

York Review



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A Word From The Editors

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The *York Review* would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of Geneva Doll, a fellow student and writer who died suddenly in September, 2006.

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The Black Dictionary

Greg Smith

I

some say we can only see stars
when they are dead,
forgotten, bulbs.

an entropic disaster—
the weight of being
becomes too heavy.

II

to the aspiring novelist:
are stars our words in the sky?
is each night an unread novel?

to the great poet in the night:
is that you, speaking to us in our sleep
letting us know that it's no coincidence
our best dreams come on clear nights?

to the literary specialists:
put down your telescopes
the universe is still expanding.

III

are words—
socratic dialogue,
sophistic relativity,
motherly lullaby,
string theory,
uttered hope,
musical scales,
marine life,
the past
and future,
expressed memories—
stars shining or fading?

IV

into a black hole
i fade, on my back,
on a rock, on a rock,
on 12,000 foot of rock,
and i am the final stone,
mining the minds of stars
and rearranging them stanza,
after stanza, after stanza
until empty shafts fill
with morning light.

below,
cars drive to
work, and i realize
my words are
meaningless.

V

some say we can only see words
when they are poetic,
crafted, verse.

in a large house—
the weight of being
embodies words to form.



Without Knowledge

Chris Veghte

“Chris, I don’t want you to go to hell.”

“Don’t you worry about spending the rest of your life in hell?”

“I want my kids raised in a church no matter what. . . I don’t care if I don’t personally like church. . . it’s just right, kids need religion.”

“Man, you just gotta believe in something.”

“Why would you turn God’s love away from yourself?”

“It’s a beautiful gift and you won’t even look under the wrapper a little.”

“I really see this world as a war between the forces of darkness and light. Chris, what side do you think you’re sitting with?”

“It’s a shame our friendship will only last so long as our lives do.”

The religious friends, lovers, mentors, and random acquaintances throughout my life constantly assault me with comments like these. When you’re young, openly agnostic, and not worried in the least about an eternity surrounded by sulfur, a man with goat feet and horns who inspires some of the greatest music of all time, and the scum of the world, religious people are very baffled by you. And so growing up in a “Christian” nation, I have grown accustomed to confusing the religious people around me.

I was never raised as a religious person. Either out of laziness, their personal tastes against religion, or their oft-stated reason (we wanted you to be old enough to make your own decision about what’s up in the sky) my parents never indoctrinated my sister and me into any sort of religion during our childhood. We did celebrate the generic Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter, but that’s mainly because my family likes gifts and my sister and I enjoyed candy as children. So, I was at a certain advantage over my peers when I finally began to understand the concept of God, gods, the Goddess and the Bull, deities, Michael Jackson, etc.

Sixth grade, or somewhere around there, was when the concept of what a god is began to fully cement in my mind. Before that I just kinda had an idea that it was some old man with a long beard who lived in the clouds and judged what me and my friends did. You see, even if I wasn’t religious, my Roman Catholic neighbors certainly were. And I got an earful from the kids all the time about what was wrong and right in the eyes of their Lord, even if they never fully followed what He told them to do. These Catholic kids were probably the first spark of my agnosticism. Their ability to be as cruel as possible and then feel no remorse because on Sundays they’d apologize to their Heavenly Father made absolutely no sense to my 10-year-old self. I mean I’d seen these kids on Saturday beat up their little brother, or ruthlessly make fun of me for being a little chubby and then bam Sunday would come and their worries would be gone. God had forgiven them, it was bullshit, I was 10 and I knew it was bullshit.



But still this God guy was too vague of an idea to me. I just didn't have the ability yet to fully wrap my young and fragile mind around something that has always been, will always be, knows everything, created everything, and then set up a list of rules that if you break you will spend an eternity with his old number 2 man in a land of flames, suffering, and pretty much unappealing stuff. In the preteen years though, my mind was ripe for learning, reading, questioning life, and exploring who I was while my peers were out kissing girls, going to second base for the first time, throwing parties and otherwise enjoying themselves. I was shy, so I had my room and my mind to explore, and what an exploration it was.

At first I begin to outright dismiss the idea of any god whatsoever, and I did it with the same passé reasoning that people always come to when they lose faith or never have it and are confused by it. Why would a god let awful things happen? Why do good things happen to bad people? Why am I fat? Etc. It was refreshing, I was an atheist. I looked up the way I was feeling on the internet and found that term to pretty much describe myself, and, boy, was I excited. I had all these friends who were Christians and Catholics (which to me then and now still means the same thing) and now I was the Atheist. THE ATHEIST, because as far as I was concerned there had never been another Atheist before me. I was the first, and someone had just created the term many years beforehand, waiting for me to come along and finalize its existence.

Though, this turned out to be false by the time I was in high school, because there ended up being about a dozen of us. Together we were bitter, angry, and elitist over the theists in the classes we had. We were awkward, not particularly in with the cool kids, highly intelligent, and as fundamentalist about our lack of faith as some of our theistic counterparts were about their faith. It was exhilarating, but after a few years just too tiring. I just don't have it in me to care that much about not believing in anything, and anyway for some reason I developed a thing for churchy girls. This started with me going to church with a friend because she kept pestering me to go, and when there realized that Jesus certainly had a lot of cute and hot girls praising his name. I looked at them hoping that soon they'd praise my name.

I tried, I really did, to get those girls on their knees speaking the good word of Chris, but it never really worked. They were always too wrapped up into their guilt of being a mortal person who, yes, did indeed have carnal desires that make sense because 1) it feels good and 2) we are wired to propagate our species. But, there was also a nice, more subtle effect to my life from attending church to try to find girls. It softened my hardened atheism into a bemused and friendly agnosticism.

Listening to a man in a funny outfit once a week for two years will eventually show you that you know nothing. The way a good reverend can explain God's implicit love and action on our world is wonderful, and it opens your closed



logical mind to the possibilities that there could be more to the world than just facts, cells, solar flares, and whatever else makes up that mysterious world of science that I cannot even begin to fully fathom.

Acknowledging that you don't know a single thing is ultimately one of the most liberating moves a person can make in their life. I don't know a single thing about the "true" creation of the universe, multiverse, etc. It quite possibly could've been a big bang, but then again maybe a god made the big bang, who knows. We certainly do not. God, Aries, Quetzalcoatl—any of the plethora of beyond-reality beings that mankind has thought up could quite possibly be out there waiting for us or watching us coldly, judging us or loving us, making watches elsewhere, or not existing at all. But, mankind lacks the right qualities to ever truly know this about our world. We cannot see what is beyond our physical world; we cannot even see certain kinds of lights. What makes us think we can know anything for



Church Yard Fence

Allie Graham

Digital Photograph, 8 x 10 inches



Social Immigrant

Joe Aldinger

Don't leave until your ready,
customs are hard and confusing.

When you visit your home,
remember it's one of your Makers.

Don't return and talk in your foreign tongue,
with your father or your mother.

Plato, Aristotle, Heidegger, Hegel,
Zizek, Derrida, Kant, and Freud,

these are foreigners in the soil of your home land.
Your family won't understand,

don't ask them.
Talk to your father in his tongue.

John Deere, Case, Mason Ferguson, Ford,
Peach, Pear, Apple, and Corn.

Your father's tongue is in your mouth,
bringing breadth to your words.

Don't forget your past—
it is your history.

I pulled ear after ear of corn,
looking at my father; he has pulled many more

year after year to feed and provide.
"The ears are like nickels and dimes"

My father would say.

"Pay for your way, Pay for your passport
out of here, anywhere,"

My father forced me to leave.

Refugee leave the farm behind,
and go to college to climb.



The Art of Collage

Ron Nath

May 1912: In a dingy studio on the sunlit banks of the Seine, Pablo Picasso allowed fragments of paper, a patch of oilcloth, and a portion of chair-caning to guide him toward the creation of a groundbreaking art form: collage. Eschewing the oil and canvas which had constituted his traditional media, Picasso picked up these new tools in an effort to explore fresh artistic frontiers. The First World War was in the offing; society as Picasso knew it was becoming less integrated and cohesive. Perhaps Picasso's experiment was his way of reflecting the turmoil of early 20th Century life in a work of fine art. Perhaps Picasso saw this first foray into collage as his way of advancing the banner of the Cubist movement. Whatever his motivations, in the seemingly simple action of pasting paper to oilcloth, Picasso was beginning an artistic revolution.

So what, exactly, is collage? "Collage" is a form of art in which a picture or design is created by adhering basically flat elements, such as newspaper, wallpaper, printed text and illustrations, photographs or fabric onto a flat surface. The word "collage" comes from the French "coller," meaning "to paste." When the product of this pasting becomes three-dimensional, the work may be called a relief sculpture or assemblage. Artists may also use "found objects," or everyday items, such as pebbles, twigs, barbed wire, or film negatives, which are unexpected but still convey some artistic meaning.

Collage, however, is much more than just gluing pieces of paper together. Construction in this art form is important, since the selection of elements to include in the work provide the context of the statement the artist is making. Items are carefully selected according to the specific meaning they communicate to the artist. When we look at a collage piece, the evolution of the artist's concept becomes more apparent as each layer of elements is examined. It takes time to understand these elements, since, as with other art forms, it is important to know the context that led to their creation. Upon careful examination, we can appreciate the deeper meanings that the artist had envisioned. Psychologists have shown, for instance, that certain images have specific emotional connotations. A young John F. Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's coffin evokes feelings of sadness, tragedy, empathy, and perhaps despair. The picture of a lone man blocking a tank brings forth feelings of defiance, courage, and a little fear. An image of a sailor and a nurse kissing in Times Square communicates joy. Since emotions are so closely correlated to the images viewed, collage is able to bring subconscious thoughts to the surface through the careful selection and placement of various materials.

The act of pasting objects and papers to a surface has been seen throughout history in various folk arts, such as 12th Century Japanese text-collages which were decorated with paper foils, and 15th Century Persian and Turkish cut-paper



designs. During the Cubist movement, while the initial collages were assembled solely of paper, the addition of other media was incorporated into the process of collage production. Each layer of new materials was meant to communicate a new idea. Furthermore, the borders of the piece became important to the artist in conveying his message. In the same way that looking through a viewfinder on a camera frames the subject, the artist uses the borders of his work surface to contain his work. The use of color, texture, and subject matter set the tone of the piece. These visual cues serve as a map to chart the visual journey of the viewer. Collage also takes advantage of the multilayered messages which can be communicated through the artistic use of mixed media. Mixed media in visual art refers to an artwork which incorporates one or more medium to form the finished piece. To distinguish between mixed media artwork and multimedia art, the following distinction can be made. Mixed media usually refers to a work of visual art that combines various distinct art media such as oil paint, acrylic paint, pastels, pencil drawings, pen and ink or photography. The term “multimedia art” indicates a broader scope than mixed, combining visual art with elements of the other arts such as literature, drama, dance, or music. Relief sculptures and collages have often been misunderstood, since they are not as familiar as other art forms. Students may be exposed to oil paintings of the Renaissance, watercolors, etchings or Michelangelo’s sculptures in art history classes. But collages, by their very nature, fall into another genre, one that is perhaps more related to another form of artistic expression.

The fields of writing and collage share many similar qualities. The various elements used in collage can be compared to figures of speech, which are used to convey ideas to our audience. As word choices, sentence structure and punctuation all contribute to clarity of expression in writing, visual elements are used for this purpose. These visual images form the vocabulary for the artist, symbolizing his ideas. Just as a writer would use a metaphor to express a concept, the collage artist may use an hourglass or stopwatch to illustrate the idea of time. Stylistic techniques in writing achieve particular goals. Flat elements and other materials are woven together to result in the tapestry that is collage.

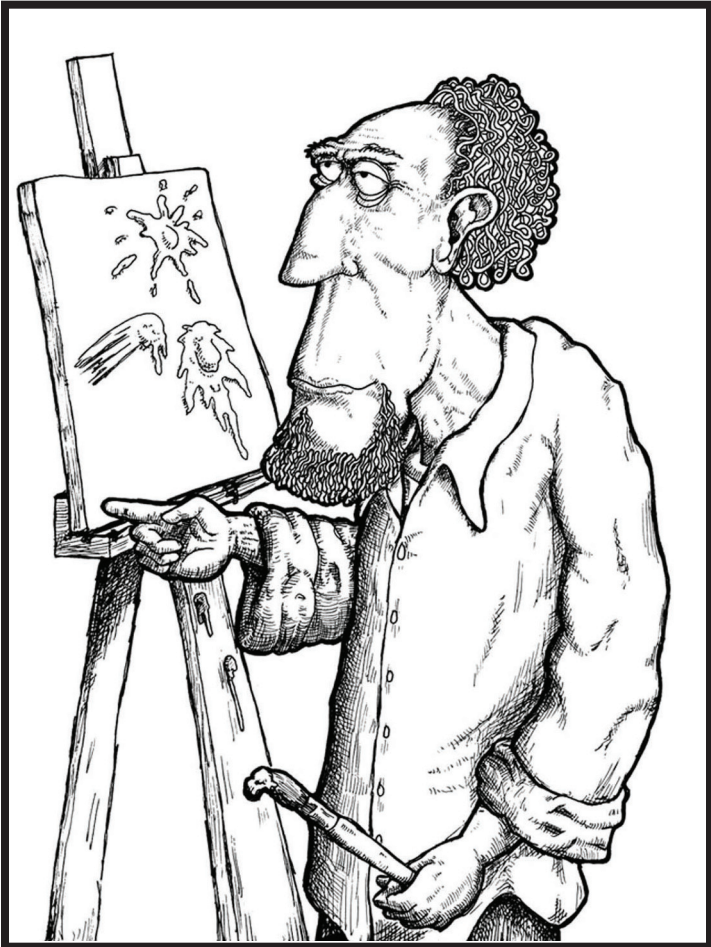
As art historian Katherine Hoffman stated “collage may be the only truly 20th Century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities.” Our varied cultural differences engender varying responses to these art forms which allow us to form a framework for interpretation. To this end, the ability to communicate nonverbally is facilitated by artistic expression. An exhibition of collages can be mounted in Germany, Japan or India — evoking different reactions — without the language barriers that a writer would experience. A poet presenting his work at a reading would face another problem, one of cultural idioms that may be easy to misinterpret. Collage is able to avoid the risks of words being lost in translation, or of ideas being distorted by faulty interpretation or misuse of language, since it relies on a



more immediate and personal way of communicating. The assemblages of collage serve to bridge cultural gaps even in a world where advances in technology serve to make the world smaller. The end result is the creation of a language truly suited to a global village.

“Construction of a painting in terms of a linear grid or framework, the fusion of objects with their surroundings, the combination of several views of an object in a single image, and of abstract and representational elements in the same picture.”

—John Golding



Abstract Painter

Curt Potteiger

Pen and Ink, 9 x 12 inches



A Stare

-to those living with visible differences

Kaelin Ball

It hits softly, quietly.
Sometimes it's loud and noisy but
it comes at you, in your face,
most of the time behind your back,
like a knife.

Call it whatever you like.
We can stand up and fight
or cower in the corner.
It's ours to choose.
Ours to reveal or hide.

Go on! Try us!
Tell us what you think!
We're not stupid!
Blind, maybe.
Deaf?
Definitely not!

Life and time has taught us
we don't have to dignify that look,
that comment.
It's ours to explain, to confess.
Stop pushing.
We can get you too.

We can throw the punches
as much as we can take them.
We are experts, truly.
You just think you are!

So go on and throw that knife
we always catch it
but it always depends on who you are
and your actions
if we throw it back harder
and faster than before.



Laces

Jacky Liquori

I used to have a callus on my right hand
where the laces of the baseball would slip in
and become an extension to my body.

I could never throw as hard or far as my brother
but I am good... *for a girl*.
We threw until the darkest dusk,
an event planned very specifically.
We threw with a neon yellow ball;
when you can't see that, it's time to go in.

I had wanted a rose colored mitt for two years
when my dad finally gave me
the most beautiful one I had ever seen.
I put it in the trunk of my car a year and a half ago.
It's had mild use since then.

Now my callus has faded
and my new mitt
never got any oil,
never got rubberbanded,
never got to dive across an infield with me.

I hold out hope I'll get to break it in,
but I know better.
I don't have the time to throw till dusk anymore
and I don't have a person on the other side of my catch either.

But that mitt is still in my car
and every chance I can,
I slip it on and throw the ball into it.
I know it's *waiting* for me.

It knows that
part of that callus is still on my hand,
and part of it always will be.



The Elephants

Maria Almanza

It wasn't until I was fifteen that I realized I was the weird kid. You know, don't pretend you don't. The girl in the corner sitting by herself half covered in sweat from anxiety, reading *Modern Science*, half for interest and half for protection. The girl who ate paste in elementary school and donned black fingernail polish before it was cool to be uncool. That was me and I didn't have a clue. I was fifteen and I suppose I should have been in the tenth grade that year, but instead I was the biggest eighth grader Mesawana Middle School ever saw. My parents determined my social suicide long before I was able to rock pull-ups. I would be home schooled and never able to proclaim, "I'm a big kid now." Socially stunted by adolescence, I didn't stand a chance. For now I would have to prove my ability to read, write, and keep from eating crayons.

Betsy, my mother, dropped me off that day. That week we were experimenting with not using "misogynistic terminology." Betsy found it self-deprecating to refer to herself as a mother. I closed the door to the pale blue Rabbit and headed for the entrance. In bold block letters over the double doors hung a beige banner proclaiming, "Welcome Back Students," in the gold and green school colors. I couldn't help wondering *what about the ones who weren't coming back, the first timers?* I looked around. The kids around me were a bit smaller, yet they were veterans. They didn't seem scared with their Jansport backpacks and brand new Airwalks. So I marched in and stared them dead in the eye, well not quite, and marched right out. I couldn't do it. I was fifteen for Christ's sake! I was 5'7 and had C breasts to betray me. I sat down on a stone bench. It wasn't quite time to go in. I would just wait. That's what I'd do. I'd wait until the last minute—no room for conversation or sideways glances. I'd slip in to the classroom unnoticed and pick out a seat at the back of the room, the nosebleed section where writing looked like little bumps of braille. Hell, maybe I'd do it the rest of the year. I'd forever be known as Djuna the elusive, bearer of all things mysterious, summed up as out there—decidedly cooler rather than simply a dork.

The bench was a prime spot. I scarfed down my lunch: a chocolate snack pack, a handful of animal crackers (all elephants), and a bologna and cheese sandwich. I'm a nervous eater. I scoped out the kids getting dropped off by parents and the pissed-off bus drivers. I decided I would watch, observe, and become cool by osmosis. Popularity was in the air.

But it wasn't the popular kids I was looking for; I was looking for a fellow dork. And then she arrived. Saddle Brimar stepped off the bus, one Reebok at a time. Her black stretch pants were tucked into her Reeboks, the strap safe and secure within her shoe, below her heavily scrunched tube sock. Her oversized New Kids on the Block t-shirt hung loosely on her bone thin frame. I didn't know these New



Kids on the Block, but if they were cool with Saddie, they were cool with me. I knew she'd be my friend, we were linked by a lot of bad hair and very little social skills. And with an odd sort of self assurance, I walked over to my new friend and spit out a hello.

I snorted, "Hi!"

"Umm...Hello."

"It's my first day," I proclaimed.

"Okay ... well, bye."

It was not quite the conversation I had hoped for. I'd had better conversations with my magic eight ball. *Will I ever be cool? Decidedly so. Would Saddie Brimar be my friend? Ask again later.*

Left behind with no one left on the sidewalk or in the heavily decorated entrance, I walked to my classroom. The school was small and I was lucky because Room 154 was directly to the right of the entrance. I slipped in just as planned. The voices of the students were excited, squeaky but excited. The teacher looked excited too, not yet defeated by the first day back. I traipsed to the back of the room. Looking for a seat, I instead found faces marred by red eruptions of acne and colorful braces. There was nowhere to sit. Almost every seat was filled by small sacks of flesh. The one lone seat sat at the front of the room. I couldn't do it. I wouldn't. The bell rang. Mrs. Peterson stood up ready to start a year of inattentiveness. I was still standing, all 5'7 of me in front of the door. My plan had failed. I didn't know procedure. How was I to know the front seats were always left last, waiting to be filled by overzealous nerds or the near sighted? No one had told me. "MMMMrrrMM," Mrs. Peterson cleared her throat drawing attention to herself, but mostly me. "Miss, please take a seat. I've got one right here," she assured me as she pointed to the lone seat, front and center. She pointed to the desk and to my destiny, a front row reject. Forgive her father, she knows not what she does.

Mrs. Peterson, a woman of middle age with a love for cats and knickknacks from foreign countries, started class unaware of the sentence she served. "Hello everyone! Welcome back. I'm Mrs. Peterson your homeroom teacher. I'll also be your English teacher this year. I'd like to start with role call and then will get right into things. Annette Anderson, Valerie Ashton, Timothy Balls, Dju... Dju.. Djuawana Barnes? Am I pronouncing that right?"

"No, No ma'am," I replied "It's Djuna. Named after Nagarjuna"

No response; apparently Mrs. Peterson wasn't versed in Tibetan philosophers.

"He's 'the second Buddha.'"

No reply. Dead silence. And then... and then someone, I still don't know who coughed out a flemy "Dooooooork," straight from the back of the throat and right to my heart. I knew I was one, the sci-fi fantasies and love for Obi Wan pointed to it, but what did it mean if he said it? I was heartbroken and then unequivocally



pissed off. For God's sake people there was a kid named Timothy Balls and yet they laughed at me! I opened my notebook and pretended not to hear my new, less interesting name.

Class continued as planned. And just as Mrs. Peterson discussed the all too interesting rule of split infinitives my stomach began its war against me. It growled, loudly, too loudly for no one to have heard. I'm almost positive the girl next to me flinched. I fought back. I repositioned right leg over left hoping to have some effect on my inner noises. Nothing and then...*GrgRGr*. I repositioned again. And still it came on only louder and a bit more perverse. If I couldn't beat it I'd mask it. I tapped my Mary Jane rapidly on the tiled floor and flipped through the unused paper of my binder. *SHH tap tap SHHH tap tap SHH tap tap*. Mrs. Peterson stopped writing and put down the chalk as the noise fought over her quiet voice. "Ms. Djuwana, could you stop that please?"

"Stop what ma'am?"

"The tapping and the shhishing"

"Oh, sorry."

Apparently it was a bit too effective. I stopped. And the growling stopped. I must have been more settled. The bologna must have finished digestion and headed for less noble places. I continued my work, frantically writing down my notes. This wasn't so bad. I could do this, I thought. And then...and then...I yacked right in front of me on my new Mead notebook. I was mortified. My mother would be mortified. She didn't like to buy notebooks, to her each page was a layer of tree. My classmates were mortified. A girl in the front row covered her nose and left the room, undoubtedly to yack like myself only in the privacy of a stall. A boy from the back of the room yelled the obvious "GROSS!" A kid to my left covered his offended nose. And the girl behind me, pulled my hair back from the dangers of my mouth. It was Saddy Brimar and it was an act of kindness I'd never forget, that made us friends despite any words. The nurse arrived. I looked down at the mess and in my haze I swear I saw an elephant staring back at me.

The nurse escorted me to her office. She was kind and reassuring like I imagined all nurses.

"Are you alright?"

"Did you have something strange to eat, maybe too much breakfast?"

I didn't respond. I wasn't alright.

"It's okay. Someone will do something strange tomorrow and they'll forget about this. Believe me. You wouldn't believe how many kids throw up in class or pee their pants."

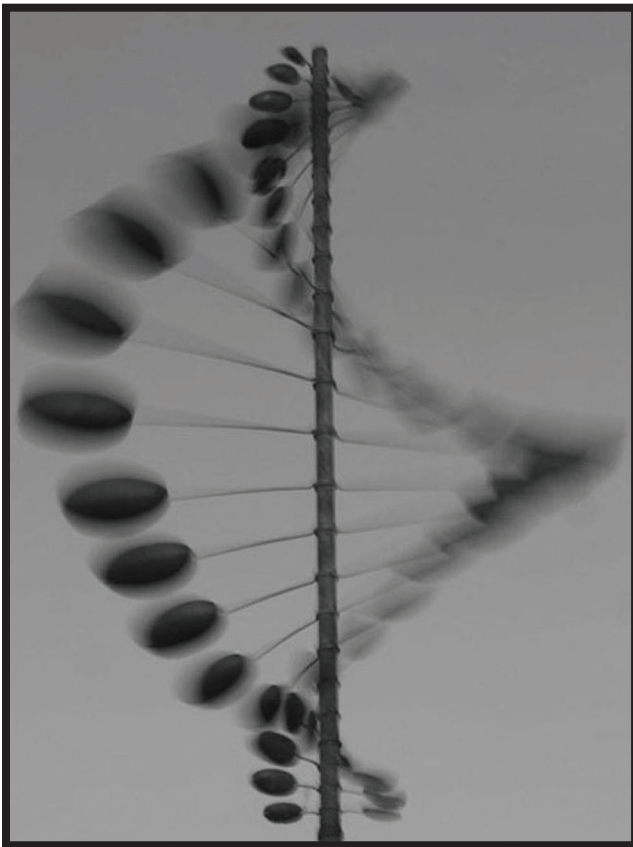
It was kind, but I didn't believe a word of it. Nothing would top throwing up animal cracker elephants on the first day of school. I sat and contemplated the



days and years ahead before I could once again return to the basement of my house with a few good books. All I wanted was to go back home. The nurse rang my mother to pick me up. I was somewhat satisfied. At least today I'd get to go home, go to sleep and pretend I never saw Mesawana Middle School. The phone rang three times.

“Hi is this Djuna’s mom?”

“No,” she said, “this is Betsy.” And then she hung up. I'd get home, just not quite yet.



Exhale

Greg Smith

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches





Insomnia

Greg Smith

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches

Something I Fell Into

Jacky Liquori

[Mitch] After my daughter was born, my wife Julie came to me and said, “Mitch, we need a bigger house.” About a month later, we moved. Our new house had a fenced in backyard, a garden, a swing-set. I had a garage for the first time and my Audi A6 wasn’t going to have to sit in the driveway overnight.

I’ve always been a man who didn’t mind a little do-it-yourself work. I had finished all the projects in the old house, and now I had an entire new house full of projects to work on. It took my mind out of business for the weekends and, since playing football with my buddies was out of the question, putting up drywall had become my latest fascination in life.



My current weekend projects were all centered around finishing the basement for my daughter. She was only two now, but the last two years had gone by so fast. It marveled me everyday watching her walk, eat with a spoon, and the way she would scream “daddy home” when she heard me coming in through the front door.

(Kim) I promise you that my old brother Mitch is crazy. You’d think having ten more years of life experience would have somewhat calmed him down, but that was not the case. I started seeking refuge in my brother and sister-in-law’s house during breaks not long after I started college.

During a typical stay, my days are spent bonding with Julie and my niece Madison, and my nights are spent in deep conversation with Mitch. Now, there is a decade worth of age difference between Mitch and I, so generally, conversations take more than a little time to develop. He’s a huge addict to hockey, was even a goalie playing for a minor team for a while, but then he got a pretty nasty injury. You can see the pins in his knee.

So depending on what time of year it is, we’ll watch some hockey, or we’ll talk baseball. When your siblings are that much older than you, and since we only share a father (not so much a mother) it tends to make things awkward at times. I had always wondered if my brother resented me and the fact that I was part of my dad’s “second family.”

After one trip out to visit Mitch, we finally got to talking about something that wasn’t sports-related. We talked about our family, and the infrequent stops into reality that both of our mothers usually made. Mitch told me that he had wanted to hate me when I was born until my mother made him hold me. He said, “Kim, I looked at you and couldn’t help but love you.”

Knowing all this about Mitch in those nights was a comfort. You have to understand, Mitch had moved out to California when I was in the 6th grade, and no one in our family heard from him until he was graduating from college two years later and my father made him come home for Christmas. That summer, we met Julie. At Mitch and Julie’s wedding in Las Vegas a couple years later the 8th grade version of me was the Maid of Honor.

After Madison was born, I decided to make it my all-consuming goal to be ‘the cool aunt,’ and if in the process I would stumble upon a real relationship with one of my siblings, I was totally on board. Even if it was just to reaffirm the fairly well known fact that each and every one of us had to be crazy.

[Mitch] There are these two floorboards in the attic of our new house. Now mind you, the house is by no means a ‘new’ house, it’s a good three-quarters of a century old. But in the attic there are two floorboards that were recently replaced.



I can just imagine some guy going through the attic floor and landing smack dab in the middle of the master bedroom, which is violently comical to me.

Well at least that was what I thought happened.

“Now, if I tell you this, you can’t tell Julie.” He said, looking down on Kim as she sat pounding away at the computer.

“Okay, I won’t tell Julie.”

He got up and headed towards the side of the basement, and stood in the small alcove that was to Kim’s left. “Do you remember when we first moved into this house and the wall was here?”

“You mean the one you knocked down to make room for the air-hockey table?” she laughed.

“Yes, THAT wall.”

She nodded, “Yeah, I remember.”

“Well, you’re going to laugh at me when I tell you this, but I found something in the wall.”

“Oh god Mitch.”

“Listen, let me tell you the story! I was coming into the wall with my sledgehammer and these keys came flying out of the wall. They must have been in the frame around those doors or something because I heard them slam up against the concrete wall over there.” He pulled out his keychain and pulled two keys off of them, “There were three, but I showed one to Julie and she threw it away.”

“They’re probably just spares Mitch.”

“No! Listen, I went through the house and neither of those keys match a lock in this house, and the one’s that have been replaced were done by Julie and me after we moved in. Every other lock was an original.”

“So it’s a toolbox key, or a shed key, or the spare key to a neighbor’s house.”

“No. My house is a Scooby-Doo mystery!” he protested, somewhat like that of a child who was being told he needed to take a nap. “Listen, if you had spare keys to someone else’s house why would you hide three copies of that key all in the exact same spot?”

She looked at him in disbelief, “Three keys, all exactly the same in the same spot huh?”

“See! See! Julie thinks I’m crazy but I’m not! Listen, I did some research and there were two families who lived in this house in the last 8 years. The people we bought it from were only here for three years, and the people before them bought it from some family that had lived here forever.”



“Well, why does she think you are crazy?” she paused for a minute and looked up at Mitch and he rolled his fingers along the concrete wall, “Wait, Mitch, what do think those keys are for?” She could see the wheels in his head turning.

“There are these two floorboards in the attic. Every other floorboard is an original floorboard up there except for these two. They have got to be like 10 years old. They’re old enough to not be new, but new enough to notice that they’ve been replaced.”

“...Mitch?”

“I think there’s a safe,” he paused, “underneath those floorboards.”

“Did you tell Julie that?”

“No, she thinks I’m crazy.”

“I THINK YOU’RE CRAZY! You did not just tell me that there is a safe underneath some floorboards.”

“Keep it down, you’ll wake Madison.”

“Mitch, you just told me that you think there is a safe underneath two random floorboards in a house you’ve lived in for 6 months. I mean, some guy could have just broken the old floorboards.”

“That was what I thought too, until I found the keys. I just want to rip up the floorboards and look.”

“And what makes you so sure that there is a safe under there?”

“Do you remember when Aunt Mary died?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay, well when I was helping them clean out that house. She still had money in shoeboxes from 1960. They were covered in mothballs and you can imagine how embarrassing it is to walk into a bank with \$10,000 worth of mothballed money. Listen, all those people from the Depression, they don’t trust banks. The family that was here two families ago, the original owners, I’m telling you!”

“You’re halfway convincing me Mitch.”

“And think about this, they hid the keys in the basement, the farthest point from where that safe could be in the attic, and, why would they leave the keys? Think about that. Unless I had smashed into that wall, I never would have known they were there. If you knew you were leaving, you’d take the safe and the keys. Right? And if you knew the safe was there but was empty, I’d think you’d tell the owners. Unless the person who put it there was unable to tell anyone that the safe was there. Unless he had put the safe in before he got sick or something. Come on, think about it, it makes perfect sense.”

“Damn it Mitch, you are way too good at convincing me to do things.”

“See. My house is a Scooby-Doo mystery.”



[Mitch] It's Saturday and I need to get Julie and Madison out of the house for a couple of hours so I can rip up those floorboards. My major problem is that Julie never seems to leave the house.

Kim promised to help me. Said that the three of them could go out for a little while and that she could buy me the few hours I needed to rip up the floorboards and see what was underneath. I was expecting a safe and I held the keys. They left around noon, and as soon as I watched the car pull out of the driveway, I ran into the basement to get my toolkit.

The attic lies atop a creaky, water warped staircase, and the two floorboards are directly in the center of the room. There are boxes everywhere, and because of my lack of actual organization skills, I need to finally 'clean the attic' like Julie always asked me to do.

(Kim) Julie looks over at me while we are in the car, "So what were you and Mitch talking about last night?"

"Nothing major" I responded, looking down at the clock. I knew I had to keep Julie out of the house long enough for Mitch to rip up those floorboards, but Madison was already getting fidgety in the backseat, and I could tell that she was not going to make this easy. Julie reached for the stereo and started playing 'baby-friendly' music.

"That should take the edge off."

[Mitch] I've moved almost all the boxes and finally started to pull up one of the floorboards. The attic is darkly lit, so I'm trying to sneak my flashlight under the boards but I haven't pulled out enough nails for there to be anything worth seeing.

I go to the next two sets of nails in the first floorboard and start pulling them up. I pull up the first floorboard and I can see it. I can see the safe, just like I said.

(Kim) Madison is crying. A lot. It's been two hours and you can see the circles under her eyes; you can see that she's exhausted. But now, I've signed on to be part of a caper, which has always been one of my higher aspirations in life. If I let Julie go home and Mitch isn't done, she'll hear him banging on the floorboards in the attic. Not to mention the fact that if we got back and Mitch hasn't found a safe but not put the floorboards back that the two of us will have a more than a couple questions to answer.

Julie looks over at me and asks if I need anything else, and in a last ditch effort to buy my brother a little more time, I smirk and look down at the floor of the car. "Wow, I could really go for a doughnut."



“A doughnut? Like, Dunkin Donuts?”

Julie has always been a sucker for doughnuts.

[Mitch] I pull out the key that came out of the wall and slip it into the keyhole on the safe. It's there, it's real, and I have no idea how I really plan on explaining any of this to Julie. Of course, they'll be a lot less explaining to do about all the deceptiveness if there is really money in this thing.

I can't decide whether or not this is stealing. Is it a caper or a heist? Kim said it was a caper, and she's the English Major, I guess she would know. I guess it can't be a heist unless you are actually robbing someone, not just ripping up floorboards and finding a safe in your Scooby-Doo mystery house.

The key fits perfectly. The safe opens.

(Kim) It's been three hours. I've gotten Mitch all the time that I could. Now, Madison is screaming and even the motion from the car isn't lulling her to sleep. She wants to go home. She wants to take a nap, and Julie and I are powerless to stop her hurricane of terrible two's force.

I can only hope that he found a safe. And even if he didn't, that he at least put the floorboards back, and didn't have any debilitating incidents with a hammer. Or that he didn't leave a gigantic hole somewhere. We pulled into the driveway and I get my niece out of her car seat. I started walking her towards the door very slowly, when we hear a loud crash come from inside of the house.

I'm guessing Mitch didn't fix the floorboards.

He laid on the bed in the master bedroom, covered in dust with a small safe tucked under his arm. He stared up at the gap in the ceiling and coughed.

“MITCH!” Julie screamed, walking into the bedroom, “There's a hole in our ceiling!”

“Yes, yes there's a hole in our ceiling.” He replied, coughing.

“What the hell were you doing?”

He coughed.

“...and what is that?” she called, looking under his arm.

“A safe.”

He slowly sat up, leaving the safe sitting on the bed.

“Where was it?”



“In the attic.”

“How the hell do you open it?”

Mitch pulled out the key out of his pocket. He casually threw it onto the bed.

“How did you...”

“I tried to pull it out, but once I got it under my arm I lost my footing. Let me just say it’s a good thing that we didn’t move the bed like we planned.”

He walked into the bathroom.

“Can I open it?” she asked as he slowly turned on the sink.

“I’m honestly surprised you’re not tearing me a new asshole right now, so knock yourself out.”

Julie picked up the key and opened the safe which housed eight weighty stacks of 20’s, right next to old birth certificates and paperwork for the house.

Mitch screamed from the bathroom, “I figure it’s about enough money to fix the ceiling that I broke because I’m a dumbass.”

“Why didn’t you just leave it up there?”

“Again, because I’m a dumbass. It seemed small enough and it’s a safe! It’s heavy! It could have fallen through the ceiling and onto us while we were sleeping and killed us!”

“It’s been up there for a long time Mitchell, if hadn’t fallen already, it wasn’t going to fall anytime soon!”

“There’s the level of anger I was expecting.”

“And you were conniving enough to wait until you got me out of the house!”

“Actually...” started Kim, who was finally at the top of the stairs, carrying Madison, “I can be held accountable for that.”

“What?”

“Mitch just didn’t want to rip up the floorboards and not find anything and you find out about it and kill him.”

Julie turned to Mitch, “YOU RIPPED UP FLOORBOARDS!”

“Nice Kim.”

Kim put Madison down, who promptly ran into her room to play with her train set. Kim headed into the master bedroom while Julie and Mitch continued to scream and she looked at the open safe.

(Kim) Well at least it was real.

[Mitch] I can’t believe I lost my footing.



“So you two planned this whole thing together huh?” Julie said with anger in the back of her throat.

“Yeah” Kim replied, looking through the certificates on the side of the money.

“Well, you know what this means?”

“That I’m helping Mitchell repair the ceiling?”

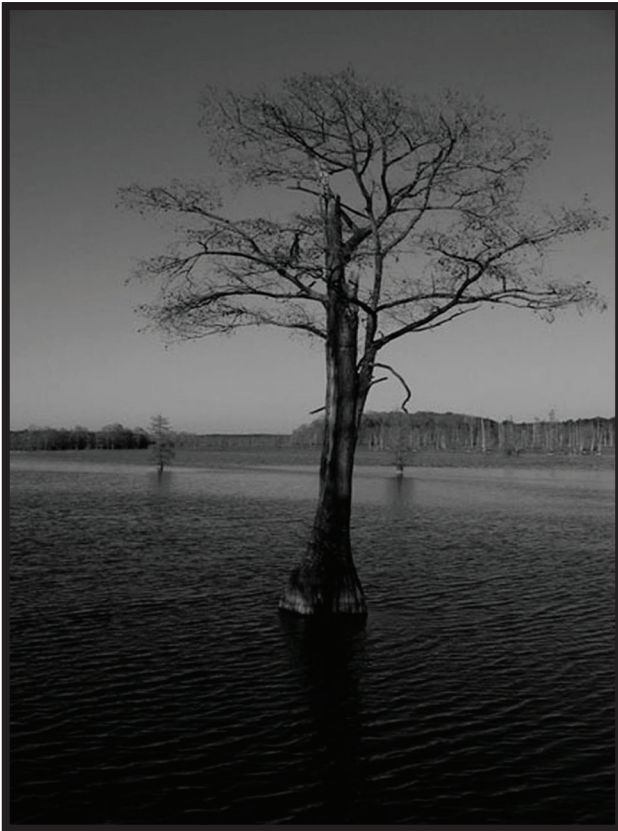
“Yup.”

Kim laughed. “That’ll teach you to go to bed at 9:30.”

“Judging by the state of the bed I won’t be sleeping here anytime soon.”

Mitch walked into the room and leaned on the bedpost, “Not bad for our first real caper, huh, sis?”

“Yeah, not bad.”



Shreveport

Greg Smith

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches



Innocent?

Steven Ruck

INTERNAL APARTMENT LIVING ROOM--DAY

A man in his early 20's, STEVE, sits on a couch, watching TV. He is wearing jeans and a T-shirt and is slouching down on the couch, about to fall asleep.

The front door bursts open and we can see a woman in her early 20's, EMILY, standing there. Emily is wearing scrubs that are covered in brown stains. Her hair is frazzled and she looks exhausted. The door ricochets off the wall and slams shut before Emily can enter.

Steve jerks awake and looks to the front door. This time, the door slowly opens. Emily walks in the apartment. She turns around and gently closes the door.

STEVE: Hey. How's it going?

EMILY (sarcastic): Oh, I'm wonderful. Never better. Never. Better.

STEVE: Alright, what happened?

EMILY: Today...I met Satan.

STEVE: Satan, huh?

EMILY: Yes, Satan. And then I killed him.

STEVE: So you met and killed Satan, all in one day?

EMILY: Yep.

STEVE: Would you care to translate for me?

EMILY: Oh, alright.

Emily walks over to the couch and falls down, lying on Steve.

EMILY (continued): So, I'm doing my rounds, right? I walk into my first patient's room, and what does he do? He throws his used bedpan at me.

Steve starts laughing hysterically.

EMILY (continued): It's not funny, Steve.

Steve continues to laugh.

Emily sits up and pushes him off the couch. Steve is still laughing.

EMILY (continued): You're a real asshole, you know that? A real fucking asshole.

STEVE (muffled laughter): I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Emily. I really am. Please, please continue.



EMILY: No. I just had the worst day of my life and all you can do is laugh your fucking ass off. Well, you know what, Steve? Fuck you.

Steve is no longer laughing.

Emily gets up from the couch and disappears around the corner.

STEVE: Come on, Emily. Don't be like that. You know you wanna tell me the story.

EMILY (offscreen): No, I don't. Go home Steve.

STEVE: Yes you do. Come on, I wanna hear the story. Tell me more about Satan.

Steve gets up off the floor and sits back on the couch.

STEVE (continued): Emily. (Pause). Emmmmillllly.

Emily's head slowly peeks around the corner.

EMILY: No more laughing, okay?

STEVE: Scout's honor.

EMILY: Fine. I guess I'll tell you the rest.

Emily comes back out into the living room and sits back on the couch.

EMILY (continued): Okay, so, after I had the bedpan dumped on me, I went and changed my scrubs, of course. When I come back, the horny bastard grabbed my ass.

Not wanting to laugh, Steve covers his mouth and nods his head.

EMILY (continued): Then, a couple minutes later, when I'm listening to his heart, he reaches up and grabs my boob!

STEVE: I hope you slapped the guy, right?

EMILY: No, I couldn't slap him. He was 87 years old and has this degenerative heart disease. One slap would have knocked him right into his grave.

STEVE: Did you try to switch patients?

EMILY: Yes. But that bitch Theresa laughed it off. She said all old men do that, that I should just get over it and stop whining.

STEVE: So, what'd you do?

EMILY: I took care of my other patients. I only stopped by when it was absolutely necessary.

STEVE: Did he behave?

EMILY: No! He was still grabbing me and he even started making vulgar comments about me.



STEVE: Did you fuck with him at all? Like, twist his IV's closed, or—

EMILY: No.

STEVE: So, what'd you do then?

EMILY: I killed him.

Steve does a half-laugh, not sure if she's joking or serious.

STEVE: You...what?

EMILY: I killed him.

STEVE: Emily. That's not funny. What'd you really do?

EMILY: I told you. I killed him. One hand covered his dirty mouth, the other pinched his nose shut. He was gonna die anyways. Better sooner than later.

STEVE: Emily, do you really expect me to believe that? Like you could kill someone. Really though, what happened?

EMILY: I told you.

There's an awkward silence as they both stare at each other. Steve becomes increasingly uncomfortable, and Emily remains motionless.

Finally, Emily starts to laugh.

STEVE: What? What's so funny?

EMILY (laughing): I really had you going there for a minute.

STEVE (defensive): You did not.

EMILY: Yes I did. You really thought I killed someone.

STEVE: Shut up. Anyways, so what happened?

EMILY: Nothing. That was it.

Steve starts to laugh.

STEVE: Wow. I can't believe I fell for that.

EMILY: I can.

STEVE: Oh, thanks. (Pause). Emily...a killer.

Steve continues laughing, and gets up from the couch.

STEVE (continued): Ridiculous.

EMILY: Yeah it is. You should know me better than that.

Steve disappears around the corner as the laughter dies down. Emily sits on the couch in silence. Steve steps out from around the corner and stands there, looking at Emily. There's an awkward silence as they look at each other.

STEVE: No, seriously. Did you?

FADE TO BLACK.



Internal *Tick-Tock*

Sara Barshinger

Feeling the throb of each hollow step,
faintest change in wind or weather.
These are not just growing pains.

A brush with death must leave its mark:
painted colors of peeked red
or deadened violet over swollen tissue

unseen. Facing
death in each raised freckle,
in parasite, *Acarina*.
Reaching for paranoia,

for the Never Forgotten's return.
Increments lament

with each passing click of joint
and motion of bone
and cartilage uncovered
and stretched sinews.

Like pegs--
a clock's rusted cog--

grinding past each labored movement,
internally counting each passing moment
in discordant organ groans.

Gelatinizing,
crystallizing amber;

my skeleton felt
framing the sarcophagus.
All life is so mortal.

Becoming a living morgue,
in the seconds between
nonexistent pulses

as life and death
become indistinguishable

then move on.

Another second, carbonizing metal
cleared 'way for another

from a pulse non-possessive,
a chimera, no longer fully you.
Accompanied blood cells
sing a woeful elegy

over the sailed 'way ship,
the mother beast and cursed carrier,
bringer of micro-life and death

in slow silent strokes:

the beating,
the passing,
the *Tick- tock* .



Migraine

Chris Veghte

I can feel it coming before it even gets here. I feel it pinging me on its radar screen like in one of those submarine movies where the crew is all silent watching the green screen ahead of them with eyes intent on how far away the Russians are. Each ping tells me it's coming closer, each ping tells me it'll soon overwhelm me. And no matter how much time it gives me to know that it's coming, I never have enough; I always end up falling to its mighty power. By the end of our encounter, I will lie quivering in a dark room crying, with the blinds pulled down low, all sounds muted, a cold compress on my forehead, and a pillow smothered over my face, trying to diminish my senses. I will effectively be in a living hell.

The pain starts slowly, almost seductive in its deliberate approach. It's like it wants me to enjoy the torture it has brought about. It starts at my temples as an almost kind visitor, just ever so gently pulsing. The veins in my temples jump about trying to warn the rest of me to get away, but no matter how much energy they put into their warnings, they never succeed. My visitor just climbs forward diligently, with the absolute will and destructive force of Sherman through Georgia.

The conquest of my forehead feels about as opposite as the seduction of my temples as hell is to heaven. It's fierce, it's quick, and it's all encompassing. Within ten minutes of infringing upon my forehead, I'm down, I'm out; I'm a sick, sad dog on the side of the road. Driving, working, learning, playing video games, making love, whatever is happening to me when it envelopes my forehead is immediately done. I pull over, go home, put the controller down, I do whatever I can to find solitude, for the hours or days of pain are just beginning.

It's not just pain that takes a hold of me, it's an overwhelming sensory deprived nightmare I fall into. Periphery vision: gone. Frontal vision: filled with black spots. Balance: replaced by vertigo and a strong desire to vomit. Sonic aptitude: heightened, second by second adding to the intense suffering I'm in. I'm incapacitated; I'm a child frightened by the world. Worse, I'm an infant once again who needs to find security in the darkness and warmth of a womb, curling up into the most natural of positions, crying like the babe I am as the world fades away. All I know is pain and fear.

I try to find an ally during these dark times to fight it off, but they're few and ill-equipped to do much but slow the assault to a level where I can find my bed and throw myself into its comfort. The bottle and a half of Advil pretty much does nothing. The sensation is too much to really be defeated by these generic



mercenaries, but they're cheap and at least I feel like I'm doing something. The wet paper towel on my forehead works for about five minutes before becoming warm to the touch on my feverish skin. In the end though, I know I'm alone, alone to just lie there and wait for it to finish raping my mind.

Marital Affairs

Rachel Rogers

Forgiving as sunburn,
we turn and toss and itch
away each other's souls
with scratches always
selfish. What rash of hell
is brought about by pleasures
pardoned, dressed up
in understanding—
these rich robes of sympathy
and stranger's skin.

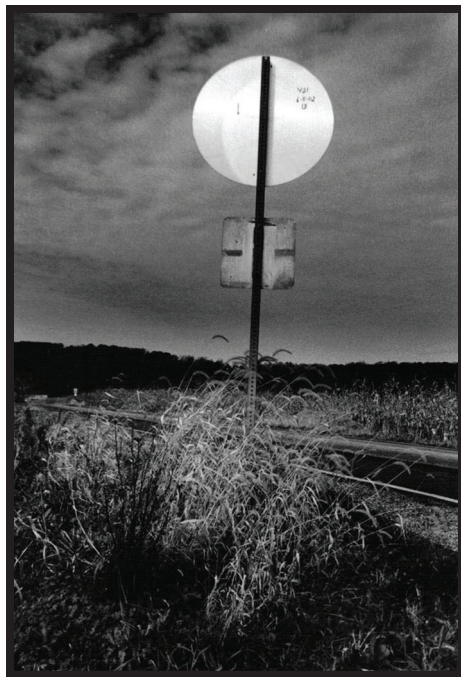
Were these the sheets?
The drawn long curtain
on our attempts at some
ideal or sanctity?

Where you wrapped
a fantasy in our silk
linens while I obliged a man
in his backseat?
(Not everyone beautifies betrayal)

As eyeless sinners
who still possess the sense,
tradition has vouched for this
death of vows. Stillborn truths
never amount to honest
endeavors, even aided by
the most earnest tongues.
Such a facade—shroud, ring
and statement—semblance
of sentiment and satisfaction.

But, it was only a hand
we asked of each other,
so the other hewed
has us still true to *one*
archaic allegation.





Roadside

Anna Hershner

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches

The Endless Possessions of a Prisoner

Maria Almanza

A row of bars casting shadows on the floor,
painted blue cement block the most unnatural of colors,
hard mattress where thoughts lie down to sleep,
and outside hoots and hollers, the boys are at it again.
Rumpled magazines of words already read—
porcelain in the corner, the most attractive object in the room.
The unlawful rests his head in his hands,
fists and fingers nearly white,
hands marred with muffled screams,
sweat from days as long as winter,
creases and cuts, the serrations of life.
An endless number of belongings—
but not quite our American Dream.



The Lost

Greg Smith

Every night the sun runs from us, seeking shelter out of sight.

We are on our own.

The face of the lost is dark and weathered, for it knows:

we are on our own.

The coldest bus crawling over the broken backs of Manhattan stumbles through
a streetlight's harsh glare

cringing and wet, I turn away as a black man spits on his seat, thinking to
myself: more and more, we are on our own.

From his eyepits dripped an incessant ink of pity and his fingernails curled and
when he raised his hand and grumbled

an Italian plea for change he drew a bead on St. Peter's head.

Though his lips moved otherwise, I could swear he was telling me

we are on our own.

Kneeling penitently beneath twilight in a New Mexico marsh, a lost fawn cries
out, its mother victim to a hunter's gun.

A mere mile from the crash, reflecting off scavenging eyes, a blinking beacon
sounds: we are on our own.

Heartbeats muddy dark earth into a human stew in the beat of a fading EKG.

The cries of medics are lost in a sea of

blood and desert camo.

Mother and father stir peacefully in dream, son framed in arms.

We are on our own.

Belly to the stars, a teenage asterisk yearns to free itself from grassy paper, and
bleeds real tears,

Asking the freckled blueblack for the first time why we are on our own.

Aged canyons sag and pale, cloaked by the opaque dark of a moonless night.

The flock lowers its head as a cardinal crows, "in the valley of death,

we are on our own."





Nature Bath

Sara Barshinger

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x10 inches



A Bitter Cup

Natalie Griffin

We used to wake up laughing.
We were children at Christmas.
Eating chocolate pancakes soaked in sugary syrup,
still not sweet enough,
but we savored every bite.

Rushing to class, we'd
hurry through the dew
barefoot,
sandals in hand, books in the other.
We liked the feel of it trickling down our toes in the young, green grass.
We sailed past each day with eager eyes wide open.

The days roll past slower now,
and we wonder why we don't wake up
laughing.
Perhaps it's because alarms aren't too funny,
and biorhythms are out of sync.
Bitter coffee replaces pancakes,
and our shoes drag on the rough, cracked pavement.
Dark pupils peer through thick eyelids.

Dripping the last of the pot into my mug,
you ask how we got hooked.
One of those adults, I sneer.
A boss. Co-worker. Parents.
Someone in a suit and tie.
Through these dark pupils it's difficult to distinguish
souls from suits or
tenderness from ties.

Adults blur past,
keeping concealed if they've
run through young dew-grass barefoot
or eaten syrupy-sweet chocolate pancakes
or woken up
laughing.
I wince and swallow that thick, bitter brew.



Thoughts on Earth's Lower Mandible

Greg Smith

Every time I see the Rockies
I have the same thought—

What ugly teeth.

—Jagged and discolored in the summer,
like some poor Brit caught in mid yawn,

more than willing to cover me with pellets of spit
before I can duck for cover.

In the winter
I suppose they may look better,
like the last thing you'd see before finding yourself
in Moby Dick's stomach.

And when I feel down
and look toward that row of bottom teeth,
I wonder how long until the top comes falling
and takes me alive.

Brown like Burnt Butter

Maria Almanza

Born with hair nearly black
and skin brown like a wafer,
I was Hispanic then,
skin and hair and eyes
to match my blood.
Now I'm more like my mother
hair light like chestnuts,
straight with length.

There is little of him in me.

Only—only I have
A birthmark on my right thigh
brown like burnt butter,
as dark as mahogany,
dark like life when you
first awake from dreams,
the inside of my skin,
the lids of my flickering eyes.

It hides just below my clothes
where only I can see
the familiar flesh of my father.



The Inferno's Vestibule (home of the opportunists) Jess Brown

My south wing stairs lead
to unknown shadows,
and each step traps heat
that swirls and glows

beneath translucent,
fingernail-thin glass,
from which colors vent
like windows at mass.

Blues, reds, and yellows
catch my wand'ring eyes.
Maybe one day I'll know
where the heat source lies,

which conjures all these
glowing and swirling
colors that drive me
down each stair, searching

without reason, on this
winding path until,
at last, my feet kiss
that one stair that will

lead me to the course
I have sought so long
that will cure my remorse
from a life gone wrong.

Sanctification Richard Rabil, Jr.

Wait on the notes of providence singing,
Wait on the wings of trust among knives,
Wait on the bells of the old House ringing,
Wait on the strength of a hope death revives.

For here comes my teacher, Patience by name,
Come now that I have to heaven beseeched.
My heart, ever thirsting for knowledge aflame,
Will dread its long practice, but drink of its speech.

If thirst yet by trials only be quenched,
If practice by fire scorched be the means,
Then is humanity destined to catch
A few wins, sad loss, and pain liberally.

Faith houses tests which breed and amply thrive,
Building, with Grace in cooperation,
Temples by tears and blood sanctified,
Inscribed with "To God alone is salvation."



One, Long Bench Seat

Greg Smith

I sat in the middle,
armed with a cowboy in the driver's seat
and the forearm of my best friend on the passenger door,
sailing through Montana's mountainous seas.
My uncle with the worn boots smoked cowboy cigarettes,
no filter, hand rolled,
and told stories of loggers
who had muscles in their shit.

He drove slow,
easing us into a land of charcoaled toothpicks
picking away at the sky.
Some cowboy gave the hills a cigarette;
lit from floor to peak,
they smoked for three months straight.



Amarillo
Greg Smith
Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches



Maintenance

Sara Barshinger

Buckets, broom, bowls, mop, food bag—am I missing anything? Clorox, right.

Dorothea took one final glance around the storage shed to be sure she hadn't forgotten anything. She tucked the bowls inside the buckets with the mop and broom cradled in the crook of one arm. The metal handles and gnawed buckets' edges poked at her side and forearm; it was too easy to snag the bandage wrapped around her thumb. She shoved the Clorox inside the bag with the artificial food pellets. It was a balancing act which she had mastered months ago. Her assigned building was 20 feet away which she didn't want to walk twice.

"Dorothea, you got a minute?" Her boss, the withered public servant, strode through the shed door in his muddy boots. Dorothea reluctantly re-shifted the weight and put down the awkward load. For just an instant, she caught Walter glancing at her thumb. He looked at it every time he ever spoke to her for the past two years—like he expected her thumb to grow back someday if he didn't watch it closely.

"Yeah, Walter. What is it?" She scrunched up her best attempt at a smile. He only talked to her when there was a problem. There was always a problem. Walter had delusions of being important in the world. No doubt he imagined himself as the concierge at some important hotel. But his guests certainly aren't celebrities or politicians, although they have been in the paper just as much.

"Dorothea, have you noticed the weather lately? It's been pretty gloomy, huh?"

"It's that time of the year." He doesn't usually make small talk. Where's his point?

"Yeah, well, you know I saw the weirdest thing the other day. You want to hear what it was?"

"Sure." *Actually, no. Shut up so I can get on with this hellish job!*

"Well, you know I saw a blanket sitting outside. Can you believe that? Just sitting outside soaking up the rain. You know it's no good having those blankets if they aren't dry. It's not like it does *them* any good wet." The blankets were federally funded—so naturally they deteriorated easily when wet.

"Yeah, I know but those stupid things drag the blankets outside all the time. Every time I bring one in, another one just takes his blanket out."



“Dorothea,” he glanced at her plastic thumb bandaged to the palm as she crossed her arms. Sometimes, she could swear he knew. Somehow he knew how she had lost her thumb and then he’d hold it over her through implications like he always does. “I don’t ask for much around here, now do I?” *Oh yeah, he knows.* “Just pick up the mats. Their safekeeping and health is what matters here, though I know I don’t have to remind you of that again.”

“No, sir.”

“And I’m sure you know how lucky you are to have a job as rare and monumental as this.” After the war, jobs were scarce for everyone—especially for those involved.

“Yes, sir.”

“Alright, I’ll let you get to work now. And remember what I said.”

“Yes, sir.” Dorothea watched him duck out of the shed. He would no doubt vanish for the rest of the day—feeling important since he had play-acted big bossy. That’s a riot. *“Rare and monumental job”—is that what they call monster control these days,* Dorothea fumed.

She turned to pick up her load and kicked over the food bag, which was closer to her feet than she had expected. With the Clorox, the bag was top-heavy. Pellets of cardboard-food spewed across the concrete.

“Damn it,” she hissed through her teeth. One more mess to clean up today. She found a dust pan hanging by a nail to the wall and started to sweep dust bunnies and pellets into a hairy clump. Of course, that was the moment Clair decided to show up for work.

Clair was a true believer in the whole deal. Her parents were bona fide tree-hugging animal rights activist. It had rubbed off on her.

“Woo, its miserable out, isn’t it?” Clair’s curly hair was highlighted by frosted rain drops.

“At this job, it’s always miserable.”

“Good morning to you too! Sounds like someone had a rough night.”

“No worse than any other.” Dorothea had made the mistake of once sharing her nightmare problem with Clair. If anything was ever wrong in the world for Dorothea, Clair always assumed it was the nightmares.

“Huh, too bad.” Clair went over to the deep metal sink to collect some clean bowls and buckets. “Did you hear about that new bill their considering in Congress?”

“You know I don’t follow that stuff.”

“Well, you should. It’s big. They’re considering allowing adoption! Isn’t that exciting? It could mean full integration of the visitors to our society.” That always



gave Dorothea a kick how Clair called them “visitors.” Intruders, certainly. Monsters, obviously. Murderers, absolutely. But visitors implied something compassionate, something cordial which Dorothea could never connect to the beasts held at their compound.

“How can anybody adopt something like that?”

“Well, it would be more like adopting a pet, really. I mean, the courts ruled that they aren’t logical creatures so it wouldn’t be like adopting a kid or anything.”

“I meant why would anyone want to adopt one, Clair.” Dorothea swept the last pellets into the dust pan.

“Oh, come on. You know they aren’t all that bad. I used to work at the animal shelter and dogs and cats are so much dirtier than people give them credit for. In comparison, the visitors aren’t much dirtier than an average English sheep dog, a St. Bernard or some other big dog. Just a lot of slobber.” She piled a dozen bowls into a stack of buckets. Clair hadn’t been working there very long and usually made three trips just to get all her supplies to her building.

Dorothea decided that she had heard enough of the believer’s enthusiasm for one morning. She strategically collected all her supplies again. In her hurry, the hook on the end of a bucket’s handle caught the strap holding her prosthetic thumb in place. Balancing the bucket tower on her knee, she managed to wiggle her thumb loose. Clair was already heading for the door herself and hadn’t noticed Dorothea’s acrobatic maneuver.

“See ya later,” Clair bounced through the shed door and out to her building. Dorothea was grateful of the silence as she balanced the mop and broomstick under her arm. One of the few blessings of her job was that it allowed perfect seclusion from humanity.

Dawn’s sunrise had barely peeked above the valley’s surrounding hills as Dorothea overlooked the ten buildings. A red glow reflected in sharp beams through the cool fog. It reminded Dorothea of Sci-fi movies where the aliens invade with beams of light and lasers. Who would have ever guessed that they would invade through American bureaucracy?

Compounds like this were scattered across the world, with each country free to handle the situation as they chose best according to UN supervision. The armies of every country had banded together in one solitary moment of union when those crafts first appeared. It didn’t last.

Dorothea remembered those early days. She had joined the army originally for the college scholarship and found herself ordered to fight in a war like the world had never seen before—a “rare and monumental job.” Her mother had been so proud.



The orders were to shoot first, discover later. It was several weeks before a live specimen was recovered from the battlefield. Dorothea remembered hearing about the captive, codenamed “Napoleon.” He was supposedly an important figure in the invader’s army. His capture was expected to cause a ceasefire. It didn’t. Nothing done to their crafts had any affect on their progression into Earth territory.

Dorothea ducked inside her building. It contains 200 cells, or living quarters. Every cell contains a single creature with special access doorways to conjoin the cells for family units. Every cell must be fed, watered and cleaned every day, day after day. Dorothea separated one of the buckets from the pile and poured a dollop of Clorox into the bottom of the bucket. She added water from the spigot protruding from the wall. The cold air seeped in through the cinder blocks along with fragile drops of water. She wished she had brought a sweater. Grabbing the mop, she started on the first cage. The card above the cell door read “Genevieve.” She had been born three years ago on our planet and had spent her entire existence within the confines of her five foot by five foot cell.

Dorothea always wondered who came up with the names for these creatures. Since the researchers couldn’t understand their grunting, they decided that it wasn’t comprehensible language. The animals were assumed stupid and assigned names like mute pets.

She understood how people underestimated them—they were small creatures with plumb limbs and a slug-like veneer. Their eyes were small but dark; she couldn’t follow their pupils to know where they were looking. They look like some cheap costume for the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland* if only it weren’t for the slim. According to the researchers, the creatures don’t excrete or eat so much as osmosis. So their sweat takes care of both functions.

When people found out that their intelligence wasn’t much higher than the average doorknob, there were riots. Citizens couldn’t understand why their army was attacking the defenseless, dumb animals. Petitioners sought peace and the safety of the creatures, who had gained rights as brainless beasts.

Dorothea dropped a cup of pebbles into a dish and left it in the cell for Genevieve to absorb for breakfast. The next cage contained Genevieve’s supposed mother, Fifi. Dorothea made sure the connecting doggy-door was shut before entering her cage. With the door open, the two could gang up on her.

It didn’t take long before the public’s scorn landed on the soldiers fighting to save them. According to the media, they had committed crimes of war and conscious in destroying so much life for no purpose. What they always managed to forget was that the creatures had attacked first. They were lethal. Dorothea replaced Fifi’s bucket of drinking water with a clean bucket free of the slim coating, careful not to let the loosened bandage around her thumb catch the snares. Glancing at her



hand, she noticed a pin drop of blood forming along the cuticle of her index finger. In the cold air, in the sharp metallic surroundings, injuries occurred without her even noticing the individual pain.

Back in the hallway, Dorothea returned the uneaten food to the bag and pushed the load forward to the next cell. Her broom bumped against a bucket squatting in the center of the aisle, collecting rainwater leaking from the roof. Dorothea glanced inside to see a wolf spider hovering on the vicious surface of the water. As the water lapped against the side of the bucket, he stretched his fuzzy arms out embracing the wall. He managed to hold and barely, indistinguishably, move up the side of the bucket. She watched him for a moment. She imagined the creature as a cast away gasping, swept onto the rocky shore of some remote island. She let her broom tap against the bucket again on her next sweeping pass. The spider was jolted from the wall, returning to his suspension act. *He's better off dead.*

It was impossible to get a job when she got back from the war. Jobs were rare enough for everyone, but one glance at her resume—her honorary discharge—scared away even the bleakest of employments. Dorothea hadn't applied for college after all. She couldn't decide on a subject.

Months passed without a job, so she did what she had to in that situation. She lied on her résumé. One simple omission earned her consideration through the job search. She was eventually placed here, at the compound. It was the best job she could get with no experience to show for on her records.

She glanced into the next cage. The mat had been pulled outside and sat wrinkled in the rain. She opened the gate but stopped short seeing the cage's resident: Balboa. He was old, a warrior. He had been code-named Balboa long before being imprisoned at the compound. Her division had faced him and his crew at the landing near Erie. She had witness those "dumb" animals as they outnumbered and cornered Officer Bobby King, Dorothea's friend since training. These creatures—they call docile—had been granted asylum and Balboa along with the rest.

The doorway to the outside pen was small like the other doggy-doors. She would have to bend down onto her knees to reach the mat. That would put her within a pudgy arm's length from Balboa. She crept along the far wall, eyeing the slug at all times. He breathed deeply as if sleeping or drowning in his slim. Dorothea crotched down gripped the top of the doggy-door with one hand while reaching out with other. She tried to feel blindly for it, keeping watch on the sleeping slug. She couldn't find the mat. With one last glance at Balboa, she turned and bent her head through the door. Stretching further, she lifted the mat

heavy with rain and backed straight back, careful not to catch her ponytail in the cobwebs around the top of the doggy-door.



When she raised her head, she was even with the beady eyes of Balboa. He was raised up onto the back of his abdomen/tail and staring through her with his pit black eyes. Dorothea jumped, held up the mat between her and the beast. In the instant scene, her mind noticed the bead of blood outlining her fingernail as she waved her arms up (she had read that seeming bigger can help in confrontations).

“Come on,” she screamed. “You want to kill me? Do it! Just try to come at me!”

Balboa snared, in that his osmosis zone bubbled like porous jelly ready to give way.

Only the creature’s stupid mat dangled between Dorothea and Balboa. He sank lower into his tail, like a spring under pressure. *He’s going to jump!*

Splat!

Dorothea slowly lowered the mat, watching as the creature had jumped straight into the concrete wall beside her. Sliding down, Balboa pulled some loose strands of cobwebs in his mouth. Through the transparent zone, Dorothea saw a hairy wriggling spider circling in the juices of the creature’s mouth.

Dorothea backed against the door, her fists still raised and ready. Her legs were shaking, she suddenly noticed, and her heart was thrashing against her ribcage.

“Fine,” she said after a moment. “You think you have everyone fooled? I know what you are. I know you’re a killer. You can kill me tomorrow.” Dorothea opened the latch and returned to the hallway. She peered back inside the chain link and watched until the slug lay down again to sleep. *I know you. You just try to kill me tomorrow.*





Physical Enhancement

Greg Smith

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches



Thanks-giving

Joe Aldinger

I broke bread
with family,
a day of thanks-giving.
A day: of unspoken joy
and warm comfort.

The turkey's skin
was a radiant hue
of browns, whites, and blacks.
All soon to be mingling
in my belly, thanks-giving.

The wine's smell is
pungent and lascivious.
We all have a glass and
warm our hearts by the fire,
thanks-giving.
Underneath all this,
lies a different essence.
Vicki hates Pam and
Pam hates Vicki, thanks-giving.

Somehow though we
stuff ourselves, with
food and lies of forgiving.
Happy thanks-giving.

Vicki doesn't hate Pam
and Pam doesn't hate Vicki.
But we all know what happens
in the shadows of the back world that are stuffed
away, tucked away, the true essence
of it all. Happy thanks-giving.



My younger brother
eats too much and up spews the
filling. And my mother's drank too
much and up spews the shadow of the shadow,
the essence underneath it all. She raises her glass,

and in a toast, she reflects on life
and why its worth living. She proclaims
and exclaims that if she had a redo; she
would have bought dogs rather than birthed
children. Afterall, she concludes, they always
obey and love you.

The family panics and attends
to the "real" situation—my brother
spewed up turkey. But the back world,
has spewed up out of my mother's mouth.
Happy thanks-giving.



Meadow's Shoreline

Sara Barshinger

Digital Photograph, 4 x 6 inches



Peppermints & Polka

Sara Barshinger

Red strands of cornhusk hair,
the heredity that I cling to.
My Royal Crown.

Remembering his watery eyes
staring at my head.
*You know in the sun
it looks auburn,*
my grandpa with a smile.

I didn't know why he noticed,
that his mother had red hair too.
I didn't have the heart to tell him
that my color came from a bottle.

Straw-coated concrete floors,
the labyrinth I was drawn to.
My Courtly Stables.

Remembering his worn, thick shoes
guiding through the barn.
*The kittens are here
young as can be,*
my grandpa with a smile.

I didn't know why grandmother laughed
at a silly child playing games.
I didn't have the heart to accept
that the kittens could ever be cats.

Dusty attic of tablecloth ghosts,
the inheritance of generations past.
My Castle Estate.

Remembering the hidden organ
playing notes off-key.
*When your done up here,
Peppermint Patties downstairs,*
my grandpa with a smile.



I didn't know why those rooms were abandoned,
that those antiques had been my mother's.
I didn't fully realize till later
the pure joy of peppermints and polka.

Rusty pickup on the back roads,
the rite of passage to adulthood.
My Stately Chariot.

Remembering his farmer's tan arms
holding me in his lap.
He needed no words,
just squeezed my knee,
my grandpa with a smile.

I didn't understand the silence,
that he couldn't say he loved me.
I didn't understand till later
that silence was just his way.

Leather-bound box of ancient tools,
the lineage that I'd forgotten.
My Treasure Box.

Remembering his shaky voice,
while handing it to my mom.
I just wanted someone,
Family to have it,
my grandpa with a smile.

I didn't know why he was giving things away,
that he'd known long before the doctors.
I didn't know till later about the colon cancer:
what my grandpa covered with a smile.





Kansas Route 56

Greg Smith

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches

Take Flight

Lydia Stern

Iron filled her soul—
only thing keeping
her with us.
Twice she attempted,
but her feet
could never leave the ground.
One hundred and one
in her twenty-two.
Eyes drooping and
falling through.
Where does the lost
soul go
if not to the sky?

‘Cause childhood, O
lonesome neighbor!
held in her sights
no future.
But they had other plans for her.
Resuscitation, resuscitation—
it only causes more
blood to be shed.
Doctors of humanity,
Ha! What are these?
Plucking the feathers
from the wings
of her soul.

Blue bird sings no more.
Choking, choking.



Elegy to My Grandmother

Joe Aldinger

A boy stands in a vacant field,
his father working behind him
building a house and a home.
His mother's swelled belly
tells the next family story.

A boy stands in a plowed field.
His father tilling the earth,
preparing the crops.
His mother, child on hip
and swelled belly tells the family story.

A boy stands in an orchard.
His father pruning the trees,
preparing next year's growth.
His mother, child on hip and leg,
and swelled belly tells the family story.

A boy stands in a bank.
His father arguing with the man
preparing to take the land.
His mother, child on each leg,
and swelled belly tells the family story.

A man stands under a cypress tree.
His father beneath his feet,
preparing to walk away.
His mother worn and wrinkled,
and daughters surrounding,

Tell her story.



A Name in the Dark

Greg Smith

At the end of the school day, the eighth graders were in the middle school lobby playing ping-pong. Along with a foosball table and an air hockey game, the ping-pong tables were our school's attempt to alleviate the boredom of second-run bus students—students given an extra half hour to roam the middle school's lobby while half-full buses hurried to unload first-run students. At the table closest to the lobby's doors, I was playing Greg Witman, as was usual when he wanted to get in a warm-up game before taking on a more dexterous opponent. I had known Greg since I had moved to Shrewsbury, Pennsylvania, in the second grade. We had played on a number of soccer and baseball teams together, and I considered him one of my better friends. He was an amazing athlete, who seemed to master a game before playing it—a feat he extended to ping-pong, beginning the day ping-pong tables arrived in the lobby a few months before.

After our game, which Greg won easily, we talked about camping with his family in November and making the world's biggest s'more. It was Friday, October 2, 1998, and we were weeks into our rule as big, bad eighth graders. We had conquered our first awkward coed gym class in sixth grade and overcome the dreaded Egyptian Contract—a massive six-week World History project—the year before, and we were now at the middle school's helm, anticipating smooth sailing. Greg and I knew this and shared our glory through peach-faced grins. When Greg's bus pulled up outside, I told him I would see him at the high school football game later that night. He waved and headed to his bus.

When I arrived at the game a few hours later there were already droves of fans and family filling the stadium. It was homecoming weekend, and five days of school spirit events and pep rallies were culminating with the high school football game against a lowly New Oxford team. Even before the marching band took the field for its pre-game performance, clusters of students were already beginning their orbit around the field. The tradition for students, be they seven or seventeen, was to roam around and socialize, and I was a veteran of these clusters. My parents had brought me to every football game since I was in the second grade, and after six years, I thought I knew the clusters as well as anyone.

I could have never anticipated how different the homecoming game would be. There would be no Power Rangers or cars, and homecoming festivities would become overshadowed by the bevy of students amassing behind the home team's end zone. What should have been a night of celebration became a nightmarish daze. Of the three hours I was at the stadium, I remember only a few snapshots, as if the night were captured in a photo album. What happened to the time I spent running from friend to friend or staring into space with blank eyes is lost in my subconscious.



I do remember the moment I heard the first rumor that Greg had been hurt. After the band had performed its pre-game show, I was in front of our team's bleachers. I could see my friend Dan Ware running from the distance and knew as soon as I saw his face that something was wrong.

"Did you hear about Greg?" he asked.

"No, I didn't. Why?"

"I think he's hurt. He got off his bus today and someone attacked him."

The next thing I knew, I was in a swarm of eighth graders somewhere behind an end zone. It was now the second quarter, and Mr. Wright, our principal, had Mr. Witman on his cell phone, yelling to be heard over the cries and questions of a mob of thirteen-year olds. It was now certain that something serious had happened: mothers were huddled together in the stands, crying, and students with shocked and wet faces were hugging. The middle school lobby had been opened for students to take shelter and call their parents. In the crowd around the principal rumors began to spread. One said Zach had been getting into drugs and Greg threatened to tell their parents, another that a masked man had attacked Greg and fled through the back door and was on the loose. When Mr. Wright hung up his phone the rumors quieted: Greg was attacked. That was all Mr. Wright could say.

My friendship with Greg had begun four years earlier. When he and I were nine, he stayed the night at my house for the first time. We had spent the afternoon with his father and brother, Zach, at the local roller rink, where we devoured handfuls of Skittles from vending machines, emptied our pockets to play the *Streetfighter* arcade game, and pretended to be speed skaters on our \$40 Wal-mart rollerblades. Other times we imagined we were Mario Lemieux and Jaromir Jagr, two famous Pittsburgh Penguins hockey players, choreographing Stanley Cup-winning goals. We sped around the rink with the endless energy of adolescence and were crushed when we learned the skating session was ending. Our gloom would be lifted when Greg's dad bought us the first *Mighty Ducks* on VHS and let us listen to Counting Crows' *Mr. Jones*, our favorite song, on repeat until we reached my house.

Two years later, Greg and I were watching the World Cup in his family's living room. We were on the same soccer team that season and, besides being fans of the game, we thought that watching the World Cup would somehow increase our on-field chemistry. After fifteen minutes of watching the United States battle Greece, we decided to test our newly-acquired chemistry against EA Sport's

FIFA 96 video game on his brother's Sega Genesis. The game was in Zach's room, and when we entered we found Zach in the middle of a match.

We had expected Zach to not turn over the game, but instead he hit the pause button and tossed the controller to Greg. "It was a blowout anyway," he said,



“you two have fun.” He smiled, asked us if we wanted anything to drink from downstairs, and left us to the video game.

I mention this because almost as soon as I found out my friend had been murdered, I learned that his brother was a prime suspect. Zach had stayed home sick from school on Friday. He later told police he was sleeping when Greg came home, but awoke to sounds he passed off as Greg and a friend roughhousing downstairs. After he thought he heard his brother being thrown against a wall, he rushed to the lower level of the house and found Greg. He called 911. When authorities arrived, Zach was standing in the garage holding a cordless phone and wearing a sweatshirt. He had become hysterical and was screeching that he needed to call his mother. His hands, as well as the phone and the sweatshirt he was wearing, were covered in blood.

The police found Greg on the laundry room floor, stabbed over 100 times, 64 times to the neck. His head was connected to his body by strands of his spinal cord. A trail of blood ran throughout the first floor of the house from where Greg had tried to escape his attacker, and investigators unearthed a pair of bloody gardening gloves and a penknife in the backyard, near a tree. A sweep of the scene with Luminol (a chemical used to enhance the visibility of blood) revealed that no traces of Greg’s blood had left the property, and lab results indicated a blood-spray pattern on Zach’s sweatshirt meaning he was in close proximity to Greg when one of his major arteries was severed.

Greg’s funeral filled the church. Family, schoolmates, and friends filed row after row into the church’s pews. At the front of the church, before the altar, was a plain, wooden casket with a soccer ball and a picture of Greg in his soccer uniform on top. There were no songs or ceremony at the service. Greg was a Jew whose service was being held in a Lutheran Church. There were no synagogues within twenty miles of his home, and the closest couldn’t have handled the number of mourners. A pastor gave a brief introduction (mostly for the parents), two poems were read, Mr. Witman gave one of two long eulogies, and the service was over. My eyes never rose above the top of the pew. I sat like a stone with my classmates, brooding over what was happening. After the service, a long stream flowed from the pews to the front of the church, where, next to the casket, mourners could shake hands and share pained glances with the Witmans. When I reached the family, Mr. Witman smiled. “Mr. Jones,” he said, “and hockey in the driveway.”

On October 10—eight days later—fifteen-year-old Zach Witman was charged with first- and third-degree murder and voluntary and involuntary manslaughter. His case proceeded far from smoothly. Unprepared for a case of this magnitude, the policemen of this idyllic, small-town suburbia had botched procedures and protocols in their handling of the crime scene and collecting evidence.



As a result the case was delayed while the lawyers argued over which evidence could be allowed in court and which had been obtained illegally.

The matter eventually became so bogged in judicial technicalities and loopholes that by the time Zach's trial began in 2003 most people had stopped paying attention. Zach would be sentenced to a life term in prison with no chance of parole, and in the months after he would exhaust every avenue of appeal, to no success.

I consider myself an agnostic more than anything else, but I still speak to the night, in case the supernatural can understand English and cares about what I have to say. The Witman case was not pretty. I remember the next Monday, when the school was flooded with more counselors than students. I remember the empty desk in Mr. Quay's homeroom and Greg's name on the class roster that hung on the door the rest of the year. His name was the first of a list of names I repeat each night of friends I've lost.

Two years later I had a friend die in a car crash delivering pizzas, driving 85 mph on a back road until he lost control. The same year, doctors found a tumor in another friend's brain, and within a year, he would go blind and die. In my first year of college, a friend diagnosed with a terminal form of cancer died at 22, ten years later than the doctors had expected. On Christmas day in my sophomore year of college, my grandmother died. I was driving to New Jersey 366 days later when the boss of my summer job in New Mexico called me, telling me that one of my coworkers had crashed his Jeep into a tree on Christmas Eve and had died on impact.

Greg's death was the first I had experienced. It was the most traumatic, the most surprising, and the most sudden. To a generation of south-central Pennsylvanian students, the name Greg Witman evoked the same sentiment as John F. Kennedy and John Lennon evoked in our parents. Greg's death was an immediate sting, a shattering of the collective thought that life doesn't end until you are old and wrinkled. Months later that lesson would be reaffirmed with the April 1998 shootings at Columbine, in Littleton, Colorado, and again in each of the random acts of school violence that followed. Our schools were transforming from a safe haven to a battleground. But Greg's death was different. It was not a distant event broadcast on the news. It was not a predictable act of violence. It was the loss of a friend.





Rough and Tough

Sara Barshinger

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches

Hanging by a String

Maria Almanza

My daughter died at only nineteen.
I howled like a wolf as she
hung. Her body limp and heavy
like too much meat.

My son died at only twenty-seven
stabbed in the chest, a million
pricks to the heart—his and mine.

Now I'm dying this death. And
for once running towards my old friend,
fate. I'm running to my daughter
with her neck limp like a goose,
to my son with holes in his heart.

I'm running from too many deaths
that hang me like the rope
that took my daughter.



Weathered Angel

Andy Allocco

Am I what you always wanted?
The artist, the dreamer, the child.
It's not so simple.
As I hang here I know I want you,
but there's more to it.

I have my violent tendencies.
My bad dreams.
I have my addictions
and loose change.

I used to wear shadows
and solve my problems differently.
Fangs and fists and blood.

I've shoved a few into the dirt
and kicked them on their way.
I've wrecked hearts and busted lips,
made a few holes in the walls.
Got my hands dirty.

My conscience is a little dusty.
My dreams, a little tainted,
my heart's a little sour.

I just need to know:
Can I be your angel
when my wings are black?



Mystery Man

Jessica Hershner

Gelatin Silver Print, 8 x 10 inches



Silver Night Prayer

--Pantoum Allusion--

Sara Barshinger

Darkness trailing under my headlights
chases faith into the child in me.
I boast of my angels,
who play trumpets from convertibles.

Faith chased into the child in me,
I hope for guardian angel bums
who play trumpets from convertibles
and pray over white bread charity.

I hope for guardian angel bums
while crossing urban sylvan alleyways.
I pray over white bread charity,
then boast of my angels.

While crossing urban sylvan alleyways,
I remember prophecy and promise.
Then I boast of Your angels before
the darkness trailing under my headlights.

Nightwalker

Joe Aldinger

I walked into my
mother's dreams
last night.

She dreamed of
my brothers,
Matt and Jarrod.
She dreamed of
me and my dog,
Sam.

She dreamed about
the laundry. She dreamed
about the dishes. She
dreamed about her work.

Most of all,
she dreamed about
foreign lands. Places
I've never seen
and she's never been.
Images found in travel-
books, mystical destinations.

I walked into my
mother's dreams
last night and found
her wanting.



Terminal Shadow and the Dreamscape

Josh Staub

Have you a couch to sleep on O Terminal Shadow
bundle of soggy rags to rest fishbowl skull image and dreamscape of rivers
crossed on cold November nights
forded at narrow crossing under reservoirbridge shivering in silvery moonlight
dead sky gray terminal ash
 footsteps echo on macadam abutment frozen bootprints shamle along
demented railroad tracks
 unhinged no longer in use

you offer prayers when sky a shimmering image and dreamscape surreal gray of
Void
of rivers crossed cold
have you shed and arclight and mess of featherdown pillows rescued from
dumpster on First Street Parkway
 unburden yourself to shivering in silvery tremendous archangelic
moonlight Pipecleaner Mouth
do you read Ferlinghetti under gaslight oillamp flashbulb explosion at strange
hours of early morning
 when civilization dreams and demons prowl streets looking for grim
sustenance and a place to eat

I'm thinking of you O Terminal Shadow
of your lonesome plaid denim getup
 gnarled cane cowboy boots mangy beard
when your bed is dead sky below furtive grove of gray terminal ash
 animal eyes of insidious poison ivy
 footsteps echo on primal terror

have all the terrible racing cars frightened you from Eisenhower Drive O Holy
Bum
 frozen footprint morning cold dawn rattled
 raked by cold shamle along demented Darwinian shores
 embers of sibilant winter
for whom do you pray for which god do you offer your prayers
 and where are you walking to O Ragged Saint
 with foodcrumbs in gray beard ash on plaid jacket stogie protruding from
pipecleaner mouth
 below furtive animal eyes of insidious primal terror
 awake to gray morning cold dawn on Darwinian shores teeming with lungfish
and crustaceans
 picking sod from tangled hair in Plato's cave among terminal shadows
surrealistic nightmare of rivers yet to cross and Novembers yet to materialize



cold electric shock waking in tin clapboard shack on soggy corrugated by
railyard soot athousand nightmares thick
beyond thin veil of icy dawn and reason
shivering on streetcorners clutching cane in good hand rat
skull in other
foggy breath billows soft stream in front of slowpace motion in angelic
halfight of December afternoons
when sky is surreal gray of Otherworld and everyone quietly subdued
railroad tracks teeming with lungfish now unhinged
terminal shadow police narc agents rescued from dumpster surrealistic
nightmare of Druggy Drag on First Street Parkway
rivers yet to cross

have you a soul to unburden yourself to O Tremendous Archangel
when your bed is made and it's a grove of poison ivy
prostitution ring under gaslight oillamp materialize upstairs thing of flashbulb
explosion at cold electric past
strange hours of early shock waking in tin clapboard shack no saintly
morning
civilization—soggy—corrugated—smokes dreams and demons prowls streets
looking for nightmare's thick mausoleum
grim sustenance and place to eat thin veil of icy dawn

where will you relax weary muscles bone rattled raked by cold embers of
sibilant winter
now that Getty has been abandoned by yellow smoke-tarnished Indians
condemned by police narc agents of the Druggy Drag
prostitution ring upstairs a thing of the past
no saintly Rayseen aloft structure
smoking crack in corrugated mausoleum
crack pipe fall silent in grave repose

I'm thinking of you O Reason silent in grave repose
plaid denim getup
who waits for fire at Promethean dawn alone and trembling on bank of
River Styx
no bootprints shamble along demented railroad tracks
unhinged no longer in use
gnarled cane in good hand
rat of River Styx

O Tremendous Oblivion
O Shimmering Void
do you have a couch to sleep on
and where are you going?



You'll Be Me In Six Years

Chris Veghte

Purple spiked hair: check.

Spiral, slinky-esque, metal chick necklace from Hot Topic: check.

Matching bracelet: check.

T-shirt from salvation army: check.

Underneath a sports coat also from salvation army: check.

Tattered jeans, Chucks with random signatures, stick of glitter: check, check and check.

This may seem like the uniform for any of those self proclaimed disenfranchised youths standing outside of your local mall smoking cigarettes, glaring at well dressed citizens, and monopolizing the Dance Dance Revolution arcade game inside your food court. You would probably be right with this assumption. It is also though, the way I used to look.

That's right; I used to be an angry (sometimes), disgruntled (rarely), intense youth determined to set the world on fire (figuratively). From about the young age of 16 to the old age of 17½, I was the most flamboyant, in your face, hyperactive talker (along the lines of Robin Williams spit fire approach) to ever pretend they were punk. I mean I had the look down; it was a science to me. Take one part colorful spiked hair, add one part weird pants, mix in a dash of colorful shirts, throw in some girl jewelry, and voila you had the epitome of punk at the turn of the century. The only problem was I didn't like the music. I'm a cock rock loving son of a bitch, and always will be. There's just something about those power chords that make me want to raise a fist in the air, or drive my car recklessly fast down one way streets.

But, I digress. The music was not what the scene was about. It was all about style, and you would've been hard pressed to find someone that worked at their style more diligently than I did for my entire junior year of high school. It's criminal the amount of time I spent trying to find ways to show how weird and creative I was; girls did like it though, so maybe it's not too criminal. So, looking at the current youth who I walk past on my way to my part time job at the Galleria Mall, and sometimes dreadfully have to interact with when they come in looking for Ayn Rand books and other works of art they think make them better than their jock peers, I wonder if they realize that they're going to be me in not that long of a time.

I didn't have a clue then, no idea. I thought my hair would forever fight the forces of gravity and stand at military attention with the help of that insidious device known as gel. I thought I would constantly be changing its color from purple to black, to who knows what other section of our vision prism I could think of.



The jewelry from Hot Topic, that too I thought would stay with me forever, even though it pinched the beastly hair of my arms a bit too much to really be practical. And the insufferable pain that is the glorious Chuck Taylor's mainstay, I didn't think, but knew that that pain would always be a burden I carried with me for the rest of my life.

These everlasting parts of my young life lasted for two more years at the longest. The spiked hair was soon replaced by a buzz cut, and then 70s shag. The bracelet was gone at the end of junior year when I lost it, the necklace stayed around until about freshmen year of college when my then girlfriend threw it away. My Chucks, those shoes I had come to look at as a representation of who I am, well they too stuck it out onto college. Then my feet met New Balance, a much better fit to who I am now. They were comfortable, didn't stand out and just did their job: protecting my feet from the elements.

For the up and coming generation of outcasts, punks, shy hallway kids, goths, and all the DDR fanatics out there, I say enjoy it while it lasts. For its not going to, no one really wants to be that 25 year old who still sits outside of the mall smoking cigarettes, wearing Ramones T-shirts, picking fights with the security guards, scoffing at people who have the nerve to wear an American Eagle shirt and part their hair to the side, and looking down their snide, insecure noses at people who decided to grow up a little. Enjoy the died hair, enjoy the Zippo lighters, enjoy the shows on the weekends, enjoy being loud with each other out in public (loud enough to always draw the attention that you guys truly deserve), enjoy it all.

But realize this; in six years time you will look like me, you will look like what you are railing against. Khakis will no longer seem offensive, but comfortable and easy to match with. Collared shirts, they're just something nice to wear to not draw unnecessary attention to you. Also, for that coveted mall job you know you want, the manager is not going to hire you while you look like a scumbag. It's alright though, the transition is gradual. You won't realize anything until you're about 20 and it dawns on you that you're at your favorite diner, but you're wearing khakis and a purple collared shirt, and those kids smoking in the background yelling and throwing food at the wall, well they annoy you. It's okay, you made the transition just like I did. I found out it's okay that my personality is bolder than my fashion; it's the way you're supposed to be.



Neighborly Visit

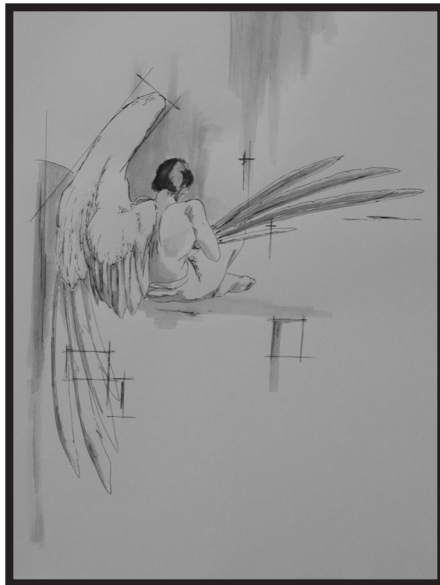
Jess Brown

Charles Cathedral's front porch pillars are large enough to be leaning posts for giants. It is a lounging area for sinners and saints waiting to confess their deepest secrets.

Large enough to be leaning posts for giants, statues of infamous emperors line the porch as they wait to relate their darkest deeds in high-backed wooden rocking chairs.

Statues of infamous emperors line the porch with stoic faces and pale, empty eyes in high-backed wooden rocking chairs. I imagine they're telling stories about a fish's size.

With stoic faces and pale, empty eyes, sinners and saints await their renewal. I imagine they're telling stories about a fish's size, rocking back and forth on the Lord's front porch.



Mending

Richard Myers

Pen and Ink, 13.5 x 10.5 inches

