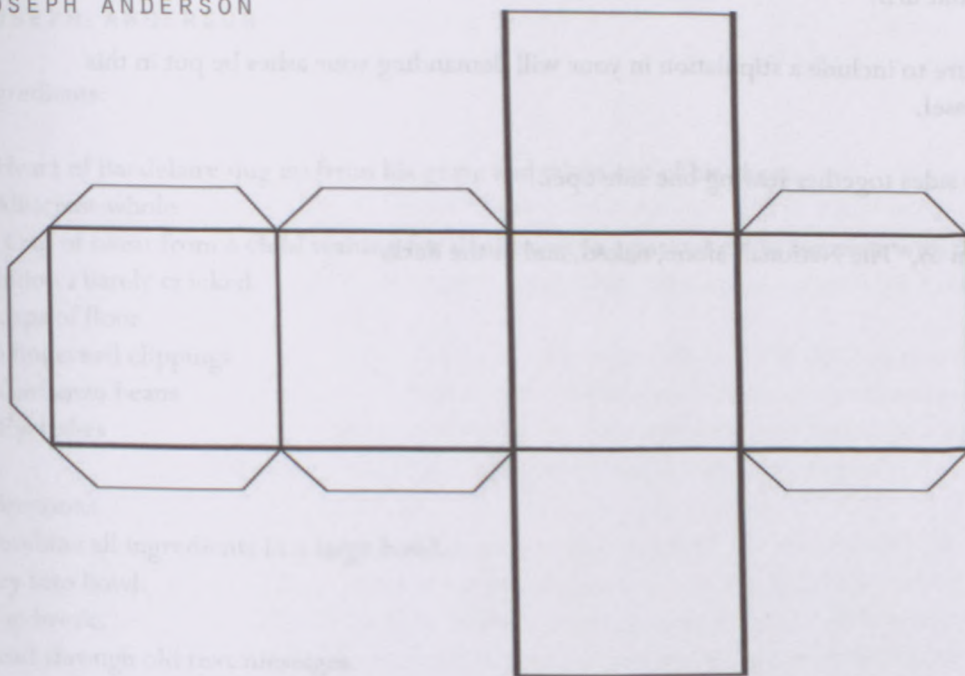
engulfed by the darkness

taken away by the sea

longing to be home.

BUILD YOUR OWN URN

JOSEPH ANDERSON



Instructions

- 1 Color in urn, the colors of your consciousness as you slip into sleep.
- 2 Hum, "Amazing Grace" while thinking of your first kiss and looking for scissors.
- 3 Take a snack break. But don't go crazy here, something sensible you will be dead soon you know maybe some crackers or a banana.

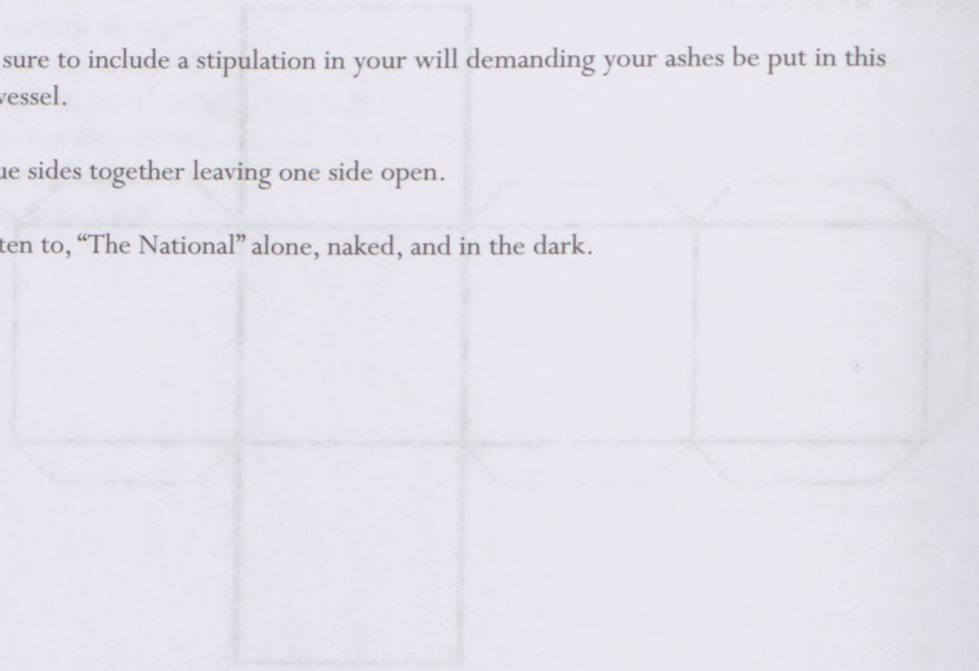
4 Remember the first birthday you didn't cry.

5 Cut out urn.

6 Be sure to include a stipulation in your will demanding your ashes be put in this fine vessel.

7 Glue sides together leaving one side open.

8 Listen to, "The National" alone, naked, and in the dark.



DINNER FOR ~~TWO~~ ONE

JOSEPH ANDERSON

Ingredients:

- 1 Heart of Baudelaire dug up from his grave and taken out of his chest.
- 1 Albatross whole
- ½ Cup of sweat from a child waiting for their mom in a parked car in summer with the windows barely cracked
- 5 cups of flour
- 10 fingernail clippings
- 3 Garbanzo beans
- 2 Eyelashes

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.

Cry into bowl.

Nap break.

Read through old text messages.

Stir bowl.

Nap break.

Scroll through Facebook.

Chat with roommate.

Make coffee.

Place bowl in oven

Turn on oven

Take batteries out of smoke detector.

Take bowl out of oven.

Serve warm.

LATE LAST NIGHT
JOSEPH ANDERSON

Late last night I feel asleep I dreamed of Ezra Pound
I dreamed his hair was soft I dreamed his dick was round
He talked like his verse beautiful and terse in style
He carried me naked upstream through raging tides of the Nile

His skin was smooth like soymilk pouring out a carton
I took him to my room and we watched my sheets darken
He asked why is everyone so serious tell me where's the funk
I said boy you've got thighs like power chords but you'll never hear punk

And all the phonebooks in China and the art students in Berlin
Would gather around to glimpse us but never admit to sin
His kisses tasted like cauliflower and smiles smelled of wine
We agreed plates were too bougie and agreed the floor was fine

He said G Stein's got a mad flow but Picasso's got the beats
Licking the linoleum and draped in velvet sheets
And as the sun began to fade he started to melt away
He melted just like butter and opened his mouth to say

Try me don't be afraid I'll be gone in a day
So I spooned out his shoulder after I knew it was okay
Oh it tasted sweet it made my cheeks blush
I wanted to spread it on toast to the grocery store I rushed

While I struggled to decide between 12 grain and oat
My dear ephemeral friend was turning into a moat
I rushed back in the nick of time to rub ankles on my bread
I smiled as I swallowed another day another spread

ROOMMATE CONTRACT
JOSEPH ANDERSON

ROOMMATE CONTRACT

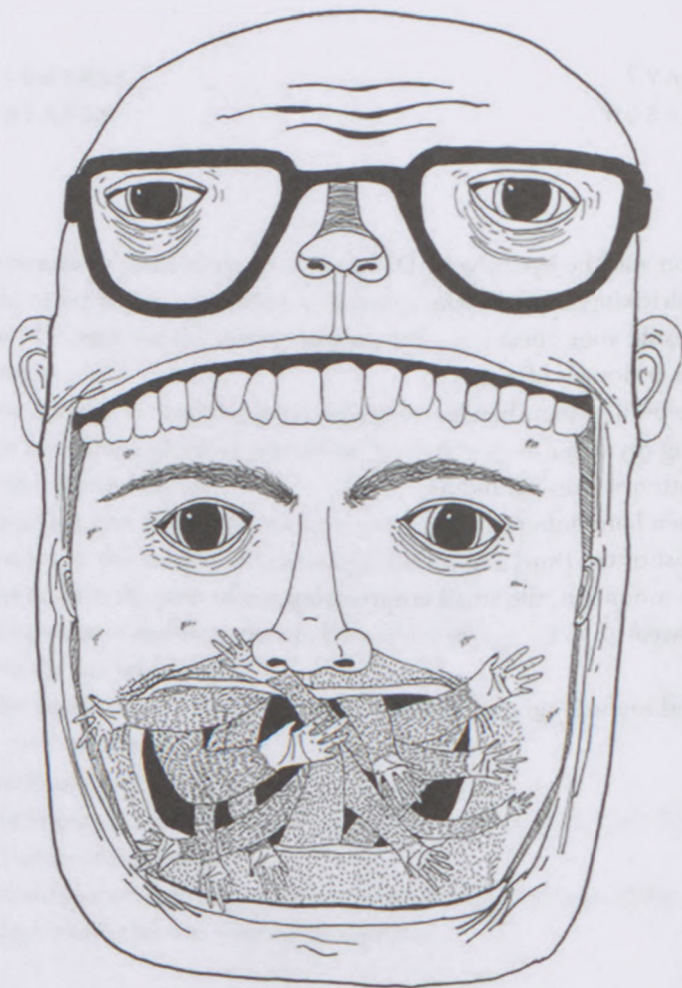
JOSEPH ANDERSON

1. Every roommate must sleep with every other roommate. This is not intended in a sexual sense. In order to see each other as whole people we must see each other at our most vulnerable. We must see the beauty and the pain, as lovers view lovers and how mothers view their babies.
2. We must commit everything we consider beautiful to memory. When we memorize something it becomes a physical part of us. Stored in data cells somewhere. We must fill ourselves with beautiful things.
3. It is important that the things we love become a part of us.
4. We must know the weight of knowing what we want.
5. We must endure the pain of not getting what we want.
6. We must preserve and slow the process of the things we love. When possible train carrier pigeons to fly our love letters.
7. Know the hands of your lover. We view our hands more than our faces. We view ourselves as we view our hands.
8. We must know each other's hands.
9. We must know each other's smells as we know the smell of our first love.
10. We will never waste time.
11. Sitting in silence or enjoying the emptiness within us is not wasting time.
12. We will go after what we want or abandon it.

SOMEDAY, OKAY?

JOSEPH ANDERSON

Last night the moon was the eye of your Dad,
after he had been drinking. It made you
feel the distance inside your chest.
In my dreams I am no longer afraid.
I am a light people hold in their hands.
I am afraid of losing my sister.
I am afraid I've gotten so good at hiding
I won't realize when I am doing it.
I am breathing most of the time. I miss
the view from the mountain, the small empty room,
the dirt, and the sweat.
"Day O, Day O,
Day light come and me wan' go home"



OLIVIA SCHWARTZMAN

THEY SEE ME EATIN', THEY HATIN'

AISHWARYA MASRANI

It was December 31, 1999 and I, wearing my Mickey Mouse fanny pack, had marked my territory in the "pens' aisle" of the Staples store in Baltimore, Maryland. I could have spent hours in this aisle. Pens were one of my favorite toys and I had all kinds of them at home in India: ballpoint, ink, calligraphy, rollerball pens, etc. We had been in America for about a week now, for Christmas break, and we had been to some nice parks and malls (I didn't care about either one) but I had seen nothing more glorious than the pens aisle in Staples (to be fair, I had not been to Disney World yet, which would then become my favorite place on my America visit). I had been writing and rewriting my name with the erasable pens on the testing pad for several minutes before my mother pulled me since we had to get ready to go to a millennium party at my mom's friend's house.

My mother spent over an hour getting me ready and yet I didn't see any difference in my appearance. I have no memory of how I came to look like I did in 1999. My head bore on it remnants of a bowl cut that bore an uncanny resemblance to the mop my janitor Ravi used to clean the patio. I wore a crisply ironed shirt (with teddy bears in Christmas attire on them) that buttoned up a little too tightly around my neck causing my neck fat to roll over the top of my collar. The shirt was neatly tucked into my elastic denim pants that rested snugly on the rolls of my stomach. If I was out to a fancy event or an adults' party, such as this, I often broke out my suspenders. To complete the look, my feet were covered by holiday theme socks (that I wore all year round) which comfortably fit into Velcro-strap Adidas sneakers. I looked like I came straight out of the boys' section of an OshKosh catalogue. After many years I asked my mother what drove her to dress me in such a fashion. To this she simply replied, "The girls' stuff just wouldn't fit you".

Our cab pulled up in front of a beautiful redbrick house. The front lawn was mowed and had the near-perfect ration of bushes to flowers that were illuminated with string lights. We walked up to the front door, avoiding the gnomes that had been scattered all over, and rang the doorbell. Even the door was beautiful- it was golden with intricate designs on the corners and on it hung a Christmas wreath. No one really lived in "houses" in Mumbai so the only time I had seen them were in movies or music videos. My mom's friend opened the door and proceeded to pinch my cheeks, like most people did on seeing me. The house was even more beautiful on the inside. The floors were made of wood, making it easy for me to slide on, and the stairs had carpet on them, meaning I could bounce down it on my butt without hurting myself. The house was filled with people that looked like they were right out of a movie. Most of them were white. The women all had similar haircuts and wore knit sweaters, nearly as ugly as the shirt I was wearing with ornate brooches on them (as if that would salvage the heinous sweaters). Most of the men also wore sweaters, sometime paired with buttoned-down shirts and balding heads. All of them held a glass of alcohol with smiles plastered to their faces.

The house was divided up between the adults and the children, who were all slightly older than me. Like the adults, most of the children were also white. I had never been around so many white kids my age before and at first I didn't even realize it. I preferred the adults, so I took some cookies off the table and made my way to the couch between my mother and a rather rotund lady. Thinking I was lonely, I was quickly shuffled by the rotund lady to the basement, with all the girls who were playing, to make friends. Either she had blocked her experiences of elementary school or had an unmitigated optimism in these children because throwing a fat foreign kid who has an "accent" and is dressed like a boy into a basement full of white blonde girls wasn't the brightest idea.

At the time, I was rather stupid and oblivious to most things. Taking my reindeer cookies, I went over to the girl with pigtails who seemed to be in charge to introduce myself. Before I could, she quickly told me that they were getting ready for a sleepover and were organizing their sleeping bags on the floor. This seemed like a manageable idea so I began searching for

my sleeping bag. The search didn't last long because Alpha Pigtails quickly came up to me and said "This sleepover is for girls only." I, obviously, was confused but kept looking. Alpha Pig-tails stopped me again to repeat, "This party is for girls only." Still not understanding where the problem was, I gave up the search for the sleeping bag since it was becoming unnecessarily tedious and I had cookies to eat.

I went back up to my mom and told her what happened hoping she could figure out the problem or at least tell me where my sleeping bag was. She responded, however, by hugging me and telling me to stay by her side for the rest of the night. Obviously, I wasn't the only one who couldn't understand the problem, which made me feel better. I refilled my reindeer cookie stash and threw in some cheese from the cheese-and-cracker-tray on the adults' table and once again made my way to wiggle in between my mother and the rotund lady. This time I was allowed to stay.

THE JOKER
JASPER DUTZ

When withering home with no will to wonder
I muséd not about one to undress
Simply violet streetlights,
making a "mighty" moonlit mess

Struggle, unlocking the door
The bike, old boxes, masking the floor
I digress.

Turning off my lamp, my meandering mind illuminates
Mocked by moaning monkeys.
Phone vibrates a farce.
Cast as another card in the deck,
Surrounded by happy frowns.
Just another offering,
to crisply clothed King of Clowns.

WAITING

NINA KORNBERG

The unsatisfying fermentation
Of wading —
To wade in what would...
And to wait.
A glorified drought
And a lesson on expectation...
Like apologies on the tops
Of our tongues.

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OLIVIA SCHWARTZMAN

IMPOSSIBLE ANIMALS

OLIVIA SCHWARTZMAN

My lover is experiencing something inexplicable. I wake up every morning and he's something different. I don't know how it happens, only that first he was a giraffe and now, a month later, he is a dandelion. I keep him in a glass jar on the kitchen table and kiss its cold lip every few minutes. "Can you hear me?" I ask, and the little white tufts move in response, though it's probably just the push of my breath.

I tell no one what's happening to him. At first, people called asking where he was. His dry cleaning needed to be picked up, the university where he did research wanted to know why he hadn't shown up for work. I was listed as an emergency contact, which surprised me slightly. I told people he wasn't around anymore. I said it like that, "he's not around anymore", because it's just vague enough. It could mean he's dead, or he's missing, or he left me. All of which are half true. He's not around anymore, please stop calling, thank you. And they stopped.

A friend of his called after a few weeks. I'd never met him. We liked to be alone together, we both felt that our friends and families were like knots of string— if they were introduced, we'd spend forever sitting side by side, not looking at each other, trying to untangle them. I asked him how he got my number but I didn't actually care, I just wanted to seem like I did. He asked why my lover hadn't been answering his phone or going at his apartment, and who was I really anyway? I told him the truth. That I am a filmmaker, your friend is my lover, he is unable to stay in one form for more than a day. The friend was quiet for a long time, then mumbled that he'd be following up and hung up quickly. It is simple to make people uncomfortable enough to stop asking.

The first morning it happened I woke up to a big thump. I was sleeping upstairs and reached out for him but he wasn't there. There was a green light coming through the curtains and my room smelled like the spaghetti we ate for dinner in bed. It also smelled like something else, like straw and mud, but that smell was coming from downstairs, where the thump came from. I went down stairs in slippers. To find the giraffe in the living room. It covered the whole carpet. Since my house is low roofed and square, the giraffe was folded uncomfortably on the floor, its legs tucked up and its neck bent at a funny angle. Every time it tried to move its head, the giraffe made a big thump setting it down. I knew it was him even before I saw the eyes. It was just a feeling. It might have been the fear I sensed emanating from the giraffe, the same fear I felt when I touched my hand to his chest at night. When I got close enough I hugged the giraffe around its neck. I didn't really care that he was different, not yet. I stayed calm and sat next to his giant head and stroked it for a long time. He shut his eyes and breathed through his big giraffe nostrils.

At first I liked this. It was nice to take care of my lover like a pet, to stroke him and feel in him the gratitude that animals have for simple things. I sat on the living room floor and spoke to him. Then I decided to get my video camera. I'm a filmmaker, but I have never actually finished one. Regardless, I am a filmmaker. It is more a way of thinking than of producing. I tell myself this but I know it's not true. Looking through the camera at him, I imagined we were in a foreign film.

"Love, are you alright?" I asked. I looked at his giraffe face through the lens, and in the white letters of subtitles, he said, I'm so tired.

"All of your organs weigh a lot more than they did last night." He let out a big giraffe sigh. In subtitles he said, do you still think I'm attractive?

"You know that I can't," I said sadly. I do have boundaries and I have to set them somewhere. He cried one giraffe tear.

So it was okay like this, speaking to him and petting him, but as it got dark I started to wonder

what I was going to do with a giraffe. I would have to move him somehow, and I didn't know how or what to feed him. I made spaghetti again but he couldn't eat the little noodles with his huge giraffe mouth. You are an inconvenient animal, I thought, and then wondered if he had ever thought that about me. It was too terrifying to think about what would happen, so I fell asleep next to him on the living room carpet. This is what I do when I'm afraid, I fall asleep and things stop scaring me because I am not conscious of them. There is no space for anything but dreaming.

The next morning he was a moose, the day after that he was a horse, and then he was a sheep and a billy goat. I was terribly worried but I took solace in the fact that he was no longer unmanageably large. I kept a lot of lettuce and carrot tops in the house to feed him, always making spaghetti in case he wanted it again. But it hurt then. I realized he wasn't coming back, that he would make a new sound every morning, and it was too foreign and uncomfortable. I thought back to the first time we made love. He took off all of my clothes and looked at me and then did an inventory check. This is your nose, these are your eyelids, these are your lips, this is your collarbone, this is your knee, this is your belly button, this is your freckled shoulder. It felt good to be reminded that I was all there. When we started to make love it was clumsy and messy and not like love at all. It felt like the way people make love at the bottom of the ocean, stuck in heavy sand, and I imagined someone watching us from above and feeling disgusted at how bulky and ungraceful we were. It was love later, but not at first. But even then I knew that there was something, his good skin, and I have felt other good skin before, but this skin was like the edge of something else. After we laughed about it and talked about movies for an hour.

The day before he became a giraffe he was sad about people. He was often sad, which was one of the main reasons why he was my lover.

"What's with people?" he asked me. We were in bed.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, what am I doing, really?" I thought for a while to make sure I would seem sincere.

"You do a lot, a lot of good things. You're useful."

"No, I'm not. Specificity is useful. I wish I was a florist, and I'd put a little sign up that said, 'If it's your birthday come in 4 a rose!' with a 4, just like that, because people would come to me for one thing and one thing only. Or a mechanic, or a window washer, or a blacksmith or a cobbler. I want to make one thing, do one job, not just put words into slots on big charts. I am just manipulating things that already exist. There are no discoveries, no tangible products." He was a taxonomist, grouping and ordering life into a massive, neat net that I didn't understand. He enjoyed order. Even I had to admit that it wasn't the most useful job. But what do I really know about usefulness or tangible products.

"What about that birdfeeder you made?" I reminded him. "That was useful for the birds, and very specific." I could tell my voice was not enough in this conversation.

"I mean people are always walking around thinking they are better than the other carbon based life forms just because they exist. Evolution has worked against us, I think. We aren't humble and we aren't practical. We're impossible. Because we can use words we think we have more going on than everything else, but I doubt that's true. I think jellyfish feel disappointment." He looked so sad and angry then. I loved that look because I didn't feel that sad or angry about anything. We were both just floating around, but I didn't want to talk about it. It didn't hurt me in the way that I thought it should, the way that it hurt him. I pulled the sheet up to my chin and looked at his neck. I kissed the whole side of it just to make sure it was covered, because who had covered all that skin before? No one. It was my job. And now it is my job to remember him how he used to be, how his hand on my arm was so tight it almost made me nervous, but how soft that hand was, the skin that was such good skin.

My lover became a fox, a tabby cat, a sparrow. After a week he was a gecko. He had little spots on his back and was a very light tangerine color. I picked him up and held him, feeling his little heart and organs working hard through his thin skin. I carried him outside and I brought my video camera, too. I wasn't sure if his memories were going with his changing shape and size and organism, so I reminded him of things just to be sure. This is a church, this is a window frame, this is cement. Street lamp, two eyes, black cat, gum. It felt good to tell him these things, now I was the classifier, the orderer. I always thought he knew more

than me. I focused my camera on the rows of houses. They looked so square and contained, it almost hurt to look at them, how they could confine a life in such tidy parameters. To be in one would make it so simple— your life can't go past this wall, so don't worry. I blame a lot of things on my house being oddly shaped.

We walked and I saw a young girl sitting in a driveway with tables of possessions and shoes lined up along the concrete. I asked if she was having a garage sale and she nodded. There wasn't anything worth buying there and I regretted getting close to it, like a car accident or something smelly. I whispered to him that this was a place where people sell things they don't want anymore. That was the real purpose of the driveway if you could park your car on the street. I looked at everything through the video camera then focused it on him. He looked straight into the camera at me with little shiny tar eyes and said in subtitles, you are so beautiful, I fell in love instantly. It all hurt then, the tables of broken radios, underwear, old dolls and stuffed animals, but I couldn't leave, it seemed like I was the only person in the world who was going to come by this garage on this street in this ridiculous town, and I felt so guilty about that for the girl and so sorry for him, my little gecko, my little love. And so I picked up a tiny pair of leopard print heels. They were plastic and looked only big enough to fit a toddler. They had gold soles. I whispered in his ear, or what I assumed was his ear because its hard to tell on a gecko, that I had to buy something and it might as well be these confusing tiny heels, and then I asked the girl how much. She asked for a dollar but I gave her two, so saddened, so disgusted by the whole thing, then I walked home and let him sit on the windowsill and sun the little spots on his back. Later that night I put him in a pan with a bit of water so he could splash around.

The next morning I woke up and he was a bell pepper, the morning after that a tomato. The randomness of this scared me; he was not only appearing as different animals but as heartless, brainless organisms too. I went to the university he worked at to try to talk to someone about it. Taxonomists like stability, working with ideas that are already established, ordering names without surprise like a puzzle. I never match my socks and can stretch out my sweater and point to a freckle on my collarbone in a group of strangers. My lover thought I was a little exotic, just wild enough for him. We met when I was making a documentary about order.

which I never finished. I was speaking with professors and researchers at the university about the systematic organization of the least ordered thing in the universe— life. I interviewed him in his lab. He took out a big chart that looked incredibly complicated with lines and colors and said, we are not even close to understanding a fraction of anything. He said he liked my socks and would I have dinner with him on Friday night? I didn't make any more of the documentary after that.

At the university I found one of the other taxonomists I had interviewed for the unfinished documentary. He was an old man with tufts of hair in his ears. I asked him what a giraffe, gecko, sheep, and billy goat have in common.

"Well," he said, "they are all part of the kingdom Animalia. Derived from some common ancestor. But broadly, they all belong to the same kingdom."

"And what about a bell pepper and a tomato?"

"They belong to the kingdom Plantae. These are very broad terms. Specifically, they are not related closely. We can break them down until they get farther and farther apart in the classifying systems. Phylum, genus, species. But in the large sense, they are all eukaryotic organisms. There is the kingdom Fungi, of mushrooms, mold, etcetera; and the kingdom Protista, of eukaryotic microorganisms. Then the kingdom Monera, which contains unicellular organisms like bacteria."

This was when I got it. It became clear to me that he was becoming simpler, going from sentient to nonsentient, shrinking through the kingdoms. If this was true, the simplest he could get to was a cell, the most basic unit of life. Either he would get there and stay there or he would disappear. At the rate he was going, about a week in each kingdom if it continued like the animals, he'd probably be at a cell in a month and a half. I suddenly felt very leaky, like all the fluid in my body was going to pour out. I began to cry. The professor was caught off guard, but he must have daughters and granddaughters, because he hugged me in a very paternal way.

"What ever became of that documentary you were making? It seemed very interesting," he said.

That only made me cry harder. In the days that followed, I awoke to find him as a pumpkin, a lily, and a sunflower.

It is funny how abruptly you can run to the outer limit of your limits: it's here, at the kitchen table, staring into the jar with the dandelion in it. We don't have much time before he is the most basic, one-eyed, microscopic floater that life can be. Sweet and small and brainless. I will not be able to look. That will not be my lover anymore, when I can't see him without a microscope. I pick the jar up and walk outside, being careful to cover the top so he doesn't blow away. I get in the car and put him in the center cup holder. My video camera is sitting on the passenger seat, and at a stoplight I pick it up to look down at him through it. He says, in subtitles, I know what you are going to do.

"What do you mean, my love?" I ask. "What am I going to do?"

You are going to blow me away. Into lots of little pieces. What will you do then? I really won't be around anymore if you do that. What will you do without me?

I stay at the light when it turns green. "I don't know," I say, staring through the camera but not really seeing anything. "Maybe you will turn back into a man again some day. Maybe. You will know how to get back here I hope, I'll make sure my phone number is always listed."

I already do not remember you, say the subtitles.

Cars are honking behind me and someone is yelling at me to get out of the road. I set down the camera and pick up the dandelion. I hold it close to my face. I give it one kiss. I imagine him growing back through all the life forms he's shrunk down until he is a naked man standing in a foreign place a million years from now, unable to remember where he came from, surprised by the feel of words on his tongue. Yes, I have already forgotten, he says.

I blow the dandelion out of the car window, the pieces floating off in every direction with the wind, seeds parting from the center like lips, like eyes opening. W



EVERGREEN

SAM ROBISON

Reverse everything

Start

But go slowly: marmalade pace, molasses slink:

So you can see every color

In all its variations

Diagram the eye

Lick the honey from your lips

Buckle down

Pick the scab

Because this is the widening of breadth

The prying up of eyelids

The loosing of the gash

I.

Go back to the part

About the roar of the highway

And how because it ran

Through the valley so deeply

The din was amplified

By the walls of rock

That surrounded it

So that even on the golf course

Some miles away

You could hear the cars
Whir and honk,
About how it was all one
Big cavernous speaker
And you lived on the edge of it

Or go even further back to the part
Where you talk about how the
Town glows amber orange at night
Because of the bus port at the west end
And the Walmart at the east
They both blasting their big lamps
Into the night air
Because that's I think where things
Get interesting

*But look
There are flocks of birds
Flying over Brooklyn
Which seems to me better
Than the helicopters which
I have seen swarm in the South*

II.

Talk more about the river now please
Or about where the two rivers met
And gargled each other and spat
Talk about the loamy earth
There on the bank where you'd
Roll around rocks with your feet

Or say something about that night you
Found yourself half-drunk at the old plot of land
Where they buried all the babies
Who caught yellow fever and talk about
All the cows there now and the way they would bay
And wail like the babes beneath their hooves
About how you broke through the fence
To feel something original

Or even talk more about the bears in the yard
Who would climb trees but misjudge the strength
Of a bow and break it
Talk about how delighted you'd be to wake up
To the sound of a branch snapping because
It meant you could slip out of bed and watch
From the porch as the bear rolled to its feet
Because that's really what seems important right now

*Ugly, ugly Brooklyn
With your head full of rust—
I stared at a spent can of 7-up
Wedge beneath the elevated J-line
For a while today to see how the tracks
Had painted it*

III.

Go back to the part
About the game you'd play
In the cul-de-sac where you'd
Lie on your back and shoot up darts

From the dart gun you bought to kill spiders
And try to roll away just before they'd come down and
Prick you or about the game you'd play while peeing
Where you'd try to see how far back you could go
Without splashing on the tiles
And talk about how you where once able
To touch the back wall of your bathroom
The one next to the washer-dryer stack
Because those are the games you used
To play when you were still funny

Talk more about the Can Man
Who would waddle down streets
And fill plastic bags full of cans
To take to the center for a few dimes
Because really aren't you now
Your own sort of Can Man
Collecting and stowing
Collecting to stow to stow
Talk more about the forest fire please

*Enter the space
Between the roots
And the sidewalk
Try to feel the pressure
They place on each other because
Where does the water get in?*

IV.

Try and go back to the fort you once built
 And waterproofed by coating with Witch's Broom
 Because your childhood friend is coming to Brooklyn
 Today and he remembers it well
 And he remembers the trampoline well
 And the retaining wall you fell from once
 But had only the wind knocked out of you
 And he'll ask you about these things when he gets there
 Because threw them was how he knew you
 So try and go back to the part about the old Saab
 Which sat in your driveway all autumn and winter
 To the part about the hose caddy which would jam
 As you wound it, back to the part about ten feet of snow

Try and go back to the beginning now please
 To the way you'd build rockets and comb out the matts
 In your cats hair because that's where
 More remarks are needed I think
 That's where the tension exists
 Back with the tortoise you used to feed lettuce
 Back with the fire ant scare
 And the bulldog you died on your watch

*In a choke-chain collar
 It lurched at the fence
 The collar caught on broken link
 And the dog hanged itself
 In the sun—See the odd bloodied mustard
 Slip from its nose*

Yes, now, that's better, that's better
But go back even further now please
Back to those plates that were all shaped like chickens
And stacked up so neat in your grandmas old cupboard
Back to that bag of hand-me-downs
Because when your friend gets here
He'll have more than a suitcase in tote
So try to go back to the part about potions
About how you'd mix all the chemicals from beneath the sink
And the old brine from pickles and dump it all on the anthills
In your backyard because that version of you
The one that would do that
Is a version your old friend will recognize
So go back to the tire swing please
Back to the old wooden shed, back to its big yawning door

Or try to return to that moment in winter
When you were all bundled up and walking
Down the long street that lead you to home
And you kicked along a clod of ice
Because each time you kicked it it got smaller and smaller
And when at your doorstep you found you couldn't leave it
Because that clod had carried you all the way home
Because don't you think it might be true
That you lost yourself somewhere since?

*Something more pure than
Something more sweet
A wet blade to run through*

*All the old words: a song
For the hideous ogre
Come down from the hills*

VI.

Fine but a song also for the old days back
When you were okay back when there weren't three of you
Drooping around cold street corners
Each one more bitter and starving then the next
Go back please to Evergreen, back
To the spot where the Cattails would sway
To where the spiders would weave webs
In the gaps of the railings around the pond
Back to the attic filled with boxes of Christmas lights
Back to the dog pen and rabbit coup
Back to the crumbs in between the countertops
Back to the stain left on the backseat made of melted crayons
Back to where your lungs were still milky and pink
Because right now the stakes are too high
Go back to the part about how you were willing
To eat bugs because right now you're nothing without it
Or back to the part where you said you'd pick the scab
Because right now it doesn't feel like you've picked it—

*I picked a scab once
That looked like Australia
I was seven and kept it in a jar
Next to an antler I found
Beneath and old and twisty bow—*

Great but where is that jar right now?
Go back to the part bout where you lost it
Or the part about where you lost
Your turtle but found it beneath the boards
Of the deck because right now
The peeling back of old wood is important

VII.

*For clarity, then
Reverse everything
Then start*

Go back the part about the long, long icicles

*Render me cleaner
More fit for use
Because all this splicing
Has made me too sluggish*

Go back the part about where you buried your first dog

*Beneath that one unlikely
Aspen in the back-
Yard where he used to lounge
And smell the dandelions*

Go back to the park about the trash you'd dig up
The spent cans and glass you'd smash on the rocks

*There were the old owners buried it
Were it was put to decompose and did*

But for the cans and bottles
Start at the part where you talk about how
You used to sit reading by the fence your dad built

My fingers drooling saccharine gunk
From lollipop lips
Over the large and simple words
I was young, I was young

About how you built it up there with him
And he let you hold all the nails
You were young yes but not lying

For clarity then
Reverse everything and

Start
But go slowly

Marmalade pace, molasses slink

Because there is a little boy laughing
Alone in a bush
And he is happy and has a little gift for you—

Something more pure
Something more sweet—

And if you miss him on your way back
You'll never quite know what it was.





CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Anastacia Anastascio is a sophomore at Eugene Lang College studying Literary Studies with a concentration in Fiction. With a passion for literature, this Los Angeles native plans to become an English instructor after Lang. She hopes to one day write something to the capacity of Edgar Allan Poe with a philosophical hint of Nietzsche.

Joseph Anderson is interested in finding better ways of experiencing and understanding himself and others. Joseph Anderson is interested in exercises in chaos, vulnerability, filth, despair, joy, and love. Joseph Anderson went to hug a tree, lost track of time and bark grew over him. Joseph Anderson is the four vial set your roommate left on your desk labeled, "Four Humors" filled respectively with blood, semen, sweat, and tears. Joseph Anderson forgot his pot on the stove and now the lentils are ruined. Joseph Anderson sometimes hides behind words because that is all he has left to hide behind. Joseph Anderson hopes his words will open a discourse for living better life and offer a philosophy to be adapted as a practicum. Joseph Anderson is hiding right now.

Ashely Beam in addition to writing poetry, publishes work on her blog.

Tiana Bui is a freshman at Eugene Lang College who aspires to be a filmmaker and writer. She hopes to ma-

jor in Culture & Media and/or Literary Studies and, until recently, has not been published. A California native, Bui is an avid fan of the author John Steinbeck, and emulates his work by writing extensively about her home state as well. When not in Manhattan for school, she likes to spend some time out of the year in the Monterey Bay Area in Northern California – the setting for Steinbeck's Cannery Row - mostly for writing purposes.

Jasper Dutz graduated from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts in 2012 and is currently a student at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He is an aspiring Composer, Saxophonist, and Pokémon Master. One long term goal Jasper has is to help improve the quality of Arts Education in America.

Lauren Early is a junior at Eugene Lang. Beyond writing, she draws comics. To her, life is just a big series of jokes. Like haha funny jokes.

Ryan Eckes lives in South Philadelphia. He's the author of *Old News* (Furniture Press, 2011), *Valu-Plus* (Furniture Press, 2014), and other books. Recent work has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *OnandOnScreen*, *GlitterPony*, *COYDUP*, and *Jupiter 88*. He works as an adjunct at Temple University and Community College of Philadelphia.

Xenia Ellenbogen is a senior at Eugene Lang College. She is currently working on a book of poems about The Bridge Café in Lower Manhattan and ghost spaces. Alongside poetry, Xenia is also a singer/songwriter. She lives in Brooklyn.

Jake Gulliver might get fired from Starbucks soon, he is from Arizona.

Matthew Kim-Cook : Mix one cup with half cup of water, blend until desired consistency. Serve chilled.

Marshall Malin : I am Tennessee-raised and twenty-years-old, and I moved to New York two years ago for college. I've been writing poetry since eleventh grade when my teacher, Mrs. Brush, influenced me to write after reading a poem of mine called "House." I love reading poetry from people like William Shakespeare and John Donne.

Diana Ramirez is a junior at Eugene Lang College. When not writing, she frequents burlesque shows. She lives and writes in Brooklyn with her cat.

Mariel Rolwing-Montes is a second year student at Eugene Lang and in the Fine Arts program at Parsons. Right now, she like writing short stories, poems, and reading Junot Diaz.

Sam Robison is a student and writer based at Lang. He is from Colorado where he used to live in the mountains. He studies poetry and lives in Brooklyn with his two friends (cats).

Olivia Schwartzman is a sophomore at Oberlin College majoring in Creative Writing and Art History.

She posts her artwork at www.oliviaschwartzman.com and sells her handmade cards at www.ivyrosepaper.com. Her work has also been published in The Juvenilia, a literary magazine for which she is the Poetry Editor.

Charolette Scott : My born and bred blood of Manhattan gives me inspiration for creative writing. Being a student at the new school gave me the opportunity to explore poetry through memories and prose. I have a unique technique for a writer as I typically do not edit my work after it has been written down. This piece in particular though, was something I worked on for quite some time as it is personal as well as cheeky. Living in the East Village at age 23 makes creativity immeasurable and refreshing.

Some people think that the writing of **Josh Segal** is not actually written by Josh Segal, but by someone else of the same name.

Griffin Sherbert a writer and musician in NYC. He has written plays and films performed in NYC and LA.

