Gandy Dancer

A student-led literary magazine of the State University of New York

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We publish writing and visual art by current students and alumni of the State University of New York (SUNY) campuses only.

Our Postscript section features work by SUNY alumni. We welcome nominations from faculty and students as well as direct submissions from alumni themselves. Faculty can email Rachel Hall, faculty advisor, at hall@geneseo.edu with the name and email address for the alum they wish to nominate, and alums can submit through our website. Both nominations and direct submissions should indicate which SUNY the writer attended, provide a graduation date, and the name and email of a faculty member we can contact for confirmation.

We use Submittable to manage submissions and the editorial process. Prospective authors can submit at gandydancer.submittable.com/submit. Please use your SUNY email address for your user account and all correspondence.

Gandy Dancer will accept up to three submissions from an author at a time.

FICTION: We accept submissions up to 25 pages. Stories must be double-spaced. We are unlikely to accept genre or fan-fiction, though stranger things have happened…

CREATIVE NONFICTION: We accept submissions up to 25 pages. CNF must be double-spaced.

POETRY: Three to five poems equal one submission. Poems must be submitted as a single document. Format as you would like to see them in print. Our text columns are generally 4.5 inches wide, at 11pt font.

VISUAL ART: We accept submissions of art—especially photos, drawings, and paintings—in the file formats jpeg, tiff, and png. Submitted images should have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and be at least 5 inches wide. Please include work titles and mediums in your submissions.

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GENESEO

MILNE Library

Dearest Readers,

Welcome to the thirteenth issue of *Gandy Dancer*, the only issue of this academic year that will follow our traditional scheme of submission, selection, and editing. We're excited to be in a position of authority where, finally, we can pass judgement about the value of art, and we are pleased to announce that there has been only minimal abuse of power.

The idea of a themed issues of *Gandy Dancer* has been floated before but never carried out, and was again shelved as an idea at the beginning of this semester. Selections, as always, would be made in accordance with our mission: to forge connections between the people and places of SUNY and to bring each other the news of the world. In assessing our final selections for Volume 7, however, we find that these pieces seem over and over to grapple with the human body: in itself, in transformation, in decay. In four poems, Mitchell Angelo labels the body "A hideous carnation. A marriage of carnivores." and invites us to "imagine I am / a raven: a created winged and worth / writing about." Colin Sharp O'Connor's "Searching for Eurydice" details a search in the gorges of Taughannock Park for the body of a missing friend, trading suspense for a slow, grinding inevitability. The piece's horror lies not in the discovery of a body, but in the search for it. Misty Yarnall's flash piece "100 Miles Per Hour," situates readers within the closeness and discomfort of the narrator's body, creating a sense of suffocation. In our Postscript, Caroline Beltz-Hosek writes of the pain and wonder of a body in transition, of "daughters, delicate split moon, / who do not yet know their bodies are ritual gardens / who do not yet know its clockwork catch and release." Even the title of Julia Merante's "I Grow Taller in the Summer Months" serves to remind us of the inseparable connection between our growth as people and the changing of the bodies we inhabit, a connection that can be uncomfortable and fantastic in turn.

We select visual art separately from writing, but the body manifested itself again in the pieces we chose. We received an overwhelming amount of submissions in one specific form: portraiture. Whereas the pieces we are often sent for consideration are a variety of landscapes, still lifes, and abstract and iconographic photography or constructed works, this round of submissions brought us an overwhelming amount of portraits and pictures of people, realistic and otherwise. We see that in Erika Snyder's work, in Heather Loase's, and in Robert Piascik's.

What does this all imply? What does it mean that in the autumn of 2018, the best writers and artists of SUNY were thinking about and depicting the

human body, or that the staff of *Gandy Dancer* was unconsciously compiling art about it? The political and ecological developments we see every day mean that whether the path we go down as a society and species is positive or negative, the world we exist in will not be the world of our parents and grandparents. The work in this volume deals with these feelings of uncertainty in and alienation from one's body, and as a pair we see that alienation can be used as a weapon against bodies labelled illegal, or legally forbidden from existing outside of a male/female binary.

In this context, there might be something comforting about the permanence of each of our bodies as the grounding point of our lives, something comforting in the knowledge that the bodies we own are capable of change. Next semester, we'll be looking backwards to previous issues of *Gandy Dancer* to compile an issue of the best work of the journal's first six years. For now, we'd like to think that this issue's cover image, Erika Synder's "Marita," won out among all candidates for the way that its subject's upward gaze speaks to prospect of a hopeful future: for all of us, and for *Gandy Dancer*.

Yours,

Jen Galvão & Noah Mazer
November 2018

Table of Contents

Gandy Dancer

EMILY HARGITAI

Poem Without Drugs

I don't know how to write poems without drugs,
so I ask my dog to write them for me.
Usually he complies, but today he just
huffs and says, "I don't write poems without turkey."
So I go to my father. I say, "Dad, won't
you help me?" He says, "Last time I did that
we both got a C, and besides, I don't
write poems without black tea." So I collapse
to the floor, and I beg and I pray
for God to write me a sonnet. "Just this
once let me borrow some words," I say,
"I'll cite you as a source, okay? I promise,
in the name of Christ, your ever-loving son."
But by the time He answers, the poem is done.

EMILY HARGITAI

The Professor

I brought the professor a poem.
It was naked and covered in vomit.
I said, “Sorry, professor. I wrote it with food poisoning.”

He said, “Bile bleaches words. The wino cries
expired milk. Please put your clothes back on
and read the damn thing.”

I said, “Sorry. I wrote about childhood love
in the woods. And a ferret named Waffle.”

He said, “No you didn’t. You stuffed a dead rat
and some leaves in a squeezable bottle.”

I said, “Sorry,” and hammered my hand
to the desk with a pen. It really hurt.

He said, “Here, have a snack,” and passed me a peach.
Then he mopped up my blood with his shirt.

MEG FELLOWS

In Defense of Body Hair

Pulling at the hair on her arms, she, my young mother, pictures an ape, the usually dark-haired animal that screams of aggression and primal male dominance. The hair on her body is dark, and she is resentful of her father's thick brown hair that looks almost identical to hers. She wishes to be blond, to be light like her mother. She wishes to be more of a feminine presence in her own body.

Grabbing the razor, she locks the bathroom door behind her. The white shaving cream makes a loud *swooooosshhh* sound as she spreads it across her arms, hiding the nest of hair that condemned her to long-sleeved shirts in the middle of July. She examines the blade, touches it with her fingertips to feel the sharpness of her decision. She scrapes a line across her forearm, watching the shaving cream dissipate into her pores. The smooth nakedness that is left over spreads a smile across her face. She continues to pull hair from her skin, planning to shave every portion of herself that feels unnatural, unconventional. She uses most of the shaving cream can, hiding it at the bottom of the recycling bin so her mother won't find out that she's grown up, more of a woman than she was an hour ago.

Walking into my mother's room, I can smell the chemicals permeating the air. She's sitting upright in her bed, her arms covered in a white globbed substance that looks sticky and thick. Usually she keeps the door closed this close to my bedtime, but tonight she is open, welcoming. At eleven years old, this

smell is familiar to me. At least twice a month, my mother shuts her door, and the upstairs of our small house suddenly smells like a sterile doctor's office.

"Mom, what is that stuff?" I ask, stepping closer to examine her arms. In the light, I can see a line of white across her upper lip, too.

"Meg, don't ever shave your arms. The hair only grows back darker." She says this carefully so as to not disturb her upper lip.

She tells me the story of shaving her arms as a young girl, hoping to get rid of any trace of unattractive body hair. She tells me she had the prettiest arms for about three days, then all of the hair grew back in thicker, darker than before. I reach for the box sitting on her bedside table, reading the word *bleach* next to a woman caressing tanned, toned legs with a wide smile on her face.

"I want you to come to me when you feel like you need to shave, okay? I need to teach you how to properly use a razor so you don't hurt yourself."

I stare at her, trying to find any semblance of my mother; in this moment, she looks like a cartoon version of her usually-put-together self. This kind of vulnerability is new, somewhat uncomfortable for me.

"Yeah, Mom, I will."

My mother lives in cinched waists and high-heeled boots. Her color-coded closet reflects the rigidness of her style and stylistic means. Black and navy blue never clash, and she only wears jeans on Fridays. Her curling iron has lived in the same spot on her dresser top since I was born, right next to her boxes of silver jewelry and oddly shaped perfume bottles. She always wears pantyhose in the winter, and makes sure her body is smooth at all costs.

The first time I shave, I don't tell my mother. I drag a semi-damp razor across virgin pores, ripping up follicles and the first layer of my skin. I see the blood accumulating in thick dark lines on my shins and rush to the kitchen for a paper towel. I hear the sound of my mother's heels against the hard wood as I try to mop up blood from the kitchen floor. We see each other; then she sees the mess that is my lower half.

"What in God's name are you doing?" she asks, dropping her leather purse to the floor. She rushes me back to the bathroom, bloody paper towel in hand. She sees the razor balanced on the bathroom sink, and lets out a heavy sigh.

"Why didn't you wait until I got home to do this?" she asks, pulling rubbing alcohol from the cabinet above our heads.

The feeling of rubbing alcohol on open wounds felt less uncomfortable than the conversation we had with the bathroom door closed. My mother asks me why I didn't want her involved with my personal life, why I wanted to start shaving, if I was thinking about sex, and if that's why I wanted my body to be naked. I couldn't tell her that I didn't want to grow up with my mother there.

"I just thought I could do it on my own," I tell her, watching the razor burn form on my legs before my eyes. Everything burned: the guilt, the skin, my body against the cold bathroom floor. My mother took the razor and showed me how to shave properly. She said even strokes, don't dig in too deep, and always use shaving cream or soap. She taught me to shave all the way up the leg, to never be lazy when it comes to hair management.

"No man wants to see the hair that you missed," she says, standing up and adjusting her long black skirt. I remember studying her in that moment; the way she looked at herself in the mirror, smacking her lipsticked mouth together as she left the room. I put Band-Aids on my shins and knees, stood up, and examined myself, too. I was a mess in comparison.

My mother and I have grown into separate but similar women. We pour red wine at 5:00 p.m. and talk about the local news cycle, moving through nights in a haze of anxiety about the next day ahead. We wear high-heeled boots together and walk in a hurried synchronicity that can move the wind. We are constantly trying to reinvent ourselves out of fear of becoming stagnant, dull. We say we're going to see each other more, but we hardly ever do. Like my mother, I wear cinched waists and keep silver jewelry in boxes.

I stopped shaving my body a year ago. My hair has grown into braids that keep me warm and liberated. My razors disintegrated into rust in my shower, and my hair grew in darker than ever. I stopped believing in the notion that to be feminine is to live within a body that needs to be trimmed and toned, no trace of any organic growth on the body—inside or out.

"Are you going out like that?" my mother asked me the last time I was home. Looking at myself in the mirror, I noticed nothing wrong with my appearance.

"What, is it the skirt?" I asked, clutching the fabric that hugged my thighs in the way my mother told me it should.

She walked into the bathroom and grabbed my wrist. Tugging my arm to the sky, she looked at my armpit hair and stared back at me in the mirror. I felt my face flush as I told her that I would not be shaving just to go out in public.

"You're going to give your grandmother a heart attack the next time you see her if you're not wearing sleeves," she says, checking her makeup while she has the mirror at her disposal.

I don't know how to tell my mother that accepting body hair is a freedom I wish she could experience. Instead of feeling like being a woman is a chore,

my choice to celebrate my body negates all my mother's teachings of the prim and proper.

In this moment, I wonder if she is embarrassed by me, if I have become the things that she feared I would: unclean, unladylike, unprofessional. I wonder who she truly wants me to be, who she hopes I will grow up to be. I wonder if I am living up to her expectations as a woman and a daughter. I look at her and search for an essence of myself in her face. I have her blue eyes, her full lips, her smile lines. Other than those physical attributes, I am mostly my own.

I grab her hand, her long fingernails grazing my palm. I want her to know that I am okay with who I am, even if she is not.

"I'll be home later, Mom. Keep the light on for me."

September 26, 1687 (linoleum ink print), Brian Menia

DANIELLE GONZALEZ

The Muck Sisters

The muck sisters of Wiles Road are mighty fierce. Or so they say. They being the kids we see at school who cling to clean and have a lot to say about those like us who live in the muck. Who think we're odd 'cause we follow our own way. It's not our fault we know how things are in the wild, that we know how to survive. We see the night howlers and many-eyed monsters that come out of the dark. Sitting up straight and using your fork isn't gonna save you. You can't use fancy language with a beast. Kinda scary, but Mama has a shotgun and we all have the family baseball bat. Ours has some nails sticking out of it, makes it real scary. It can't hit a baseball anymore unless you wanna hear a pop. They also say you can spot us playing in the mud and after that we bathe in the swamp water nearest to the mangroves. They're not wrong, the oldest muck sister going extra times too, often under the light of the moon. Normally we'd be begging her to take us with her but right now all we're concerned with is why she been so clean lately. This question drained the fun out of July.

These last couple of days all of us are pretty bored. My youngest sissy, Lily, marches around our trailer not knowing how to contain herself. Her reddish hair is unkempt and wild, and her bangs stick to her forehead from the July heat. When we play in the muck you can barely tell the dirt apart from her freckles. Her arms lay all jumbled at her sides. She's twelve now and when summer ends she's gotta go to school. No more gym wrestling or mud-wrangling at recess; she's gonna have to sit still for a while in middle school. I bet she's gonna hate it. Today she been asking me all about the hallways. Our elementary school is set up in a clump of trailers, similar to ours, with a class in each one. Middle school's when you get the buildings. Since I'm fourteen

now, I'll show her all the ropes. I tell her that school people are different from us; their clothes don't have wrinkles and they don't eat free lunches at the school either. There's some things we gotta do to avoid getting gawked at, or worse, pitied. That's what I tell her.

Don't get lost, our oldest sister Tilly says, laughing. Tilly's seventeen and looks for a different type of mischief. She's still a muck sister though, no matter how hard she tries to hide it. Even she's stuck in the trailer. Right now she's glued to her hand mirror fixing up her hair, waiting for her boyfriend. Trevor don't get out of work until late. He pumps gas down by the two-way intersection of 34 and 495 that's about a twenty minute drive away. Twenty minutes before the dirt road goes into pavement and we're met with the highway. Tilly gets real moody when she waits, starts telling us she can't wait to get out. She says she got proof that lots of people wanna get out of the trailer park too, to the nicer apartments where the paved roads are, far from the swamp.

There's fewer muck families living in our town than there used to be; most of us live in one clump, in the Sunny Grove trailer park. But the shrinking numbers don't scare me. Mama tells us stories of the ones who lived deep in the Florida swamplands. Said they even ate wild boars. She smiles when she tells us this. Mama's old but she's still as wild as us. Her senses are still sharp, too. She raises chickens outside of the trailer for eggs and meat, not afraid that their clucks could attract a wild beast. That's our Mama, but Tilly never seems impressed; she doesn't want to be anything like her or us. She wants to be like Trevor, nice and cushy. Now with Trevor she's gone almost all the time. He takes her from us, I swear. Worst part is he's a secret; Mama don't know a thing.

Ever since Tilly's been working she's been like this. It started with her complaining about work she's been doing around the yard. Now she's waitressing at that rundown Gator Grill Diner. The only one Mama usually brings us to, since it's the closest one to home. Most days Tilly walks there and back. Only a ten minute walk! Mama says, though sometimes the way Tilly huffs and puffs makes it seem like an hour away. That's another thing with Trevor, he got a car. Makes her eyes all glowy like she's real hot stuff dating some guy outside the Sunny Grove trailer park. Trevor lives in one of those New Palm apartments with his brother, even has cable, Tilly tells us. Lily and I watch her as she jams lipstick on her lips, slaps it on thick.

Nice Crayola, I say.

Shut it, Milly, Tilly hisses with her mouth still closed.

Just 'cause he don't wear muck makes her wanna dress up. Now Tilly smells like vanilla.

Quiet! Mama's voice roars through the trailer. Come get! she says. We get out and stretch our necks to where Mama is, behind the trailer. Close to the woods, holding a shotgun in her mighty hands.

What's wrong? I ask, scratching my head. Mama puts a thick finger to her lips. Then I hear it, some rustling the leaves. Some squealing too. Mama gets her shotgun ready, she waits. I hold my breath. She cranes her ear further down into the forest. We wait for the beast. My mind goes wild, in my head I see a wild boar, then a crocodile, a giant cockroach, no, two giant cockroaches—

Just a pig, she snorts. Lily, get that crate! Mama hands me the gun to put back and rolls up her sleeves, Mama's ready to tussle. We sprint as fast as we can to get the crate and run back into the trees cheering. There's a dart of movement in the leaves. We see its little pink legs scuffle, seeking cover, but Mama's already pounced. I swear if we lived in the mountains Mama would be wrestling bears. Makes me wonder how bear meat tastes.

Mama got the pig good. Wrestled it to the ground. It tried screeching real loud for help but there ain't no other pigs around. Sorry piggy, just Mama, Lily and me and we're all drooling. Now Mama's got the pig between her legs. She had to pin that piece of pork real good before getting it in the crate.

We're gonna have a real feast soon! Mama bellows. Mama hacks spit and rubs her hands.

We're getting meat real soon, real meat, wild meat. We just have to wait until it gets a little bigger, Mama says, gotta fatten her up. Until then we nash on the corn and fish sticks. Globs of the stuff dries on our faces, which we scrape off with our fingernails, real good. You can't scratch too hard. Then you bleed. Got to just get right under the corn and peel it off. 'Course you could also eat neat, but what's the fun in that? When I see corn, I go at it. I know that once school starts I can no longer eat as I please, Lily's gonna learn that lesson too.

Mama takes the crate the pig's in and drags it to the chicken pen. We hang on the pen's sides watching as Mama kicks the crate over, sending the pig sprawling out. The chickens go wild and cluck this way and that. Mama looks to the empty feed bin, all dusty in the corner of the pen.

Someone's got to feed this thing, she says. And it ain't gonna be me.

Me neither, I got things to do, Tilly says. Lily and I almost forgot that she's there. She's filing her nails now, they come to little red arches. They don't even have dirt on them. Mama looks her straight in the eye and Tilly returns the stare. Makes me wanna yell traitor. But what good is that going to do? Besides Lily's looking at me, wants to know what comes next. Come on, I say. With sharp shoulders Tilly follows us out to the pen with her shoulders down.

Lily and I break the job in half; Tilly can't contribute much with her arms crossed. We take out a quarter and flip it. I call Washington, I say. My little sissy huffs but accepts; she is younger after all. We flip it into the sky. Washington stares at us from the ground.

Darn. I grunt. Lily smiles, revealing a corn chunk wedged between her front teeth. I take the bag of chicken feed from the shed. It's heavy, almost as heavy as Lily. I drag that thing into the pen. The pig's still squealing away, much louder than even the baby chicks. I open the top and spray it into the bin. Most of it makes the feed pen, some spills over the side like rain. The pig's looking at me. Now eat, I say. She just keeps on staring. Fine then, I huff. I pick up the feed bag and drag it away again, all sweaty. I smell all grainy now. When I come back Tilly's already in the trailer, now that Mama's away. She wouldn't've been much help, I say to Lily, might've broken a nail. Lily shrugs, her eyes now on the pen.

Recently it's been Lily's turn to feed the pig. The coin keeps landing on tails, except I don't think she minds it, she might even like it. Every day she wades out there a little longer. Just her and that pig. Throw it, Tilly and I say. She can't hear past the oinks. If I look out the window I still see her out there, petting that pig now. She comes in smelling like pig. Thinking about the pig makes me hungry. I just wanna have a piece. It's a shame you gotta kill the whole thing before you can have just a tiny bite. The pig keeps oinking. Lily says it's a girl and her name is Betsy.

We keep feeding it chicken feed. Seems to do the job. I see that Lily brought out a water bucket. I couldn't tell whether it's fresh water or not. Betsy the pig seems to like it, she been slurping it up. I bring the chicken feed down. She plops her chin up, her feet scuffle toward me. I could almost swear she's been tamed. Betsy oinks once before eating the whole darn thing in front of me. No manners. I grin. Mama don't go out and feed her, says that's our job. Says we got to learn our way around animals. She doesn't think collecting eggs is enough, she wants us to see how our dinner eats. As our dinner keeps slurping at the water, I can't help but snort.

My older sis is out with Trevor again. It's been two weeks and Betsy's been fattening up nicely. Lily still takes long with the pig though. She comes in talking about Betsy, making her sound real high and mighty. She even begs me to give her my turns, she just wants to get out of her house chores. I shake my head. It's my turn and besides, Betsy would know I skipped. When I walk in the pen you can tell Betsy knows me. She points her snout right in my face. Here you go, little fella. Betsy's wild whiskers tickle up against the palm of my hand real funny like. It's getting hard now to pour out the feed. She moves too fast, and then she's on me snorting and wheezing. She keeps going for my hand. Oink Oink. Pig's real funny, I can't help but chuckle.

I'm washing my face when Tilly comes back home. She slams the door shut since it's only evening and there's no sense in sneaking. At this hour, Mama's out getting dinner ready. The way Tilly smells makes me think she ate already.

Hey, Milly, she says and hangs up her purse. She makes sure it's not tangled with anything. I know she's heading out again tonight. I look at the denim skirt she has on. She looks kinda nice. I sniff the air, she's got on that vanilla perfume again. But that's not all, then she goes and hands me her french fries she got from Wendy's, they're cold but salty and I shove them in my mouth quick.

How's Trevor? I ask between globs. Tilly beams.

Real nice, she says, he treated. My munching slows and she can see I'm impressed. She pulls out her pinky. The left one. Says I better not let this spoil my appetite. I take out my pinky and wrap it around hers; it's a deal.

At dinner Tilly doesn't say a thing. Mama gives us corn, no fishsticks. Tilly takes some corn, plays around with most of it, picking it out kernel by kernel. I can tell Mama's watching. She only grunts once. Lily and I nash most of it, just a bit left of the tip. I'm grateful for the fries, or I might even eat the cob. Tilly looks from Lily to me and snorts. Says we look like animals. We oink back. We spend the rest of the evening in the trailer. We press our faces to the trailer's windows facing the chicken pen. We try oinking to get a rise out of Betsy, though she knows it's us and oinks back anyway. Y'all are getting soft for that, pig, Tilly says from her bed. I could say a lot of things, like how she's gone soft for Trevor. We all know it. Even Betsy.

Lily's little pointer finger traces some lines in the glass. It'd be funner out there, Lily says. It'd be funner with Bets. It would. I wink. I see Lily's eyes light up and it makes me excited. We could play with Bets all night even, Lily says, her voice rising. We can go—

No. I shush her. We can play with Betsy as long as we're the only ones awake, I whisper. Lily eyes Tilly who is in bed flipping through a clothing catalog. She sees us staring and lets out the fakest yawn I've ever seen. We all know she's going to be waiting up for Trevor, like I said before, she's gone soft for him. But we're gonna out-wait her.

We see the orangey sky fade into indigo and Mama goes to bed. We almost do too. But we stay up, keeping an eye on our boots. We wait until late into the night when Tilly disappears. Don't want her to rat, can't even let her know that we're up. She'd never leave if we were awake. We cover our faces with a blanket, our clothes still on from before. In the dark she can't see our smiling faces in the midst of Mama's snores.

We hear some weight on the floor boards, and then a slight creak as light shines through the our blankets real quick then disappears. We hear an engine

grunt and gravel move. Then silence. We wait a bit before peeling the covers off.

She's gone! Lily says. We run to the window and pull the curtains back. We can see Trevor's rusted pick-up truck jumble out the swamp until it's swallowed up by some trees. Our boots get yanked back on. Lily and I slip through the muck and the dark walking in the darn tall grass. There's no killers out here, right? Lily asks.

Only us, I say, and the wild. We get to the pig pen and see that all of the chickens are heaped in one corner asleep but Betsy's still up and snorting. Wish you'd been out here earlier, she seems to say. Lily pouts playfully, crossing her arms. Betsy races up to the pen, pressing her snout to the wire. I open up the latch and we go in. We all play tag until Lily explodes in a yawn. Darn it, she says. She plants a wet kiss on Betsy's ear. Our trailer's lights are still off which means our sneaking has been a success. When we return home Tilly's bed is still empty. Mama won't know and Tilly'll be back again in the morning.

Ever since then Lily and I have been sneaking back to take a peek at Betsy whenever we can, which is hard since we don't know exactly when Tilly will be sneaking out. We have to lie in bed and wait an hour for the growl of Trevor's truck. It's been about a month of this sneaking and I can't lie, I like it. Ever since then Trevor's been getting Tilly some gifts, small things like charms that can be worn under clothing like a pinky ring that you can only see when she eats. Anything she can hide she wears. Often I catch Tilly staring at me, staring at Lily. She doesn't know that I found the "For Hire" section of the newspaper crinkled under her bed all circled up, and none of the jobs are around our trailer. It was buried in the little notes Trevor writes to her. Makes me want to gag, but me and Lily find them funny from time to time. When I was alone I took out the newspaper and smoothed out the crinkles. SECRETARY FOR HIRE is circled and underlined. The date of the interview's already passed, August 3rd, 1987. Maybe that was when Tilly was at work? Did she miss it? I hoped so. I took the paper and stashed it in my pants pocket, hoping that she wouldn't get any more ideas, that she'd stay here forever, with Lily and me.

Mama keeps looking at Betsy. Any day now, she says to us. Mama starts buying things. She got onions, peppers, next thing I know I see long fresh carrots. Mama's going to be cooking up a stew. A Betsy stew. Poor Bets, she's fattened up nice since we got her. She's still silly though, shouldn't be gaining all that weight, just makes her look more delicious. When Mama calls Betsy Pork Chop I get hungry half the time. Other times I just feed the gal and I can't think of her feeding me.

Lily and I hear bangs. Copper bangs. Pots and pans. You know what that means, Mama found out about Trevor. I gulp wanting to hide, but Lily's with me so I just say it's gonna be okay.

I work, too! Tilly screams from the trailer. I stay up, too! I can hear that her throat is sore. I can also hear Mama cussing.

You ain't gonna be seeing no smart mouth priss! Mama roars. Not in my house! Mama storms out of the trailer. Huffs and puffs out. That's when I see it, paper is crumpled in her fist, one of Trevor's notes. Mama spits at the ground and marches into her truck. I can hear Tilly howl before stepping outside. We watch Mama and then we watch Tilly. I can't tell whose face is redder. Makes me want to hug Lily close. Instead we both slip back further. I can see that they're both tired. I want to yell at them both to stop it and say sorry, but then I'd be looking for another home too.

Mama snorts. She sees that we're watching. It doesn't hold Mama back. Ain't putting up with that priss no more, she says to us. That's bull, she says, shaking her head. Tilly retreats in the trailer and Mama goes marching again, this time to the car, drives off, who knows where. I repeat what I've just told Lily, that everything's gonna be okay.

Next day Tilly's gone. Dead gone. All her clothes are gone, even her lipstick she crammed in a trash bag somewhere. When Mama's at work, only Lily and I can hear the screaming silence inside the trailer. We spend most days with Betsy now, holding her closer than ever before. Never leave us, Bets! Lily cries.

When Mama comes back home we crowd around her like animals. Mama starts sharpening her knives, real sharp. I take Lily aside and whisper through a hot breath. Those are her carving knives. She nods. We look at the ax that's been taken from the shed. It's a hacker, that's for sure. Gonna be a clean cut. Sissy and I go to pet Betsy. We call her Bets sometimes. She doesn't oink too loud anymore. She's quiet like she knows what's coming. That she's gonna get hacked. Makes me sad. I want to be with Betsy forever. Lily starts to sniffle. Poor Lily's already getting sad. It's okay, I say again. We can play with Bets again tonight. She's not gone yet.

It's nighttime and Lily and I run to Bets again since we don't know if we're going to see her tomorrow. We splash in the water tubs lined up by the pen. Betsy cheers and slowly trots out to see us. She missed us after all. She's huffing all heavy now, sassy that we made her get some exercise. I'm going to miss her, darn it. I pout. Lily looks at me. We look at our fourth sister, Betsy. Can't explain it much but she been looking kinda tired lately. Even as we play with her, Betsy doesn't even want to get mud on her face. She lifts that hairy chin

of hers up every time she flops around. It's like this place has started eating at her or something.

You know it ain't right, Milly. She's a muck sister, too. Before you know it, Lily is already at the gate, lifting that rusty old latch up from the fence. She jumps up on the rickety thing and leans back swinging it open. I stare in shock but my body doesn't disagree, even if this is gonna get us spanked.

Now we're both in front of the open pen. We stare at Betsy and she stares back. Nothing to hear but the howlers and crickets. Come on, get! I say. Betsy trots out real self-assured, she wastes no time breaking free, at a speed that doesn't match her fat belly, she sprints. Betsy, Betsy, we echo. Go, Bets, go! we holler. We run with her past the pens, past the trailers, into the woods. Faster and faster, our muddied boots keep up. She bolts through the muck, away from Mama's reach and we swear she's laughing. Betsy goes real quick right into the thicket. Lily and I stand back, watching her get smaller and smaller, till she disappears into the darkness. We can't help jumping up and down in excitement. She's a fast one! We grin. The night sky almost swallows us whole. Makes us wild. Betsy hollers in the night.

PARKER REID

Reciprocal Hurt

Your mother holds herself,
fingers grip
her skin like clay
cracks in the sun,
crumbles
if you let it
go.
Crimson beads run the length of
your body shivers,
ping
pong
down
baby hair
lined legs pinned
beneath the dash of your
gender in transition:
a car
crash between a Prius
and a semi where you
aren't sure if you are
the dented metal frame or
the cause of
the weights that fill
your chest that heaves,
your lungs not sure
who needs the oxygen.

Watercourse (photography), Lucas Cook

GRACE GILBERT

on waking at 3 a.m.

in this dreadful pattern of insomnia
        & wondering if i could love you,
each unflinching minute
        hums thick like a pulse—
a torrent of frantic wings beating
        against the soundless expanse
of an unremarkable bedroom; somewhere,
        where my mind houses our sleeping bodies
and little else. i envision our love
        as that small breath
i always draw at the start of a dream,
        sharp and secretive,
a tiresomely private mention
        of a world you'll never visit.
there is a cruel diligence
        to keeping you here,
listless and expectant,
        when my love has eroded to nothing
but some unearthed relic
        of need.

GRACE GILBERT

First visit, during the county fair

after Anne Sexton

it is June.
        i am tired
of being strong.
        i place wet wild daisies
on stone, a weary offering.
        some petals obstruct your name.
of all the sad new facts here,
        i would much rather admit
the daisies.
        it is beginning to rain,
a slow one, tapping on the canopy above
        before it begins to dimple
this bleak neighborhood,
        & i lie in the dirt next to you
one last time,
        allowing it.
i know the injury
        of acknowledging death
in back of every i love you—
        accepting what falls before it does,
but goodbye
        is always hovering like this,
a red balloon tied
            to a wrist.

ALAINA MAGGIO

Blood Runs Cold

24 Saltaire Road

You will move from your closet-sized room on 44 Great River Drive down the street to 24 Saltaire Road. A yellow house with chipped paint and a flag pole out front. You'll play in the garage because you've never had one of your own before, play with the button that opens the door until it breaks and is never fixed. You will play in the backyard and find a forgotten racist jockey statue with a black face in the bushes, and cry until your dad promises to get rid of it, so it won't haunt you in your sleep. Swim in the pool that's half in the ground and half not. The whole thing is surrounded by deck. Your mother will say they want to put in sliding glass doors from the master bedroom that leads there. You will see it in your head and it is beautiful. The doors are never installed, and the deck has since been ripped from the backyard. All that's left is uneven grass and a hole where the pool had been.

You will fall asleep in a room that shares a wall with the bathroom where you hear everything that happens. Your dad talking loudly on the phone, your brother singing in the shower, and sometimes your mom crying. There's mildew growing on the ceiling. The fan in the bathroom stopped working one day and was never fixed. Brown spots bloom above the shower. The stone tiles by the sink started to crumble, and all that's left are the wooden planks that lead to the damp basement. You will hear, "Why can't you fix anything?" echoing from the bathroom, and you will wrap your pillow around your ears.

You will forget the exact moment your mother started sleeping in the living room and your dad in the den. You will watch the master bedroom turn into a graveyard—the stone, a wedding picture above the bed. You will wish the garage wasn't full of discarded trash and nests of raccoons now, because you think that might be the only place you won't hear them.

You will go away to college and make your own home. Lights along the wall, people who actually smile. You try not to imagine how the conversations go at dinner back on 24 Saltaire Road.

Eyes of the Hurricane

Your mother will take her car and your father will take his work van. They drive away, leaving the echo of screaming and something broken in the walls of your home. Your brother will be sitting at the kitchen, his head hung low. You'll creep down the hallway, afraid another harsh insult will be thrown and bounced off the wall toward you. You'll find the sparse remains of what was supposed to be dinner and hear either yours or your brother's stomach growl. You will offer to make grilled cheese for the both of you, because that's all you know how to make. Your parents have done this before so you know how this goes. You sit across from him, eating in silence.

"If I'm ever that unhappy, I want you to kill me, Frankie."

He'll look up for the first time and nod. "Ditto."

They'll both come back at their respective times and pretend like nothing happened. The house is quiet, everyone in their designated corner. You'll wonder if it's normal for families to hate each other this much. You and your brother never talk about this again.

Unfiltered

You'll grow up giving your mom a side-eye every time she lights one and crying and begging for your grandma to stop smoking so she won't die. Your grandma will cry back that she's sorry. She throws her pack in the shiny garbage can in her kitchen, but you're sure she still sneaks off to the garage and smokes one of your grandfather's. You'll watch your other grandmother undergo open-heart surgery and quit cold turkey after sixty years. She doesn't even have the urge, she says.

While your mother goes to change the laundry, you'll watch the ashtray with her lit cigarette and wonder what would happen if you put your lips to it. You wonder what keeps your mother coming back. You'll creep up to the smoke and cough yourself nearly to death before you were even close to the filter. You run back to your room when you hear your mother's steps.

You'll learn your mom seems to flick the cigarette out of her long pack mostly after she and your father yell at each other, but also after dinner, and also after pulling away from the driveway and also while watching TV and also after her first cigarette.

You'll have a rough day at school, and you'll think walking down to the beach will help, but you think it might not be enough, so you look at the

cigarette pack on the counter. Your mother is in the shower. You knew it would happen anyway.

So, you'll walk down to Woodhull Beach holding the cigarette in the pocket of your sweatshirt making sure it wouldn't break. You're afraid that you'll be seen if you stand close to the road so you walk down the beach about half a mile and then you take the Marlboro Light 100 out of your pocket along with the blue lighter you keep in your room for candles.

You realize you've seen your mom light a cigarette twenty times a day but you still don't know how to do it yourself. You'll hold it over your lap and light it. When you pull it up to your lips, the world stops. It tastes horrible, and you're not entirely sure you're doing it right. You're about to take out your phone to Google "How to smoke a cigarette" but you're on a beach, and there is no service for stupid questions like that. You continue putting it up to your face and breathing in nothing—looking at the waves crashing against the rocks—pretending you are smoking a cigarette.

Today you'll wake up, roll out of bed, grab a sweater and not even bother with shoes. You'll light the Marlboro Light before you're barely out the door. Sit on the bench and count your money in your head because smoking isn't cheap, and you only have half a pack left. You'll take ten showers before you see your dad, even though he knows and the two of you pretend the other doesn't. When you're home, you'll wait for your dad to fall asleep, and you creep into the living room and light up with your mom. You talk about boys that have hurt you, though hers never changes. She'll smile sadly, take a drag and say, "Don't make the same mistakes I did."

Sluggo

Sluggo, 1986 Miller Place High School graduate, lost over a hundred pounds in a summer. Big rimmed glasses, bigger hair. You didn't know her. Somebody told you once she washed down her acid tabs with straight vodka. She got an abortion at nineteen, married the man two years later. She smoked pot under the bleachers during football practice, smoked Parliaments. You heard once she and her friends rented a school bus filled with five kegs on it to go see Iron Maiden. She never ate, that's how she lost it all.

Sluggo, beautiful reckless, Sluggo.

She spends her nights sleeping on a couch on Saltaire Road. Answers to a different name. She never told you why they called her Sluggo, just told you not to repeat the word.

"Don't make my mistakes," she tells you.

"Marrying your father was a mistake," she says.

You try to not think that you were part of that mistake but you do.

You always do.

Financial Aid

You were a junior in high school. The word on everybody's lips was *college.* You had never thought about it before. Your mother went to trade school to become a hairdresser, and your father didn't even finish high school. There was nobody in your family that you knew of who went away to college. You remember the day your guidance counselor called you into the office and explained what a safe school was and what a reach school was. You remember the day like bee stings on your fingertips.

You sat down with your mom at the kitchen table, the light overhead broken. She was making dinner and looked a little annoyed when you asked for a moment of her time. You swallowed the lump in your throat, and when it wouldn't stay down you hammered it.

"How much money do you guys have saved for me for college?"

"We don't have any saved up." She didn't hesitate. She gives you whiplash when she stands up to stir the pot with Hamburger Helper in it. Your heart breaks, it falls, it burns. You look at your mother's back and decide not to cry.

"How can I go away to school?"

"There's loans for that kind of thing."

You nod your head and stand up. You walk yourself down the hallway to your room to look at the folders your guidance counselor gave you earlier that day. You think about college. Your reach school was NYU. It was a reach because standing on your tippy toes with a yard stick, you couldn't even graze the tuition price.

Thanksgiving

Your father owned a sprinkler company that consisted of himself and his cousin Guy (when he was free). Your family got by during the summers if your dad was healthy enough to work, which he nearly never was. The winters, though, were terrible. No one wanted sprinklers in the winter. Almost every month, your electric was threatened to be turned off. You ate the cheapest dinners. You reused the same winter jackets until impossible. You didn't have health insurance most of the time. You couldn't remember the last time you went to the dentist. The Ford dealership man would come to your house at four in the morning to repossess the car that your mother drove because the lease was overdue. You'd wake up at ten in the morning and see your mom in the same spot she'd been when the man left with the car. On the couch, a cigarette in her hand, crying, the same word repeated under her breath: *embarrassment*.

One year, on the day before Thanksgiving, you received a different knock on your door. Two baskets full of all the fixings for a large meal. Cranberry sauce, vegetables, dinner rolls, ingredients for stuffing, sweet potatoes, and a

large frozen turkey. At the bottom of the baskets were two $50 gift cards for the local grocery store. Your dad sifted through the baskets, happy to receive the anonymous gift. Winter was looming, and he'd been out of work already. You turned to see your mother, frowning, a cigarette in her hand.

"What's the matter? Not good enough for you?" your dad said, looking for a fight.

"This is an embarrassment." She inhaled her cigarette quickly and slammed the can of pumpkin pie filling she'd been holding onto the table. "We're not some destination for a food drive. We're not a charity case."

Your dad choked on the smoke that was barely by his face and began to leave the room.

"Yes, we are," he said.

Your mother will cry, but come the next morning, she'll roast the turkey that was given to her. She'll make the stuffing, bake the dinner rolls, and she will smile while placing the food on the table for your family. She doesn't say anything during dinner.

Water Colors

It began happening at night, the feeling of water filling around your bed, slowly inching its way toward you as you tried to sleep, leaking its way through the sheets like a newly dug canal. It leads to your nose and mouth, stops your breath. You were drowning, but you didn't care enough to plug the hole. You were drowning; you let it happen.

You'd wake up, wipe the water off your skin. You could pretend like it didn't happen, but your fingers stayed pruny, a gentle reminder of what was to come the next time you tried to sleep.

One morning you woke up with your head in a fish bowl. The entire day, you couldn't breathe. The water was thick and gray and made everything else look that way too. You walked through the day with a kaleidoscope view of what it felt like to be dead. You woke up like this every morning. Instead of reaching for a towel, you laid back down and slept for ten hours, ten days, ten years.

Your mother called these days a waste, but she feels it too. She wastes days too. She sits on her couch up to her neck in water. She hasn't breathed in twenty-six years. You don't know why it took you so long to see it. She ate to punish herself, and then looked in the mirror and cried.

"It's either I eat this Moon Pie or I slit my wrists."

You shiver.

It wasn't until you were in college that she even used the word.

"Sitting around and sleeping only makes the depression worse, you're just making it worse." She sat on the couch then, where she had been all day, her

hair in a messy knot on the top of her head, bags under her eyes crafted perfectly, and a cigarette hanging from her hand. A coloring book is on her lap.

That's what she did to help herself. Color. It started last Christmas when you bought her an adult coloring book. You look at the end table next to the ripped couch she lived on and counted her twenty-five coloring books, four boxes of colored pencils, and two electric sharpeners. She colored to pass the time, the bad moments.

You wonder if that'd work for your bad moments, if you could color in the gray imprint left by the thick water that suffocates you. Could you color in yourself? Scrub the pencils hard on your skin until you could bleed out color.

Burnout

Your brother throws a magnet out of the school bus window because somebody told him to. He cracks the windshield of a minivan and is sued for $150. Your brother is bored and decides to microwave a bowl of a cut-up bar of Irish Spring, which makes the kitchen smell like burnt cleanliness for two months. Your brother shoots out the back door with his BB gun. Your brother totals his car. Your brother flunks out of community college. Your brother plays with the dog until she cries. Your brother vacuums up his dead fish. Your brother was always the screw up.

You talk to him only at holidays and funerals and you get along fine—great, actually. It's getting him out of his room that's the hard part. He nests in the dark bedroom with his current girlfriend. You don't know what happens in there.

When you were younger you used to wait until he had left the house, crack open the door he always kept shut and take a look around. You found a box of condoms, a pack of Camel Blues, and a love letter from his Russian exchange student girlfriend. You sat hunched over the dirty clothes on the floor not believing the words. You ran your hands over the lifted letters in cursive. You couldn't believe somebody could ever feel that way about someone else, specifically your brother who didn't seem to care about anything.

Your brother who totaled his car for the third time, your brother who leaves his window open when the heat is on, your brother who got caught stealing from the Dollar Tree, your brother who hugged you when your grandmother died before you even knew how you felt.

Your brother uses his money from his part-time delivery job at Domino's to go on a cruise with his girlfriend to Jamaica.

Your brother totals his car for the fourth time. Your mom shrugs. Your dad zips his mouth and locks it shut; he throws away the key in a pit of fire. There are some things your father doesn't want to lose.

The first time you're pulled over, you get a speeding ticket. You'll never hear the end of it.

You're held to a higher standard. You're tired. So tired.

You read his letter until your eyes get blurry.

Daddy's Girl

Your father was the softie; he'd come into your room after you got in trouble for talking back at dinner or when you forgot to clean off your plate. He'd kneel by your bed and say goodnight and show you all the affection you never got from your mother at this age.

People called you daddy's little girl and told you to take off your glasses so you could compare your tan faces. Your father would touch your upper lip and say, "you have to catch up with the facial hair." He'd do anything for you and always did.

And then one day it became more of an effort to get him to do the things he always did. You'd run into your room, stare at the ceiling and wonder what you did to make him care less. You'd look in the mirror and realize you weren't so little anymore.

You realize it's easier to have a conversation with your father when you've been away at school for two months at a time. The car rides home were listening to Led Zeppelin and screaming the words; he'd play the gas petal like a bass drum. It became less like that. You'd scream at him for the littlest of misunderstandings and then cry, because he'd never understand your years of vented up feelings against him. He'd slam your door shut, cracking the door hinge. When you sleep with the window open you can still hear the wind going in between the door, sticking to the wall and unsticking.

Your father asked if you were crazy when you said you were seeing a therapist at school and when you said no, he asked why you needed the attention so bad then. He called your anxiety an attitude problem, your depression a bad day.

He told you once, a couple months ago, that you were driving a wall in between the two of you. You don't deny it, but you know who drew the line first.

Uncle Frank

Your father went through friends like water. They'd be super close for a couple months and you'd be forced to go to these people's houses for dinner and coffee. Your mother would scoff, and you stayed quiet the entire night while you heard your father be called Uncle Frank by the kids.

Sage was the kid who created the name. "Uncle Frank," she'd squeal in joy when she saw him coming through the door. He'd lift her up and hug her. Her laugh still echoes in your ears.

Giovanni was his godson, the only child he ever personally picked out a present for in his life. He always took you with him to Walmart or Toys R Us and asked your opinion on what to get but ignored your ideas anyways.

He thought Angela was the most beautiful little girl he had ever seen. He told you this and you stared at the Christmas picture her family had sent that year. You looked at her blonde hair and blue eyes then looked in the mirror at your brown hair and brown eyes. You knew he thought you were beautiful but you started to think maybe not like Angela.

Sophia was the worst. She went on hunting trips with her dad and yours. You see the pictures on Facebook—your dad and Sophia hugging on a ferry somewhere in Connecticut. She practiced archery with the two dads. Soon after, you tell your dad you want to learn. He buys you a small pink bow and starts to teach you. You get busy with school work and college applications, and he gives it away to her because she grew over the summer and needed a bigger bow. You were too busy now anyway.

24 Saltaire Road (Reprise)

You were eight years old. Your mother was smoking pot in the basement with her friends. Your father was doing shots of Jägermeister with your brother in the kitchen. But they found their way to each other come midnight to share a kiss. You had just moved into your new house, and there were no decorations on the wall in the living room except for the Christmas tree that would be taken down promptly by your mother the next day. There must have been fifty people there, crowded in that living room, and in the morning there'd still be a bunch of them on the floor sleeping off their hangovers. You'd step your way over, snickering to your friends who stayed the night about your mother's friend Kate who fell asleep on the stairs. The ball dropped quickly; you remembered your brother's friend Vinny saying the world was going to end shortly, but you looked around at your new house and your parents kissing over their glasses of champagne and thought there was no way it could, not now.

Today, you sit in the living room painted three different colors since then. You think about the kitchen tiles that bubbled up with water from the leaking dishwasher. You think about the stains on the kitchen table from hair dye. You think about the bathroom downstairs that clogged once and has since been unusable. You think about the basement that floods with the tiniest amount of rain, the broken light in the shower, the broken light in the walk-in closet, the hole in the door of the den that your dad created with his fist. You sit in the living room and hear the screams, the ghosts.

You were thirteen years old. Your parents could still bear each other.

It was Mother's Day. You woke up and stepped out of the hallway to the sound of your parents laughing louder than you've ever heard them in your

entire life. It was a harmony of laughter, their voices swirling together, caressing each other and creating a song that could kill you with pure happiness if you were exposed to an excess of it. Your Aunt Elenore always said, "There's nobody else for your mother and father." You never believed it—except there, looking into the living room, your mom clutching your dad's wrist, her mouth wide open with laughter. You believed it then. He had bought her a birthday card by mistake, and it made the both of them roar.

You decide you want moments like that every day. You want a birthday card on Mother's Day and a harmony of laughter. You want what your parents seemed to have, except you never want it to fade. You spend a lot of time thinking about how much it sucks that they don't get along anymore, that all the differences that were charming in high school aren't anymore. But now you think it's not just the illusion shattering. Your mother said to you once, "That's not the man I married." It froze your bones to your skin. Because you could be doing everything right with the right person and then one day wake up next to somebody different. How could you ever be sure you weren't making a mistake?

You watch your brother switch girlfriends like socks, and lose every single one of the pairs along the way. You watch yourself cling to guys who pretend to be something they aren't. You wonder if it's destiny to end up like your parents.

You think of 24 Saltaire Road. The yellow chipped paint and the broken garage door and the broken bathroom fan and the crumbling bathroom stones and the light overhead the kitchen table that hasn't worked in years, and you think of the broken hinge on your bedroom door. You think of how all those things can be fixed with just a little effort, all those things, like most things.

MISTY YARNALL

100 Miles Per Hour

Five miles per hour felt dreadfully slow on the gravel driveway of the White River Drive-Ins. Mazzy barely had to brake once stopping at the ticket window. Charlie, sitting in the passenger's seat, passed her a crumpled wad of cash, totaling nine dollars. She took her own wallet out from the glove compartment, the door hitting his knees as it dropped open, and unzipped her wallet to scrounge for more.

As she handed the man a handful of bills— crinkled fives and ones, he gave her two printed tickets. She wondered what their purpose was. She imagined turning fifty, attending scrapbook meets in the Baptist Church basement, pasting hand-cut hearts and the same printed tickets to a page.

After driving through rows of cars, Mazzy found a slim vacant space between a bunch of rocking vehicles. She parked the car, but left it on and cranked up the volume to hear the previews. She and Charlie crawled over the center console to the back seat.

"Here we are," Charlie announced, trying to be clever or ease her tension. He stretched out, wrapping his narrow arm over her shoulders like a boa constrictor tightening its choke.

"Grammy wants you to come over this Sunday for brunch," he said. "My cousins from Delaware are visiting."

"Okay."

A black-and-white cartoon of a striped box of popcorn and a paper soft drink container danced across the screen, singing about White River's refreshment counter, but the front seats blocked Mazzy's view. She meddled with the levers, but the seats only reclined so far.

"Don't worry about it, babe," Charlie said.

Mazzy gave up, leaving the seats at an awkward angle. She sat back next to Charlie. As the Pixar logo appeared, and the little desk lamp bopped across the

screen to trampoline on letters, Charlie placed his hand on top of her knee. He rested his head on her shoulder, something she always believed worked the other way around. His body heat was overwhelming in the muggy, summer air. He was stuck to her like cling wrap.

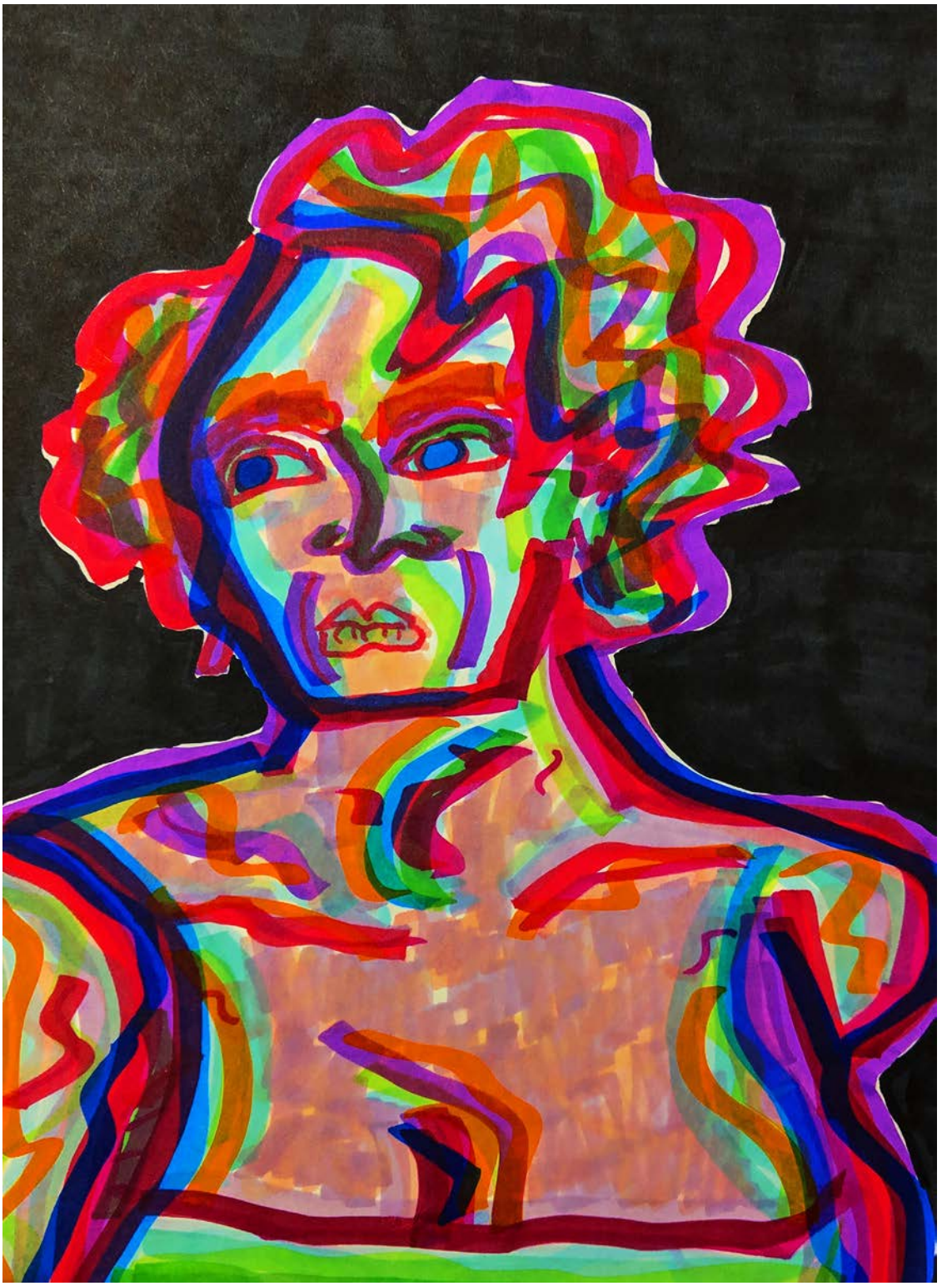
He kissed into her neck, trying to mimic some sort of sucking sensation he'd seen actors perform in movies. His hot breath on her skin sent uncomfortable chills through her. Mazzy twitched, something he mistook for pleasure, and she felt the purple mark deepening on her neck, draining the blood and the feeling until her skin was raw.

Charlie came up for air. She wished she could, too.

"I love you," Charlie told her, and without waiting for an answer, targeted another spot on her neck.

She held the movie ticket in her hand, picking at its splintering corners and crinkling its perfect flat shape.

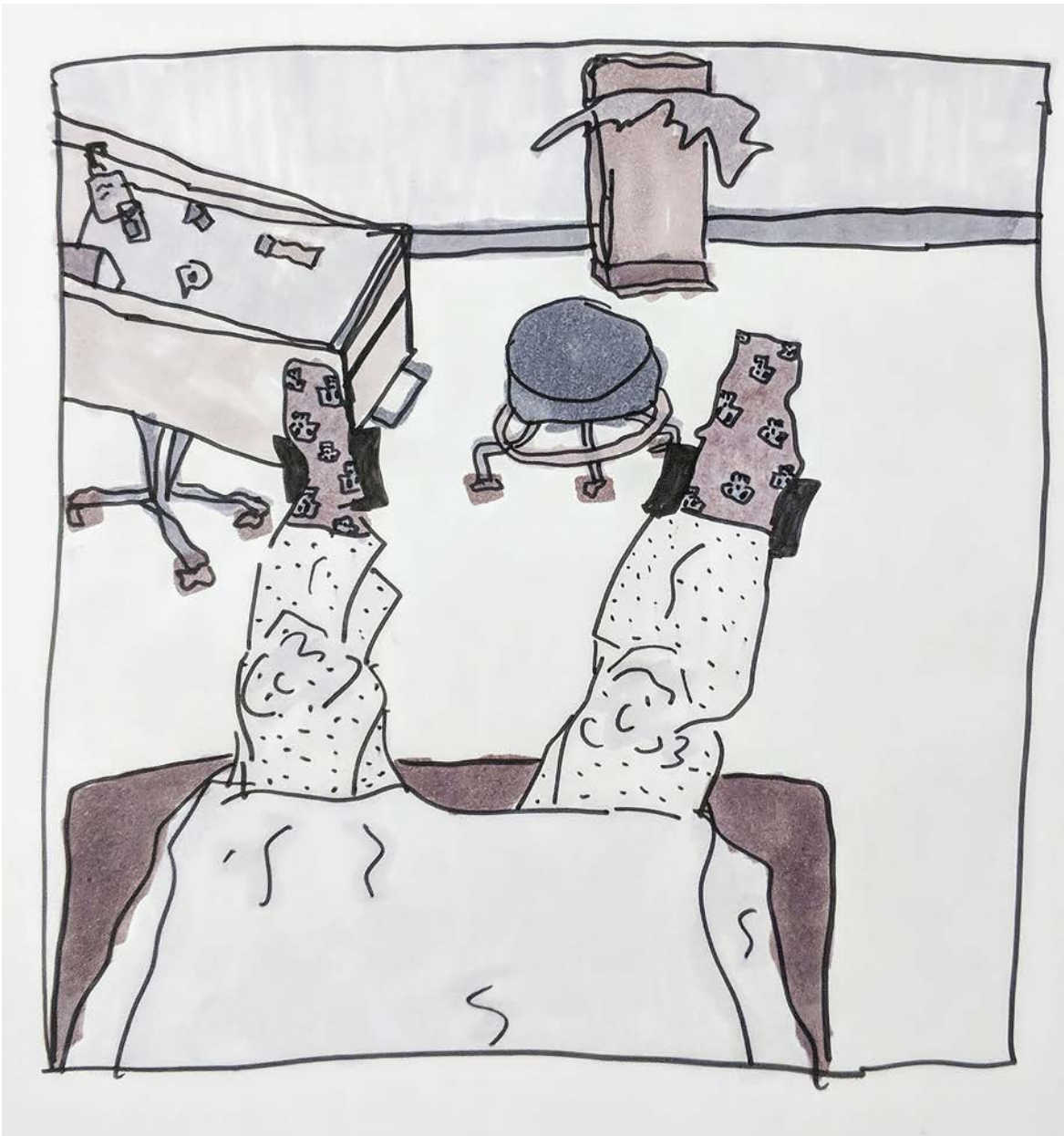
Heather Loase



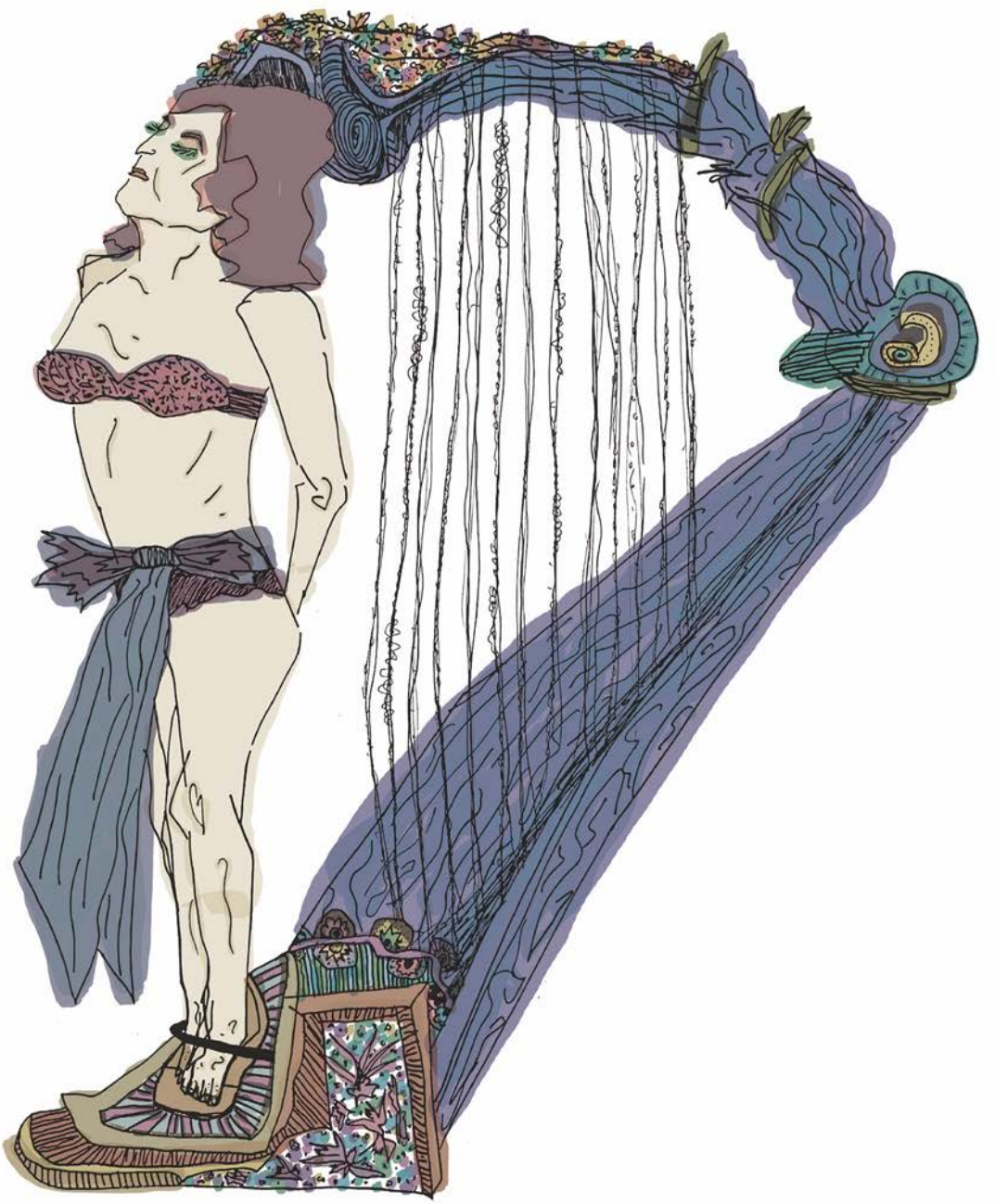
Very Suddenly Last Summer (pen and marker), Heather Loase

Gretchen (pen and marker), Heather Loase

Grammed (pen and ink), Heather Loase



Planned Parenthood (pen and marker), Heather Loase



Human Harp (pen and ink, digital), Heather Loase

Frankensteins and Mermaids (pen and marker), Heather Loase

Rock of Love (pen and ink, digital), Heather Loase

NATALIE HAYES

psychic distance draws a line down the middle of me

i scrub my skin with salt
until the grains' raised red lines begin to blur
into the red plaid-patterned tablecloth of childhood home.
this skin feels more familiar somehow;
i look more like myself like this
(rubbed raw and bleeding)

so lay me down, i guess.

cut to my sweat-stick back cementing itself to the hardwood
such that i am centered on the dining room floor.
i feel steely forks and spoons against my hot skin
and the ceramic base of your plate soothes my throbbing skull.
eat off or from me. put this body to good use
(as i certainly have not)

now sit me back up

and perhaps at last you will understand the weight of body
when brain is little more than an amalgamation of rocks.

my head is heavy and stagnant
and the pressed powder of prescription pill barely masquerades the cold
cobble glistening of gray matter; in the right lighting,
i look no different than before
(still gray-brained and mostly breathing)

let me sit steady in this

pattern of refusal; i store everything behind my eyes until i am absolutely
and unbearably full and then release all at once. after a long and unforgiving
six months of ignorance, i cry three times in one day.

NATALIE HAYES

river as reaper

crawfish falls from the sky and lands in my lap:

i imagine what you were when you still moved
(and my skin crawls, but i don't tell you that)
and where is the thing that brought you to me?

big bird with shit grip
snatches you from shallow waters
and names you supper

but you are too hard to be held that tight
and so you fall to my front lawn.

i want to know whether or not
you looked back at the bird as you fell
and if you did, were you laughing? or were you
asking to be eaten instead? the passage

from tongue
  to throat
    then stomach
      is warmer, at least

and perhaps if eaten you would have returned,
albeit unrecognizable, to your river.

it is just so hard to see when you are moving that fast;
maybe stomach acid would've taken its time with you.

JULIA MERANTE

I Grow Taller in the Summer Months

My favorite kind of snow is the kind
falling in July:

that is when
the blossoms turn to lemons in brown
paper bags—

that is when young boys
tell Mama that pigeons are their
favorite animals at the zoo.

To My Father

I see myself on deck, convinced
his ship's gone down, while he's convinced
I'll see him standing on the dock
and waving, shouting, Welcome back.

-"Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead,"
Andrew Hudgins

The worst part about fishing is putting the worm on the hook. It always spasms out of control and tenses up so hard that I feel myself actually killing something and I start screaming until my dad, who's laughing so hard that he's spitting, takes the murder weapon and victim from my hands. With the ease of a seasoned worm-executioner, he methodically punctures the night-crawler in four different spots, wrapping the body around the hook in loops.

"Now it can't fall off when you cast," he explains, handing the rod back to me. I take the pole by the handle and climb back onto my rock, looking across the lake. My dad joins me and we take in the view and the silence together. We are always casting from some kind of shore, since my dad can't do boats. After a trip on a fishing boat in the Atlantic a few years back, where both he and my sister took turns puking in the same bucket for three hours while I stood at the bow, loving the salt water spray, our fishing has been confined to casting from shores and piers.

Today we are at Canopus Lake in Fahnestock State Park, sitting on crumbling soil and rock on the edge of the woods. The ground is an intense beige, almost an orange hue, and we're casting into the deep blue of the lake. When I cast, I hook the pole left so the line flies out as far as possible and avoids the

trees just behind us. Dad has already lost two bobbers today thanks to me catching a branch instead of a fish.

"That's the risk of fishing from shore," he says with a shrug. I make sure now to lock down my line so it stops spinning and then I sit back, watching the bobber as it drifts. I'm in for the long haul now and I know Dad feels it too because he stops hawking over me and returns to his spot over the little soil mountain behind me. His cast goes farther than mine and he jerks the line with precision, his fake-frog lure jumping over the little waves.

Dad used to tell me he wanted to retire in a house on a lake whenever we visited a nearby state park and saw the few lucky cottages that were hidden in the trees. He said he liked being away from everyone, having a great view, having water to dive into. Despite his tendency for sea sickness, my father is actually a fish disguised as large, hairy Italian man. Every summer since I can remember, our family has gone down to the coast to see my grandparents. The second his feet hit the sand on those overcrowded beaches, he's running like a little kid into the sea, beating my sister and me by a mile. For hours, he would entertain us in the waves, taking us out deeper and deeper and when I couldn't stand anymore he would hold me up, grinning as the whitecaps of the waves rumbled in our ears and chests. The water relaxed his tired feet and aching knees and gave him something that made his brown eyes shine.

How badly I want to give him a house on a lake.

"Got something?" my dad asks, sliding down the soil next to me. He's spotted my line moving before I have. I scramble to reel the line in, but I know there's no fish at the end of it. When I get it all in, I show him the half-eaten worm still writhing on the hook and he laughs a big warm laugh that he'd say "scares all the fish away."

In the late afternoon, we pack our tackle box and weave through the woods, back to the car, with no fish to call our own. A few days later and we realize we are itching our arms and legs, and we both recall some funny looking plants we passed that day, breaking out in poison ivy all over our bodies. Dad starts to consider that even the shores are no longer safe. Like my sister at her new job in another state, finally moving away from home at twenty-five, and me when I decided to move two hundred miles away for college. Both shores are unknown to my sister and me, but we chose to dig our heels into the dirt and cast anyway. I wasn't there to move her into her new apartment, but she and Dad were there to move me into my dorm.

It was so hot that day that sweat was pouring down my face and back, soaking my new college T-shirt and making it stick to my skin. The box in my hands swayed from side to side as I ascended the staircase, packed to the brim with journals and old, worn out Agatha Christie books I had gotten on sale from a used book store.

"Let me get that, sweetie," my dad said and swiped it from my arms, as if it didn't weigh over thirty pounds and his knees had never hurt him in his life. He adjusted the box and then climbed the stairs like he'd done it ten times before. He moved my sister in and out when she was at college just five years earlier and the movements stuck with him. I struggled to keep up with his pace and I tried to be useful, grabbing a small silver lamp without a light bulb and my metal blue trash can that was holding ratty secondhand band posters. He's always moving quick like that when something needs to get done, always going for maximum efficiency. He's that way at work, too, when he's selling cars, always jumping from customer to customer, working his mouth and feet all day long. Just a few hours earlier, before we had made it to campus, he packed the white minivan rental as if it were a game of Tetris, his eyes darting back and forth over the empty trunk–if this box of shoes fits here, the TV can go there, therefore the stuffed animals can go here, etc. He's a practical guy in almost all situations; it's logic and numbers first, and if those fail, just run the numbers again.

I remember when I made it to my assigned dorm room and he was already in unpacking mode, squatting over boxes. His jean shorts were stretched to their limit and his white Sketchers squeaked on the cream linoleum floor as I came up behind him.

"Dad, you don't have to do that you know. I can do that all later," I said. His gray American flag shirt had large dark pit stains and a parabolic sweat line going down his back. He turned and smiled up at me with an all teeth smile (all fake teeth, mind you) and kept going, wordlessly. My mother watched her ex-husband from the hall, leaning on the door frame.

"Don't go too hard. You'll hurt yourself," she warned. I bent down and start to help organize as he pulled out a hand drill.

"Your desk is wobbling," he said, putting a screw on the tip. I told him we weren't allowed to mess with any of the furniture. He started drilling into the wood.

When my sister went to college, he seemed pretty okay with it, like he had made peace with it a long time ago. I imagine he thought to himself, well, at least I'll still have one, since now it would just be me visiting him every other weekend for fishing trips and coming Tuesday nights for ravioli dinners. It would just be me and him sitting and watching NASCAR in his one bedroom apartment and commenting on how each driver could possibly make a better left turn each time they circled the track. But now it would be no one. This thought came to me when it was time for him to leave.

We stood on the grass by the side of my building, between the quads of the other dorms and under the light of the dipping orange sun. We had to squint to see one another. Strangely and starkly different from my sister's goodbye, he started by not looking at me. The stoic, hard-eyed, heavyset Ital-

ian rock of a man refused to make eye contact with me. Then he sort of began to ramble and put a hand on my shoulder, telling me that I should have fun, always study hard, and call him if I needed him or, you know, if I just wanted to talk. Then the hand slid to my forearm and he gripped it hard. He has no nails to dig in from years of biting them after smoking, but his hands are huge and powerful still, so the grip shocked me.

"Dad, that hurts—" I began, but he pulled me into a tight hug, my mouth muffled into his shoulder.

"If you ever need anything, and I mean anything, you call me and I will be here. You got that?" he said into my ear, his words fierce. I tried to pull away slightly, but he held me still. I had never felt so safe and scared at the same time.

"Yeah, yeah, Dad. I get it; you can let go," I said. He did let go and I saw that he was crying. Still not looking at me, he lifted up his wire glasses and wiped his wrinkled eyes, staring at some distant spot above my head.

Usually when my dad is overly emotional, it's not sadness that breaks through. It's more of a burning rage that takes time to develop deep down in the pit of his stomach and when it finally surfaces, you have no doubt about what it is and that you've got to get out of the way. For as long as I can remember, I've had these distinct memories of my father exploding, with the worst being the dreaded coffee incident. I was alone that day, without my sister to help me, so I didn't see the signs. I was too young to know where to run.

Like any school day, my day began with a checklist.

Yes, I had my lunch box. Yes, I had my notebook. Were my shoes on? Yes, and I had tied them all by myself. I remember my father took one long look around the kitchen, probably making a mental list of that day's chores. Then he took my hand in his huge one, and we were moving. We went down the basement steps in a staggered line, me jumping with two feet onto each step, him stepping down slowly and watching my every move. When we finally made it through the garage and out of the house, I was the first to make it into the car.

"Are you excited?" he asked as I buckled myself in.

I nodded vigorously, my head bouncing around on my shoulders. We both smiled as our eyes met in the rearview mirror. He turned the key and we backed out of the driveway, a Styx CD already blasting from the speakers.

He always had (and still does have) an onslaught of rock and roll prepared for any trip, whether it's just a five-minute drive to the grocery store or a four-hour drive down to Toms River to visit the grandparents. His taste ranges from Rush to Lynyrd Skynyrd to Paul McCartney to AC/DC to Queen to Earth, Wind, and Fire. Just one look in my dad's eyes when the drum or guitar solo comes on and you can tell his soul is alight with the music, his lips running over every lyric without missing a single word. His brain must be

fifty-percent song lyrics, twenty-five percent car models, twenty-percent trip routes (the man never uses GPS), and five-percent his own children's names. I can't even begin to count on both my hands and feet the number of times I've been called my sister's name.

Just a couple of turns and we were almost halfway there. Our town is pretty small to begin with, so making it to the school wasn't a journey. It was more of a peaceful, scenic drive. We passed the sunflower field and my dad said all the heads of the flowers were turned to face us to say hello. I pressed my face up against the glass, straining from my seat, admiring the yellow shine of them, and slammed my head against the ceiling as my dad hit the brakes.

"Get the fuck outta my lane!" He banged his fist on the dashboard. His whole body was hunched over the wheel as the car sped up, his head leaning to the right to see the driver of the black car that had swerved back into its lane. Our car lurched forward and we became parallel with the black car, us in the left lane and them in the right lane of the winding road. The woman in the driver's seat was looking straight ahead, not even glancing at us. She didn't even look at us during the red light as we sat together or when we began to follow her, my dad never breaking his eyes away from her, even when the road narrowed into one lane.

I knew about the bat that sometimes rolled around in the trunk.

As we followed her, our front bumper and her back bumper were almost touching the entire way and my stomach jumped from being slightly upset to completely nauseous as she pulled into the school parking lot with us.

My dad sped into a spot, put the car in park, and jumped out. The car was still idling as I unbuckled my seat belt and peered out the back window on my knees. He stalked to the black car in three large strides and grabbed the handle of the woman's car door. I swear I could see the whites of her eyes and the terror there as she stared up at the man trying to get into her car. It was almost an out of body experience—a moment that most children don't feel until they're much older—the fact that your father is just a man to other people, that they don't know what you know about him, how nice he can be, and how he doesn't really mean to be this way. At six years old, I wanted to explain this to someone in case my dad got in trouble so they could understand him the way I did.

"Open the door!" he screamed. His face was getting redder, veins popping in his neck and on his forehead. She shook her head at him, yelling something back, but it came out muffled. When he couldn't get the door open, he came back to our car and retrieved his Dunkin' Donuts coffee mug. Three more strides and he dumped the entirety of the container on her windshield. In that moment, the principal and a security guard burst through the school entrance, rushing to the scene. But that wasn't what got me out of the car. It was only when I saw the woman's back door slowly start to open that I got

out and ran over. The little boy that emerged, tears streaming down his face, took my hand when I offered it and together we retreated into the school. I don't remember his name or what he looked like, except that he was not much taller than me. But what I do remember is how he looked at my dad, and how I began to notice the way a lot of people looked at my dad when he did things I was accustomed to.

My grandma tells me that he wasn't always so angry, as if showing me childhood pictures of him sleeping soundly while swaddled in a blanket wordlessly proved her point. It's always hard to connect your parents to the black and white images of them in photos; how is the man in front of me supposed to have been this punk-looking kid from the Bronx who had his teeth smashed in in a wrestling match? I can barely picture him rolling around on the floor with a friend, blood and teeth splattered across the cement in the basement of some colonial. My grandma tells me how he got into wrestling matches and fights a lot back then, and that he even stole Grandpa's car once or twice for a drive. I can see the anger in those old pictures, the ones where he's just a teenager standing next to Grandpa, my grandpa but not his real father. My real grandfather passed away when my dad was ten, in what I've recently learned was a fatal car crash.

This past summer my dad and I took the Circle Line boat tour around Manhattan to see the entirety of the island, and as we sat baking in the heat, with not a drop of water or sunscreen to our names, he pointed at a tunnel.

"That's where my father died," he said. I looked from the choppy waves of the Hudson up to his face, which was completely stoic. His eyes met mine and he nodded his head toward the city, where he was still pointing. I followed his arm and finger to the tunnel, and we stared at it together.

It was later that my grandma told me that he had been driving a dump truck and the dump was still up just slightly, but the light on the dash wasn't on to say that it was. He drove into the tunnel and the dump buckled and he broke his neck. After that, he lived for about a month on tubes until he passed in his sleep. My mom says he must've been holding on for his three little ones, my dad and his two brothers.

As much as I try, I can't put myself in my dad's shoes. I've never been that close to death before. That's why I can't seem to picture the little brown-haired ten-year-old boy from the worn, yellowed photos standing by his father's hospital bed. I can't see him staring at the breathing tubes and beeping machines, waiting patiently for his father to wake up. I can't look at my dad and see the little boy, even though I know he must still be there.

SYDNEY SHAFFER

See a Daisy, Pick it Up

The first time I fell down, I had my father
to pick me up. My knee curdled into red jelly pieces,
and my tears started to roll. *Drama queen*
my sister shouted. From then, I promised
to never play in the rain anymore.
I sat on the benches as my cousins
threw around a muddy soccer ball,
splashing wet dirt, neglecting each and every rule.
They called me referee. I watched
the sky meet the clouds which morphed into mud
caked onto the wings of a honey bee. I remember the walking
and tripping and falling,
and not having my father to catch me anymore.
A daisy padding my scarred knees as I crashed
off my scooter on a bright day. There is something
about the throbbing, I do not remember.
I knew when it started to rain every day, I would have to
break my oath and swallow my crystals.
Protect me from the tripping and falling and
pad my face, so when the soccer ball came at it full force
I'd be left with just a bruise under my eye. *Tough bitch*
my sister shouted. From then, I promised
to ache and trip and fall and
smell the flowers on my way to the ground.

SYDNEY SHAFFER

The Goats Grow Bigger Every Spring

In my head, I weigh down pockets with stones in exchange for the clearing of chrysanthemum fields.

I stuff petals in my ears, I drown the world out, I just want to hear honey.

To stay as high as I am, I beg long enough that my molars stop breaking through the glitter. There is no room for soaked sheets.

Sometimes the angels gossip about the feathers in my hair. I cannot remember the last time something I swallowed stayed put.

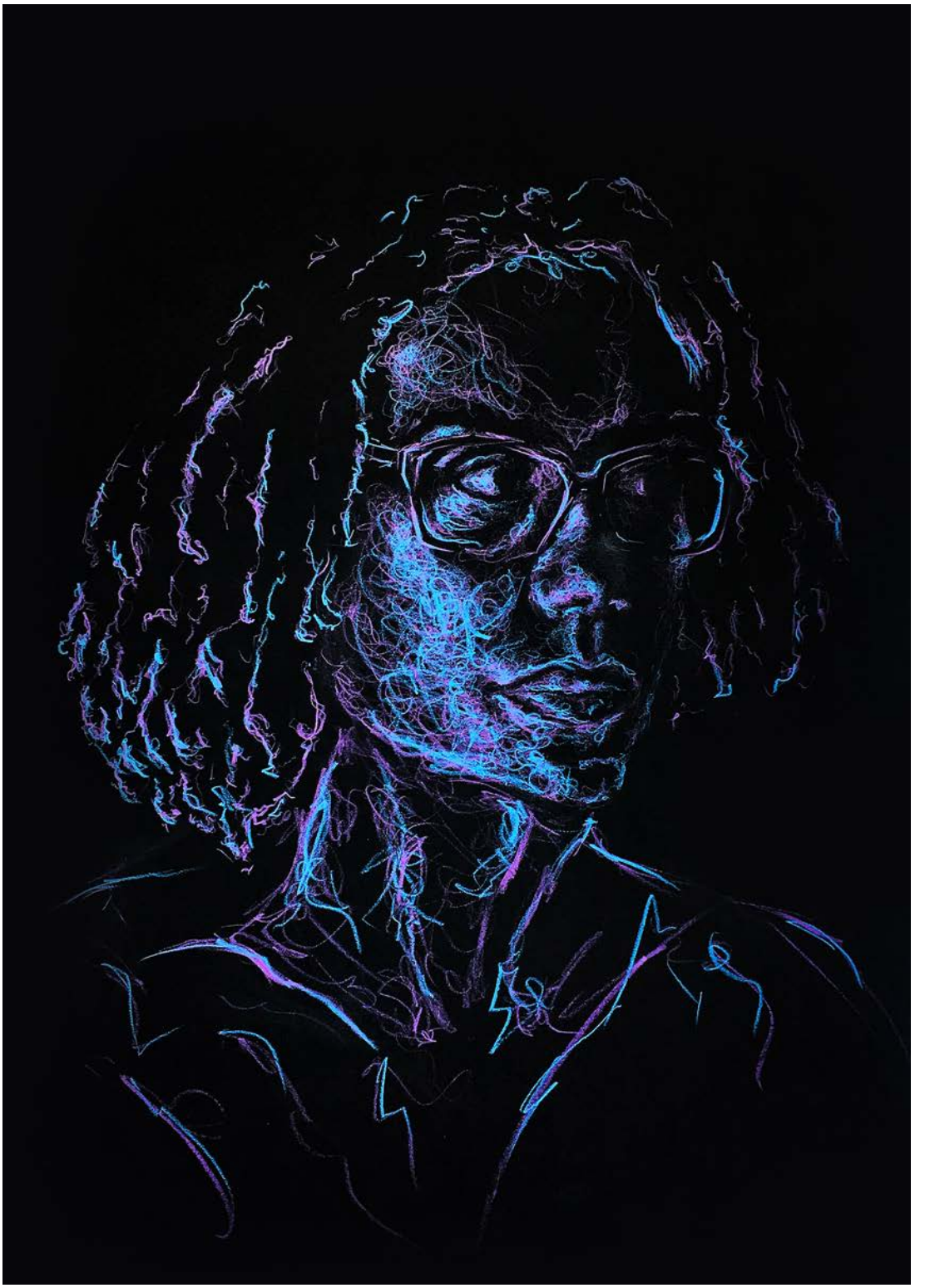
Wait to hear a pin drop, for the fat to keep me warm. This sweet-toothed jabber too loud.

I tuck into a new gown. It brushes the floor, I am floating. Buttons scallop the skin—zippers indent my back like an opening paragraph.

Say thank you for freshly scraped knees, for the handing out of pastures. Roll in the wind that coats the grass with pesticides. They're no good for me either. Swallow them with mouth closed, I still have manners to uphold.

The solstice is too yesterday to think about now. I gut myself, sell the rotten parts for market money. I eat all the sweetbread the world offers.

Amo (colored pencil), Erika Snyder



Janelle (colored pencil), Erika Snyder

MITCHELL ANGELO

Carnivores

Before there were men, there were hours
of limbs on linen and imaginary cherry-bombs.
Great marble bodies outstretched in heat. Orchids
tied to bed posts. I was the first infant with an appetite for rats.

A goat's head hangs above my mattress. She wears a prayer over her horns.
I cannot name things I do not love
so she is only a goat. In my sleep I name her after myself. In my sleep
I am only a goat.

Before there were men there were moths. Before all this
Skin. Before there were words for things like this. This body.
A hideous carnation. A marriage of carnivores. Still flesh
cannot thrive without father, so in which organ shall we bury him?

Once I knew a river so shiny I grew gills.
Fish are filthy liars, and with all these bones
I'll never swim. In my sleep I am only a fish. I'll lie
so flat and so still on the water's surface you'll think me a lily pad.

A Girl's Name

Bend—baffle the wings into shapes unclean. Marry the animals that do not caw; falcon. Perhaps eagle. Kitchen table now. A man has your feathers for breakfast. Heirloom the estranged inching up of

thighs. Turn uncles to fruit juice. A knifed citrus lies in the sink and I will play possum licking rind to rim. Offer seconds and or thirds. He only feeds you after he says he's sorry. There is no slur like the

overripe. Pitted. Queer. Remove context and this can be about your stupid boyfriend. Remove context and this body sings female. Remove Remove. I'll They until I vomit in virgo. I'll worm into pinker

apples. I'll bury my zodiac.

MITCHELL ANGELO

Sonnet for a Cowboy

And I'll carry you on my back to the water.
To frame your figure out West. Let's promise not to
use that word anymore. Let's promise not to touch
anymore. King of the plains. Of things that break,
bend. Play matador on the freeway. Strip like raw
hide. Prey or pray, both end in blood and saliva.
Arizona in June can make anything less
painful. I'll scrub your mouth from the tailpipe. And I'll
carry you on my back to the water.

MITCHELL ANGELO

Pre-Operative

As feral as I feel I know I am docile. Pretty
boy. Honey blood. Let's imagine I am
a raven: a creature winged and worth

writing about. Claim the aggressive and angular. Bury
ovarian in bloom. Pretty boy. Honey blood.
When I fall I will land crooked but I will still be

beautiful. Let's imagine I am something softer.
Let's imagine I am a story in which nobody
dies at the end. Let's imagine I stain

this body in orchids.
Pretty boy. Honey blood. Faggot. Firecrackers. I
am going to need you to cover my ears.

When you say my name for the first time I
want it to scare lesser animals. Perform
predator. I will never die

but if I do remember me as a cowboy. Perform prey.
Your father will see me like he sees any other girl and I will let him. I am
not crying.
When I fall I will land crooked but I will still be beautiful.

COLIN SHARP-O'CONNOR

Searching for Eurydice

The sun is not up at five sharp when we set out for Taughannock Park in my beater of a Corolla, and this time of year the condensation comes so thick I need my wipers just to see the road signs. In deep fog this road takes on a different shape than in clearer weather. Vaughn, my flatmate, has reclined the passenger seat as far back as it goes to allow his bulky frame to fit comfortably in the cabin. He's on the phone with Noah's parents, speaking in a soft and serious voice that doesn't suit him. Vaughn is robust, broad in the shoulders and sandy-haired, with a healthy face that usually reminds me of those pictures of old Ivy athletes postered all over the college gymnasiums. Grinning footballers in grainy Kodachrome. But he isn't smiling this morning.

"I understand. Yeah," Vaughn says, probably to Noah's mother, although I can't hear the voice. "Luke and I are on our way now, it's just the weather—" He leans over the stick. "Any idea when we'll get there?"

"Still a mile or two out. Time?" I say. The clock on my dashboard is long dead.

"Five-thirty. Ish."

"Tell her another five or so," I say.

Vaughn says so.

"We won't be late, sounds like," he tells me. "She's just—yeah." Then Noah's mother says something, and Vaughn says, "Really, a whole rescue crew? That's good," and then, "Sounds like we're in good hands," and then, "We'll find him today, Mrs. Alterman. I promise."

He hangs up and taps the phone on his thigh. “I think she blames me,” he says.

“She say that?”

“You know how I mean.”

“Yeah.” I wish I had more to say. “Just you?”

He sighs. A heavy sound. “Who knows, man. I guess she’s not wrong, if that’s how she wants to play it.” And this is true.

“Was the both of us looking after him.”

“Was my idea to do all that stuff with him, though.”

“I don’t really remember,” I say. True as well.

“You wouldn’t,” he says, and laughs, shortly. It sounds pained. “If they find anything in his system, I’ll take the heat for it.”

“Have it your way.”

“I had it coming, I guess. So long as he’s okay I don’t care what else happens.”

I look at Vaughn’s face then, easing off the gas. He stares out the windshield into the fog ahead, eyes blue and wet, jaw tight, the muscles of his cheek standing out in relief. You promise. I wonder what he thinks, this boy from California. Whether he understands that Noah is dead. Whether he believes it.

Noah was mine and Vaughn’s other flatmate. A freshman. Last Friday he fell into the gorge. Vaughn and I were at the park with him. We didn’t see it happen. We didn’t see when he slipped away, but Noah fell and I know he died there. I feel it, and gut sense from a local in this respect is more than fact. Noah fell. A blank recognition suffuses through my memories of that evening like staring too long at the sun. What’s left are remnants, a fragment of memory, a roll of film pulled disfigured from the fire. Losing the night in full would be preferable to this. It hurts just to picture his face.

We reach the park earlier than expected, driving across a wide cobblestone bridge and turning into the entryway. So early in the morning of course the park is closed, and a firefighter stands out in the road by the ticket booth. He has casual clothes on under his hi-vis jacket. No turnout gear today. Only helmets and harnesses. I crank down my window and pull up beside him with mine and Vaughn’s IDs in hand, but he must recognize me because he waves us on without asking for them. I turn into the lot. A few cars here and there, not one adjacent to another. There’s one fire vehicle, plain white, a faded yellow maltese cross on the door. I park next to it and we step out into the chill.

Taughannock Park is a series of oblong fields, several loose colonnades of trees, a worn and patinated amphitheatre, a pavilion, a playground, a rocky beach, all arrayed against a convex portion of shoreline. It’s punctuated at intervals with white billet jetties left freely adrift in the water like decorative strings and on the northern end by sailboats moored in an inland mari-

na—startlingly small but pretty enough on sunny days. But the park takes a different shape on these mornings, too, like a forest clearing in a dream. All detail erased in the mist that pours off the lake's surface, transforming the land around.

A hundred yards from the lot an ambulance idles on the wet grass outside the pavilion, its emergency lights diffused into soft coronas. In the pavilion a dozen figures of no fixed uniform or order huddle in the relative shelter provided by their open building. As we approach two of them step out to meet us, ill-shapen in their nylon parkas. I recognize the face of Noah's mother, broad and lined, hair wild in the mist. She hugs me tightly. So much strength for a woman her age. I am embraced for a long time, and when she releases me my hand is clasped as if by some supplicant and I find myself looking at a man I do not recognize and whose eyes I will not forget. We step under the pavilion and the firefighter in charge takes down our names and address perfunctorily. Then we stand with the rest, people I have never met who greet me softly by name and shake my hand in turn, as she explains the procedures and precautions, the zones of activity we will be assigned to, the intervals at which we will report. It strikes me that I have stepped into a church of sorts. Like it is a wake we are attending. Perhaps it is. When she is finished I volunteer to carry a GPS locator and a little laminate map of terrain I know by heart already. When she hands them to me this woman shakes my hand also and nods to me as though it were some noble choice. But there can be no protests now, no subversion of the ritual. Vaughn and Noah's parents and I will go together, and this is another rite. When we step out from the pavilion and onto the grass again it is in three curious diverging lines, like hooded Franciscans in prayer.

The firefighter from the park entrance joins up with us as we head back toward the road along a little stream that feeds into the marina. His eyes are a clear and pale blue and he walks with a professional briskness that sets his rescue harness clinking and he answers all questions put to him by Noah's mother with the same demeanor, though kindly. I see his crinkled face and wonder how many bodies has pulled from these waters. The stream flows under a wood bridge and then gradually broadens from ten feet to a dozen yards, still shallow enough to make out the darting shadows of fingerlings on the flatrocks beneath. We walk under the cobble bridge by the entrance and the shadow of the bridge turns the stream to softly rippling jet.

"And how long will you be once we find him?" asks Noah's mother.

"Depends where he is," says the firefighter. "How he is." He scratches his chin and then, remembering his bedside manner, says, "Might need to call in more responders if he's somewhere needs rappelling. Helicopter can take a while in this weather. If it comes to that."

"But not long otherwise," she says.

"Not long otherwise."

The firefighter helps Noah's parents down the long slope of the gorge mouth, the only real descent to be made. This place is really the inner boundary of the larger lake basin. The land ahead but fill displaced an aeon ago over a period equally unfathomable. Like fingers tracing their long marks in the dirt, so goes the old story. The gorge is a slight westwards fissure in this neolithic berm. Shallower even than the basin, terminating just miles from its rim. Geological minutiae from such a vantage. The sides are exposed shale, pines growing over top, and they seem to me to stretch up forever, on forever, irregular rock striae forming vectors along each face pointing deeper into the shadowed valley. Soon the sun will rise and all this will be gone. We press onwards.

We walk through the fog on a small flagstone path that passes under overhangs dripping clear water rhythmically on the smooth rock below as if demonstrating their own massive trajectories. We pass by pale screes where the shale is scratched and sunbleached to the color of bone, even in this damp time of year and from which brown moss and wiry sprouts of buttercup grow in clumps, isolate from their like, and when the flagstones end we walk on the thin band of alluvial clay built up on the sides of the stream or in the stream itself, it scarcely deeper than an ankle and running mostly over stable flatrocks so eroded by millenia of current, though covered in a slippery filamentous lichen, and we travel slowly and search each crevice and eddy carefully. All sounds distant except the cold trickle of water running over rock. As if some greater rite were underway beside ours on this liminal ground now at its periapsis and should our exhalations or our footfalls in the stream prove too indiscrete for what unnamable convocation thereby gathered it would be desecration. I walk with the firefighter and behind us Vaughn accompanies Noah's parents, following their slower pace, making sure they don't lose their footing in the current. Their black parkas glitter faintly with condensation. The two look old, though I never asked Noah how old.

After a mile of walking the stream deepens into a natural pool of the type familiar to collegiate truants and rescue workers, visible by a sudden darkness on the surface, a stilling of the current. A minor cascade perhaps ten feet high feeds into it at a gentle trickle. There is little flow over the blackened slate, only a liquid shimmer and a dull babble that seems as well to come from the woods around as the falling water. The firefighter and I search the sides and find a scalable path.

"What're you thinking?" I say.

"What's that?" he asks.

"How—" I rephrase myself. "Well. What should we be expecting here, is what I mean."

The firefighter examines me a moment. That look in his blue eyes again, casting around for his bedside manners. "I guess I wouldn't advise you to expect a thing," he says.

"All right."

"Give me a leg, here."

I boost him up and then take his hand and clamber up after him. The rest of the way is easy enough for us. Slate makes for simple climbing.

"Look," says the firefighter, sitting for a moment beside the stream. Legs swung out over the ledge. "I've been doing this thing longer than you'd guess. They all start the same. Kid goes missing one night. Drunk, stoned, clumsy, whatever it is. Sometimes—You get it. These public searches, no different. Follow?"

I wipe the grit and algae off my palms and squat beside him. "Yeah, I get you."

He scratches his chin. Vaughn and Noah's parents are making their way toward the still pool, speaking quietly. He carries on. "If his buddies aren't right there when he tumbles, they won't call it in for a full day sometimes. You all were pretty quick, considering."

"He isn't the wandering type." I shrug. "I got worried."

"Was a good call. Lot can happen in a day. Sometimes he might fall near a path and hikers find him in the morning. Hear him shouting, or see him. If it's out of the way he could lay there days until we go out ourselves. You okay?"

"Yeah, I'm okay," I say.

"Maybe laying there with broken legs, ribs. Damage to the organs, you know. Sometimes paralysis. If he hits his head, that's it. Same if he falls in fast water. Get twisted up in that, you go right under and you don't come up."

"I get you."

He looks at me again. "Don't get me wrong, now. Lots of them make out okay after roughing it a weekend. Sometimes they're just too scared to move. Young college kid, phone broken, all kinds of trauma going on in their head. Not unheard of to just stay put til rescue finds them. So that's what I mean. There's no good guesses here."

"You know better than me," I say.

"No one can tell from the start how these things end," he says. "That I know for certain."

I look at Vaughn as he leads Noah's parents carefully around the lip of the pool, that darker blackness in the water. He must be optimistic. Not optimistic. Desperate. The way Noah's parents are desperate, holding out not for hope but for the afterimage of hope, the same thought I clung to on the first day, that vanished on the second, that left in me on the third a more concrete

resolution. My flatmate is dead, is swallowed up here. We may never find the body. If we do it will not be him.

Noah's mother can't make the climb. She gives it a fair shake but neither Vaughn nor I are quite willing to pull her up properly and the firefighter doesn't take long to put an end to her efforts. He is gentle as a mortician. Doubtless he expects little more from her husband, and rightly so by the cut of him under that rubberized hood. Never seen a face gone to ruin like that. Too much to look at, too much to look at.

The firefighter speaks briefly at his pager in an approximation of English and then scratches his chin. "Well, I'm sorry."

He means it despite the brevity. Quiet apologies abound. An offer of escort, a sequent refusal. The tears that follow. A pitiful thing.

They offer to wait by the pool until the search is done but the firefighter is set on sending them back to the pavilion, and so it goes. Noah's mother turns away and my last impression of her face cannot be sadness. Nothing there could be encompassed in such a word.

"That's the way of things," says the firefighter.

"You think it's for the best?" I say.

"For you all?" says the firefighter.

Closes my mouth right up.

We make quicker time just the three of us. The firefighter and I are used to wading and Vaughn outstrips us both, striding out in front like a man driven by high accord, as though he might part the very waters, and it hurts my heart to think he might be searching for some second possibility hidden in this darkly hyaline stream. There is nothing submerged in it, nothing kept for closer viewing. The darting shadows of fingerlings against the rocks, the lichen, the ripples of our boots against the current. The shadows of those ripples too. Around us the fog thickens further, the raw outcroppings on either side reaching jaggedly up into that strange absence of sky. Not far now to the source.

"You say he's not the wandering type, huh?" says the firefighter, after some time spent in silence.

Vaughn looks back. "Could be he's not in the gorge."

"Where else?" I say. Vaughn shrugs.

"He took a hell of a trek for the middle of the night," says the firefighter. "Whenabouts he go missing again?"

"Late evening. Was past dark. Couldn't tell you any better."

"I think it was eleven or so," says Vaughn. He checks his watch now. As if the hands had froze in place the exact moment Noah had vanished. As if there was ever such a moment.

"Hey," says the firefighter. "Pick that up."

Vaughn turns around, looks down by his feet, stops. He stoops and picks something out of the stream. A soaking mess of fabric, vague in color, water pouring from the folds in gouts. Vaughn straightens it out the best he can.

"That his?" says the firefighter.

"Yeah, it's his," says Vaughn.

It's Noah's windbreaker. Forest green is hard to spot underwater. Vaughn goes through the pockets, comes out with ticket stubs and a shrunken leather wallet, wax all washed out by the current and settled white and filmy on the topgrain. The firefighter examines the wallet and finds its contents rotted and zips it up in a plastic bag and stows it. Nothing much to say between us. My hands begin to tremble.

"Time to go on," says the firefighter, scratching his chin. "Sunup soon."

We trek on in silence through the thickening fret looking much like ghosts ourselves. The stream deepens here into as true a river as any, rising up above my boot-collars, drenching my socks, but none of us steps out into the bank. The looming shape of the valley narrowing above us in uncertain shadow imposes a peculiar sense of vertigo, as if after crossing some antecedent threshold all gravity and direction had reversed along our course and by following the source of the current we are not moving up toward the surface of the world but impossibly downwards and deeper into the earth. I have a sudden urge to turn back, but then I remember the faces of Noah's parents and do not know which of us is for the worse. Too late now, anyway. I can hear the falls roaring.

It is by ear one first recognizes Taughannock Falls, but the feel of the place is what they remember. Even on a clear day the sheer spray of that enormous overhung flume bears down on hair and clothes, out nearly a thousand feet from the whitewater. Not a regal weight, as some naturalists might ascribe to the experience. Taughannock belies such personification. At the end of the gorge there is a deep and sheer-faced rondel canyon and at the westmost point of this canyon the falls pours out into a small lake below. A plaque somewhere on the visitor's trail far above in the ridges will tell the reader that Taughannock Falls is the tallest single waterfall this side of the Rockies but this comparison is meaningless. Stand close enough to feel the weight of that water crashing down and there can be no comparison. There can be no anything at all.

We reach the canyon just past sunrise, light tinging the fog a soft, opaque amber. The river has shallowed out again and broadened into a sort of slow-running floodwater only half covering the pale shards of slaterock scattered across the canyon floor. Or perhaps it runs to further depths after all and the rocks are piled up deeper than I see. Mist tendrils drift from the lake in front of us like ectoplasm, mixing with the fog, evaporating. Our own breath following in course.

"Give the fog time to clear," says the firefighter. "Easier to look round that way."

We find a rocky place in the river and sit and we watch as the fog clears. It takes five minutes to see the sky, midnight blue in the west and still faintly dotted with stars. As the day brightens further, a thin strip of rainbow manifests in the spray of the falls, vibrantly shaded, arcing across the canyon's width as if drawn by some illusory paintbrush. The wet erected rockpiles that litter the perimeter of the lake glitter magnificently and one among them is larger and darker than the rest and it too is soaked with spray.

The firefighter stands abruptly. "I want you all to wait here," he says.

It lies strangely equidistant from the little cairns that flank it along the shoreline as if, like them, it had been placed there deliberately by some unknown artist—as if its very existence had been presupposed for that endeavor. It and all around it perfectly clear and already memory in my gaze. A waterlogged shape smaller than any person ought to be, a pile of wet hiking clothes, jeans and a hoodie, colors soaked close enough to black. Sneakers white but filthy. Not him. Not him.

"Vaughn," I say, and Vaughn is already standing to follow the firefighter now picking his way across the uneven shale with sure steps and raising his pager for words to be lost in the deaf roar of the falls. I say, you'll only get in his way, and feel my voice as air and vibration and no discernable sound, the words all hollowed out, and Vaughn stops but does not sit down and I feel guilty for stopping him so thoughtlessly.

"Is that him?" he says. "Is that him?"

I look numbly at the distant bundle. Do my best to look at it. Now I think that perhaps it is a mirage, is some impossible thing, and it seems so that I cannot see it clearly no matter how long I focus on it. A thought washes up against the bulwarks of my conscious, a dispassionate, conceptual thought, and I flinch from it and then force myself, nauseated by the contradiction, to review it. Noah is dead. That cannot be him. Nothing animate could look like that. When I was a boy a deer died in the nearby woods close to the treeline. It died in late fall and was covered in a thick snowbank all winter and was preserved like some natural taxidermy until spring. As the days warmed again the hide took on water and rotted and swelled and when it finally split all but the bones were gone already. When my father and I went out to bury it in the spring it seemed weightless and somehow graceful. That was a dead thing. That was death to me.

The firefighter puts on a pair of nitrile gloves and leans over the bundle and then reaches out and touches some part of it, carefully probes the bundle away, probably for our assurance more than his, and then he sits on his haunches and takes off his helmet and runs his fingers over his scalp and does not move a while.

Vaughn splashes across the loose shale and I follow him, shambling, the ground under my feet tipping forwards, and then I feel I would fall if I went a foot further and I stop in the middle of the stream, in the middle of the canyon and the spray, and am witness to that thing I cannot bring myself to see.

The firefighter rises and pulls Vaughn back by the shoulders, Vaughn already kneeling over on the shore. From the back he looks like a man arrived at the end of a pilgrimage, not a mourner at all. When he is pulled away he does not resist. The firefighter looks him in the eyes and speaks at him, the words a thrum in the air, and releases his shoulders one at a time. He walks back to me slowly, dragging his feet in the current.

"Jesus, Luke," he says.

The firefighter shakes out a foil survival blanket from some hidden pocket and drapes it neatly over the bundle and weighs the corners down with rocks and then he comes back to us and says somebody ought to call the boy's parents. Vaughn and I nod without looking at him and he says "When you're ready to," and he leaves it at that. We sit back down on the rocks and we sit there a while.

"He's," says Vaughn, and then he turns away from me and starts to cry, hiding his face in his hands. I put an arm around his shoulders. So much tension in that musculature. Like his body might tear itself apart. I look at the blanket and the shape under it and think that if there is any wholly cruel thing in man's design it is that we remember most strongly what we refuse to see. I look for a long time. I look until the rescue helicopter arrives with a thrum in the air and whipping wind up in the canyon, displacing the lake surface in broad concentric ripples, beating the foil blanket into a shimmer, and I look while the firefighter and more rescue workers lift the thing onto a stretcher and tighten the straps around it, lift it away into the sky, and the helicopter rotors beat the wind harder and the unrestrained corners of the foil sheet beat the air and I cannot see a thing from so far away but I see nonetheless a shock of hair slicked black against skin, a forehead, an ear, the white line of a neck, already memories forever. The firefighter makes his way back to us and I see the blue of his eyes and wonder how they stay so clear.

"I'm sorry you boys had to see that," he says.

Vaughn has stopped crying now; his eyes are red but dry. He nods slowly. "It's good we found him," he says.

"Either of you ready to make that call?" says the firefighter.

"I will," Vaughn says. Some kind of atonement, perhaps.

I don't cry until after Noah's parents pick up the phone.

"We found him," Vaughn says, and then, "I'm so sorry."

Vintage Samo (photography), Robert Piascik

RACHEL BRITTON

Ófeigur Sigurðsson's *Öræfi: The Wasteland*, translated by Lytton Smith: a Review

The first line of Ófeigur Sigurðsson's *Öræfi: The Wasteland* prepares its readers for a journey of self-searching: "The glacier gives back what it takes, they say, eventually brings it to light." As I stood in the Skaftafell Visitor Center last summer, peering into a glass case of human debris from the 1953 British expedition on Öræfajökull, I could feel the glacial cracks in my bones. Broken tent poles. Pieces of clothing. Snapped skis. When the jökulhlaup swept those students away, a glacial rush of silt and water, it erased roads, street signs, buried cairns under snow.

From a distance, the Vatnajökull glacier seemed smaller, though it covers eight percent of Iceland's surface; but standing out on one of its many tongue glaciers, crampons digging for stability, the ice seemed to be all that ever was. On my way to Öræfi, I traveled with Sigurðsson's protagonist Bernharður Fingurbjörg across the south of the island, exploring its landscapes, environmental conservancy, and the history of death metal. Fingurbjörg, a toponymy student from Vienna, is conducting research for his doctoral thesis on place names and simultaneously searching for answers about his mother's experience at Mávabyggðir, a peak on the ice cap where the seagulls reportedly

roost. He is braving the glacier when he is viciously attacked by a wild sheep and forced to crawl all the way down to the same Skaftafell Visitor Center. There, his story is interpreted.

In Lytton Smith's translation of this Icelandic novel, place names become important markers, without which the protagonist and readers would be lost. Perhaps the most repeated word in the book is just that: *lost*. Fingurbjörg, who shares a last name with one of his destinations, admits early on that he is "going to Mávabyggðir to find [himself] because [he is] lost in the world." And so names guide like trail posts throughout the journey. Sigurðsson is clever, drawing connections to classic Icelandic literature like *Burnt Njal's Saga* and the *Poetic Edda*—naming a character after the latter allows the name-revering Fingurbjörg to literally have a romantic affair with poetry. Once we realize the wit behind character and place names, we find ourselves paying particular attention, constantly making connections to names and their inscribed meanings. Sigurðsson makes toponymists of us all.

As Bernharður moves from Reykjavík to Öræfi, he accumulates a band of companions. Each given a name that encompasses their identity, they teach Bernharður about the land he's traversing, offering impromptu and sometimes incorrect history lessons. The Regular, sometimes known as The Guest, is a particular mentor, getting the poet Bragi to provide Bernharður with a free collection of books—must-reads, according to the mentor. Bernharður lugs these with him in a bottomless trunk that follows him wherever he goes. He describes the trunk as "an extension of [his] body," and carries in it all his books, possessions, and cakes that his mother made for him to take on this journey. It even becomes a shelter, in which he can sleep, court Snorri's-Edda, and store his spices, especially his beloved caraway.

Sigurðsson's novel becomes a meditation on truth and fiction. As stories are told and retold, by Bernharður and a veterinarian named Dr. Lassi and an interpreter and the unnamed Auth., we must decipher and decide what it real and what is not. The Regular speaks to this in one of his rants, saying "the novel is the author's role, driven by fantasies and delusions, he shapes himself in fiction, finds his style and finally the style becomes the author's role, his character, the man himself is lost…" The novel is presented as a letter Bernharður has sent to Auth. A quite thorough, 200-page letter.

Formally, Öræfi rarely comes to a complete stop. The prose continues down the page in long sentences, often pausing only with the assistance of a comma, reminiscent of the *miðnætursól*, the midnight sun that stretches Iceland's days long and thin. The story, in this way, moves as though it is told directly through dialog, carrying on without pause; no matter how difficult the hike or painful the recited tale of Captain Koch's Greenland expedition, the plot pushes on into the unknown. This distinct form carries readers

through Bernharður's journey—through The Regular's rants, through the sheep attack, through the blinding erasure of a glacier.

Sigurðsson's novel is a clever, funny, and philosophical exploration of truth, land, and self. In the most basic sense, *Öræfi: The Wasteland* is the story of a tourist who comes to Iceland and falls into a crevasse. Along the way, we are swung around the twists and turns of human life—its truths and fictions—and led to question how we might make myth of our own lives.

NOAH MAZER

An Interview with Ófeigur Sigurðsson and Lytton Smith

Ófeigur Sigurðsson is the author of six books of poetry and three novels. He was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature in 2011 for his novel, *Jón*, making him the first Icelander to receive the prize. His novel *Öræfi: The Wasteland* was published in Iceland in 2014 to great critical and commercial acclaim, and received the Book Merchant's Prize in 2014 and the Icelandic Literature Prize in 2015.

Lytton Smith is the author of *My Radar Data Knows Its Thing*, *While You Were Approaching the Spectacle But Before You Were Transformed By It*, and *The All-Purpose Magical Tent*. He has translated several novels from the Icelandic in addition to *Öræfi* and is a 2019 recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Translation Fellowship. He is a professor of Creative Writing and Black Studies at SUNY Geneseo.

***Gandy Dancer*: Reading Öræfi in translation, I couldn't help but dwell on the passages that remind us of the presence of Interpreter, who relays Bernharður's words to Dr. Lassi, who writes the report described in Bernharður's letter received by Auth. in the spring of 2003. Reading passages in which Interpreter filters out "all the delirious babble and needless descriptions" and weaves together "a pithy narrative, an escalating, logical series of events," it's hard not to remember that English-language readers are consuming a text**

which has been translated. Were you aware, when writing these lines, that Öræfi would eventually find its way into English?

Ófeigur Sigurðsson: Good question! No, I was not aware of that; it would probably have blown my mind, since there were already so many layers of narration. The "babble" and "needless descriptions" was to me a little joke, since the narrative is consumed with some babble but necessary descriptions. My state of mind, as I was writing the novel, was such that I was sure nobody would ever want to publish it, so I felt completely free to do all kinds of literary stunts and had a lot of fun writing it.

***GD*: The reader is consistently reminded that the information we receive is traversing a chain of memory and interpretation in order to reach us, as exemplified in passages like "The snow was packed around me, hardened like concrete, said Bernharður, interpreted the interpreter, wrote Dr. Lassi in her report, or so Bernharður wrote to me in his letter that spring of 2003." Throughout the novel I found myself assuming that this technique is designed to make the reader question the truthfulness of the narrative: at the end of the book, the narrative, although based on a false premise, seems as though by virtue of its construction by only by one person, to be reliable after all. What can be said as to the ultimate truthfulness of the narrative?**

ÓS: Well, in the end it becomes clear that it is a work of fiction, as the author speaks from the future. This chain of memory and interpretation is an experiment to make transparent the multi layers of how stories generally come into being. The ultimate truthfulness of every narrative, I think, lies in the narrative itself. Meaning that it has to be agreable with the reader, even all the unbelievable things, supernatural and so on, have to be credible to make an emotional or mental connection between the text and the reader.

Lytton Smith: I'd also add that a narrative's truthfulness has to do, I think—and maybe this is the translator's experience speaking—with the moment and context in which you're reading the book. That the author is both writing from the future (as the afterword makes clear) and from the past (because working with things retrieved from the glacier, from the recent past for we as readers now, and echoing a real-life, mid-20th century tragedy), I can't help but read the truth of the narrative as a warning about how susceptible we are to climate. That doesn't even have to mean that we accept a human role in climate change, though of course I do; it's just that we're not at all humble before the environment at this point in U.S. history, and that's such a dangerous thing. The book's a fiction, Ófeigur writes, but maybe it's very much not, too...

***GD*: The novel's blurb presents its plot as the "mystery of Bernharður Fingurbjörg," although the way that the plot unfolds separates the book from the trope of a mystery which hinges on clues and signs and a collection of suspects. The unanswered mystery that remained for me at the end of the novel: who is the Author? Does it matter who they are?**

ÓS: The author of the book is a fictional author. It was intended so to give the discovered letter more credibility. And also, stretching the concept of authorship, there is a author behind every author.

***GD*: *Öræfi* combines a character-driven plot with passages on Icelandic geography and toponomy, a tally of seemingly every suicide in the Öræfi region from 1611 to 1793, a theory of poetics based on alkaline or basic fungi which grow inside the bodies of poets, and histories of Iceland's sheep and dogs. Is the novel written out of a particular formal tradition that American readers might not be familiar with?**

ÓS: Not that I am aware of, no; I do not think so. But, what I was trying to do was mix the European novel (whatever that might be, exactly), mainly my favorite authors at that time, for example Thomas Mann and Thomas Bernard, with the Sagas and the Icelandic folklore. Combining amateur writing with professional, natural talent and trained writing. If I succeeded, I am not sure. But every novel is an experiment, an experiment with form, structure, plot or non-plot. It is an adventure, a journey into the unknown. Thomas Mann said something like, if the author knew beforehand what the novel was going to be about or how it will finally be, he would never be able to write it. The novel seems, Mann said, to have a mind of its own. So the work of an author is to follow his intuition to find the way. The author has to invent a new form for every book. There is no formula for art.

LS: And, to echo Charles Olson and Robert Creeley's mantra, form is never more than the extension of content. But it's always interesting to think about how translation has to retrace what might have been the author's mindset: one task a translator has is to find touchstones that might work for the reader reading in the target language, i.e. American literary English; while European writers were a touchstone for me (and Bernard especially), you also find yourself thinking about discursive American writers with whom readers might be familiar, such as Richard Bach.

***GD*: What, if anything, was lost in the translation of this book from Icelandic to English? Translating poetry from English into Spanish this semester, I've found that English slides around its own rules of grammar more easily than Spanish does, and there's often not a way to avoid leaving something behind. What concerns did you have for the English version of *Öræfi*, and how were they dealt with in the English version of the novel?**

LS: Most students of translation at some point get told Robert Frost's adage that poetry is what gets lost in translation, and many more people know that saying than actually read translations. And there is something left behind, as you neatly put it, of course there is: in your case, the particular cadences of Spanish, which is softer in its consonance (at least to my ear) than English or Icelandic. But I think we have to remember any language is always in motion, like a glacier is; it's just invisible to us until a major event—a glacial flood, a coinage of a divisive word or syntax, a translation—happens. So there will be nuances of Icelandic history and culture that don't make it across; details that resonate with many Icelandic readers will either fall on deaf ears in the U.S. or not make it into the translation. And yet I think, if the translation has worked, the atmosphere has become a bridge between these two texts. I know it's more abstract that your question's asking, but I think of translation as an anti-nationalist endeavour: it's not replacing one national literature with another, but recognizing the impossibility of national categories, that we're always globally influenced (see Ófeigur's last answer!). Different Icelandic readers will get different things; it's not that there's a guaranteed, essential version of the novel in Icelandic. So while you try to get everything across, you can't, because the novel is always a moving target, its language more like a river than an ice sculpture.

***GD*: Students of literature are trained not to conflate narrator/characters of a text with the author. In a book where characters frequently perform the literary equivalent of turning to the camera and addressing the audience directly, and in which the author and a central character share the experience of having been teenage Icelanders in death metal bands, how wise is it to assume that there is separation between author and character?**

ÓS: I am sometimes of the opinion that all the characters are the author, and if I remember correctly, I think it says something of that sort in the book. At least, the characters reflect the author, some in a negative way, some in a positive way. Writers use their experience to build characters. I, for example, have a lot in common with the Regular, I gave him a lot of my own past, same experience regarding the death metal, same address, same interests, same experience in Öræfi with Kiddi, and a lot of people see him as me, the author, me included, sometimes, although the trip and meeting Bernhardur is pure fiction. And I agree with not conflating characters with the author, for the work of fiction should stay a work of fiction and not be dragged into reality by trying to find the truth. There is no reality-truth in fiction, only fiction-truth.

***GD*: Dr. Lassi speaks for nearly six pages about her disillusionment with her career as a veterinarian, which she reduces to "castrating and killing." Within this speech, addressed to the Interpreter, Dr. Lassi speculates briefly that**

she will give up veterinary medicine and apply herself "to creative writing," which she calls "the most exalted and most sinful thing, worse than castrating and killing." What should we make of this statement's place within a work of fiction? Is Dr. Lassi right, or does her judgement reflect her inexperience with writing?

ÓS: Well, I do not know what to make of all of Dr. Lassi's opinions. She was hard to handle and a bit of a untamed beast. You are right in assuming that her judgement reflects her inexperience. That is a very good point, since she is insecure after being intimidated by her parents when she was young and wanted to become a writer. Now, wanting to break out of the security of her daily job as a vet, she hesitates about going into the insecurity of being a writer. But she is right in a way. Writing is linked to guilt since it is most often non-economical and seems not to be doing any good, to be a waste of time, done alone in a room, to be for lazy people, etc. As with all artists, she often doubts her ability and talent. Art is not about just doing a job; you have to create the job first and then do it well. Maybe she was reading *Literature and Evil* by Georges Bataille? I don't know, maybe that's it.

LS: I just want to add that I love how Ófeigur's responding here in a way that recognizes characters have a life of their own! I think they can both be parts of ourselves (of our psyche) and also unknown to us, for we never fully know our deepest selves. And maybe that's what makes translation possible: we're not trying to faithfully copy a certain answer, but sharing the experience of trying to explore and understand characters and plots alongside the author. I've been fascinated recently with the metaphysical problem known as the Ship of Theseus: if you have Theseus's ship set up as a museum artifact, and a board rots, and you replace it, and another, and another, one at a time, until all the boards have been replaced, do you still have Theseus's ship? Maybe that's what translation is: the ship of Theseus.

Intervals

First Unitarian Church of Rochester, 1988

Before the sermon begins, I puke
blood in a cramped hallway & leave without

cleaning up the mess.
What grace—

Am I Eve? Biblical pariah,
my girl body disturbs me: pink

collection plate. Sweat gathers
in hairless armpits, oocytes stir yet

their travel will, for another twenty years, produce
only cyclical absence.

Nascent breasts under loose tops,
I learn my empty slough is something

to hide in bathroom stalls, feminine
pad expel, expelled to a backpack or purse.

I learn to exaggerate the pain when I want to
skip gym class. Like all the Raggedy Anns.

What does my teacher—without knowing—conceal
& predict when he quickly averts his eyes?

He gives me sweaty permission
to read alone in the nurse's office: thin membrane

curtain, foldaway clot, tart red
juice in a Styrofoam cup.

Mother of all my living, my living all
my mother, I was a chiasmus from the start

& go two months in utero until she's onto
me. Her ovum is my ovum is my twin

daughters, delicate split moon,
who do not yet know their bodies are ritual gardens,

who do not yet know its clockwork catch & release,
who do not yet know God

is gone too soon from this place.
What wisdom is there in shedding?

Cardinal

"Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself." —Sylvia Plath

My daughter dreams of dogs, saliva like glossy tripwire. As the pack circles her bed,
showing teeth, she readies (red as the desire for red) her face for impact, menace
of a fiction that feels real. She wakes & screams, eyes glissando from darkness to
darkness, I come, I say: "In your house, in your bed, nothing can hurt you-

I have been avoiding this
poem. I don't want to be
pulled under the wheels of—

I want to write
about my daughter, who I think could live forever :: unscathed, smiling
if I can just love her enough,
remind her of everything that is:

Look—the thick
kisses of sunrise, the hushed way
someone dresses
for work.

not death,
not you.
Jo, my daughter, is
not you but she is
you

Joah: a simple, obscure Biblical name,
masculine, yet suicide is women's
work: trill of impact, your eyelet dress blooms rust
as the Amtrak "Cardinal" separates you & nothing &
can hurt you.

"What is the point of dreams, anyway?" Jo asks.
She holds me hard, arms soft hooks (*as if clinging could save us*), I kiss & kiss her nightmare until it oxidizes clear:

red pink girl this—

Hush—cadence of dissolving.

It's all right, but (let's be clear) you should have lived, you lived with cousins who kept you: clean & confident, Peter Pan collars *stiff as a board, light as a feather*. Your older sister, Thea, was sent to (this feels like fiction) Aunt Icy Leona who spoke to her as if she was already dead, who put my grandmother in charge of the household laundry, left alone as long as the washboard & soap flakes did their work. Red-eye :: stain, release.

Midwestern Cinderella. A songbird with teeth.

Jo: diminutive of Josephine, feminine of Joseph.
She will add/give/increase. I named my daughter
after that outspoken March daughter, a novel
I loved when I thought I couldn't love anyone
more than my mother. We inherit this desire to take
life :: an affectionate mother, this—

the last
day of April. Red tulips rise
outside my window, the cling
of my :: death-breath, poem, (you & not you) girl
trills in the next room, softly
like feathers or fur, or lucid dreams,
or how you imagine
everything could have been.

About the Authors

Mitchell Angelo is a junior Creative Writing major at SUNY Purchase, with a focus in poetry and a minor in Theatre & Performance. His work covers topics like gender, the environment, and anything pancake shaped.

Rachel Britton is a 2017 graduate of SUNY Geneseo. She studied abroad in Iceland with Lytton Smith and currently works at Poets & Writers, Inc.

Caroline Beltz-Hosek received her M.A. in Poetry from SUNY Brockport. A former assistant editor at Penguin Putnam, she has taught creative writing and literature at SUNY Geneseo since 2006. Her poems have been published in *The Fourth River* and *Minetta Review*. Additionally, she was awarded a 2018 Incentive Grant from the Geneseo Foundation for "The Long Diminishing Parade," a poetry collection based in part on her maternal ancestors, which explores topics of motherhood, mental illness, alienation and the immigrant experience, and the role that place—real and imagined, personal and historical—plays in shaping identity and creative expression.

Lucas Cook is a junior at SUNY University at Buffalo. He is a Fine Arts major with a concentration in photography. His photographs have a nonlinear narrative and focus on the mundane, composition, and texture.

Sarah DeLena is currently studying English and Professional Writing at SUNY Cortland. She hopes to become an editor and writer of YA literature, her favorite genre, own at least two golden retrievers, and further the legacy of the Oxford comma.

Meg Fellows is a senior English (Creative Writing) major at SUNY Geneseo. In her spare time, she indulges in feminist literature and political podcasts, and her work can be found in *The Finger* and *acorn & iris*.

Grace Gilbert is currently studying Childhood/Special Education and English (Creative Writing) at SUNY Geneseo. Grace is a finalist in *Sweet Literary Magazine*'s 2018 poetry contest, and her work can or will be found in *Anomaly Literary Journal*, *Twyckenham Notes*, *Maudlin House*, *Pretty Owl Poetry*, *Gandy Dancer*, *Glass Mountain*, and other publications. She hopes to pursue an MFA in poetry.

Danielle Gonzalez is a fourth-year student at SUNY Geneseo. Danielle enjoys writing fiction to satisfy her inner child. When she's not writing or praying you can find her looking out the window, spotting birds.

Emily Hargitai is a senior Creative Writing student at SUNY Purchase and a recipient of the 2018 Ginny Wray

Prize in Poetry. She likes writing poems about writing poems and currently has six gray hairs.

Natalie Hayes is a double major in English (Creative Writing) and Film Studies at SUNY Geneseo. She is extremely passionate about all facets of the arts, including but not limited to film, writing, and the visual arts. She is most interested in where these forms overlap, and in engaging in them collaboratively.

Heather Loase is a senior at SUNY Plattsburgh and is working towards a BA in Printmaking. She recently started submitting to the *New Yorker* and has had two Daily Shouts pieces published on their website. Heather likes finding humor in the humorless contradictions embedded in modern life. She loves skiing, horror movies and napping.

Alaina Maggio studies creative writing at SUNY New Paltz. She grew up on Long Island, in Sound Beach, New York.

Brian Menia is a junior at SUNY Plattsburgh studying graphic design. His work invites the viewer to explore vice and recklessness in relation to art history, as well as the value of art in relation to business. He explores these avenues in Sticky Licks, an ongoing design initiative.

Julia Merante is a junior English (Creative Writing) major at SUNY Geneseo. She also has minors in Biology and Human Development. Her goal after college is to earn her MFA. In her free time, she enjoys her waitressing job, traveling, and watching movies with her mom.

Robert Piascik is a Communication major at SUNY Geneseo and a member of Chromatic, Geneseo's newest visual arts group.

Parker Reid is a student at the University at Albany's School of Social Welfare currently working on their bachelor's degree. Some of their hobbies include writing, reading, and knitting. After graduation they would like to use their education to serve the lgbtq+ youth community.

Sydney Shaffer is a junior Creative Writing major at SUNY Purchase. She loves cats, coffee, really long walks in the snow, and poetry.

Colin Sharp-O'Connor is a junior at SUNY Purchase.

Erika Snyder is a multimedia artist from upstate New York. She relies deeply on content, dimension, and color. Snyder's passion is to enhance the figure's beauty and complement it with suggestions of movement.

Misty Yarnall wrote a five page story in third grade, and never stopped writing. Growing up in northern New York, she obtained sixteen awards for her short fiction and poetry, along with a publication in *Thousand Islands Life*. She is currently a Creative Writing major at Monroe Community College and is working on a novel.