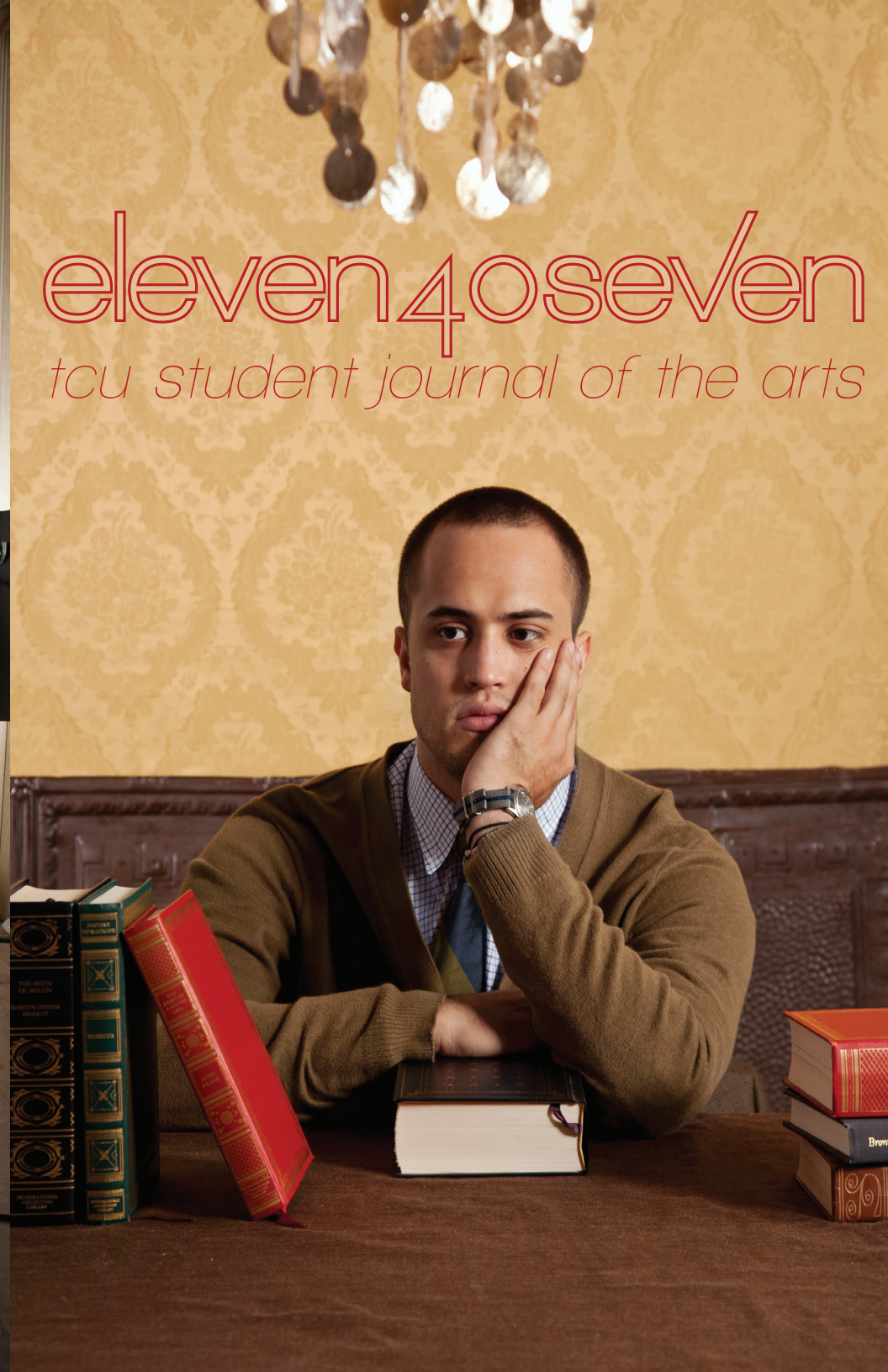




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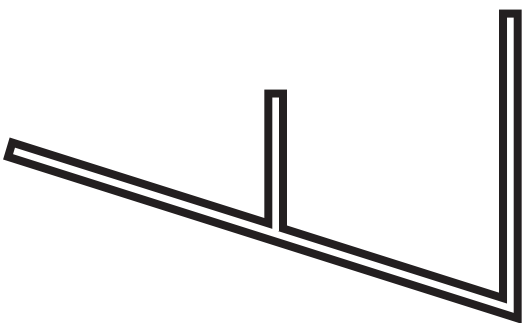
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“YOU CAN'T DEPEND ON YOUR
EYES WHEN YOUR IMAGINATION
IS OUT OF FOCUS.”

Mark Twain
American writer and novelist

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Woody Allen's *Manhattan* opens with a writer trying to figure out how to properly express his love for New York City. He's not having a difficult time because he has writer's block or because he can't find inspiration; it's because he can't find the words to express what he feels for New York. I had a very similar problem in beginning this editor's note. How does one write how wonderful they think the work represented in this journal is? Cue the Gershwin, and I'll give it a shot.

I've read or been a part of this journal ever since my sophomore year and have always been, and still am, amazed at the quality of work it showcases. Biases aside, I don't believe that there has been as strong a representation of the TCU creative community as there is in our Fall 2011 issue.

Every issue, as we go through submissions, we pick the work we feel is the strongest and then see if we can find a theme. Some years the theme hides itself. This year, we were fortunate enough to have it jump right out at us. If you'll examine our front and back cover (Paige Perry's "Untitled Film Still #46), you'll notice that you're seeing the same thing twice, but in a different way the second time. Read through Bill Hamlett's palindromic poem, "Reflections" and Nicole Johnson's genre-blending, "New Skies, The Same" and you'll see these pieces literally use the same words twice, but with a different impact in each instance. This journal represents that TCU artists are so creative that they can pull something so different out of things that are, at their core, the exact same.

Our advertising slogan this semester ("For a Limited Time Only") had a degree of bitterness to it. At the beginning of this year we posed the suggestion that this time, the college years, is the only time in which people could express themselves as freely as they wished through their creative work without anyone trying to change that art or how it represents the artist. However, as I read through the sonically-joyful "Irregardless" by Elora Davis, the southern gothic-y "The Earth Laid Bare" by Travis Freeman, and see the beauty Xing You pulled from people simply walking the streets of Italy in his photos, "Couple by Ponte Vecchio" and "Violino nella Notte", I am reminded of the final lines from *Manhattan* and know that there is something wrong with that (slightly pessimistic) thought we had only a few months ago:

"Not everybody gets corrupted. You have to have a little faith in people."

Thank you for submitting to, reading, and supporting this journal. Enjoy the issue and also take the time to check out the extended Web edition at www.1147.tcu.edu for more great content.

NATHAN PESINA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

REFLECTIONS

Bill Hamlett

Bill is a junior Writing and French double major from McKinney, TX.

6

the wind
rushing through

red cypress, wild
grasses' cool churning

the apprehension
of the sumacs' red-brown

droops before
their golden blooming

here, roots fold
into the serpentine stream

the stone standing strong is
as a strong standing stone

in the streaming of serpentine
roots, folding here

their golden-blooms
drooped before

the brown-red sumacs'
apprehensive

churning: cool grasses,
wild cypress red

rushing through
the wind

IRREGARDLESS

Elora Davis

Elora is a senior English
major from Plano, TX.

Irregardless,
You aren't true.
You have no bearing
Behind
The words of precision,
Like tofu
Trying to moo in a field of cattle,
Versus the grammatical
Unpredictably fanatical
Actual—
Sabbatical
(I call for grammatical sabbatical!)

Suffocation
Smothervation
Vacation . . .

Irregardless,
You were too
Trendelicious
To ignore
 To succumb
 To surrender
 To—

Irregardless,
I shouldn't have used you.
You are a bird
Pinned like a fly,
Amongst other flies
Who indulge their needles,
And the brave beetles
Can't scuttle.

(stanza break, poem continued on next page)

You are used still:
Is your bird bill
Free?
(Sing!)

Truly,
I have too much fun
Using you
For emphasis,
The synthesis
Of nonsense
And better sense!

Better sense to get my point across
To feel what I really feel
Inside
And let it free
Fly free
As flies flee:
Short-lived,
But fruitful

Fruit flies
Eager eyes
Electrifies
Lazy lives

Heart-wrenching
Goodbyes
Are worthless without
Words
Without deviation

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

IRREGARDLESS

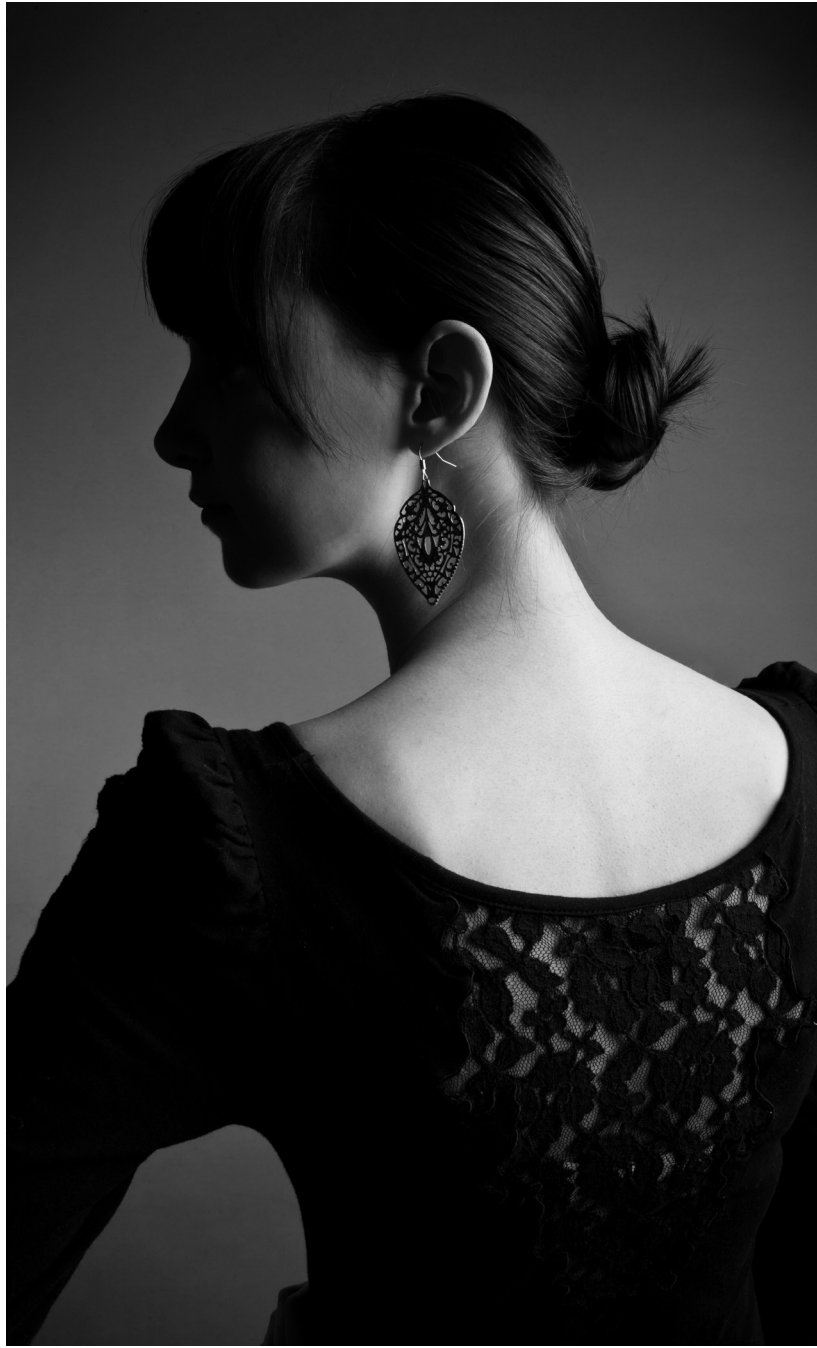
And expression,
A heart anew
Beating fresh
Bird feathers
Versus the grammatical
Free from tyrannical
To finally feel
The radical actual!

Irregardless,
The needles nag away,
Needless the pain
And yet they stick,
Ceaseless.

(Am I still right?)

The world turns on its side
Barely gripping its axis,
Yet still it turns.
So fly!

Bird wings grow feathers;
They last longer
Than the fly wings
Made of spindly webs,
Brittle nets,
And an affinity for pins.





The day Antonio Mamouk was born the world stopped dancing. The rain stood suspended; the rivers were hushed silent. Conversations were held indefinitely. Wars took a break. Plates full of food stood before guests, taunting them, waiting to be eaten. Athletes were captured mid-jump. Breaths were never let go. Mamouk grew while everybody stood still.

Mamouk woke up. It took him one hour to get out of his bed, between dreams and half-dreams of an ice castle in a place called Teheran or something like that. He considered taking a shower and then considered not taking one; it was cold, and he wasn't planning on going outside. He looked at himself in the mirror and admired his mustache. He liked it; he thought it made him look dignified. He looked away before he could catch sight of his receding hairline. He washed his face. He put on a robe.

Breakfast was waiting for him on the kitchen table. Mamouk had made sure of that, last night and every night. He made himself a cup of coffee and poured it in his favorite mug. His friend had given it to him at one of those parties Mamouk really liked, at which friends would sit and laugh and drink and give each other mugs if they felt like doing so.

Mamouk farted. He looked outside the window down the familiar suburban lane, at the floating birds about to perch on his cloth line, at the kid on the green bike, his knees ready to push the pedals and continue the ride. He had been there for as long as Mamouk could remember, and then a little more. Mamouk had wanted to bike, at some point, but now he thought it a silly wish for a grown mustached man. He had decided to learn Mandarin

instead, and he would start to do so any time now. Or perhaps he would learn how to drive, or write a short story like he always had wanted to.

But he wouldn't; the world had tired of resting.

It started out as a dark mood clouding his mind, and a falling leaf finally reaching the ground it had been so close to for years. He dropped his cup and somewhere in the world another cup also shattered, like it meant to long ago. Somewhere, a pianist reached the final chord, releasing her audience from suspense. Everywhere, thousands of people died. Thousands were born. Mamouk died. His eyes closed; he fell forward; a door closed, another opened; a call was made; a call received. His bowels loosened; hundred of toilets flushed; a kid fell from his bike, and birds took flight. His kitchen was filled with the smell of death.

The minute Mr. Mamouk died, the world continued its dance, as if nothing had happened, almost as if he had never existed. His only legacy was a corpse in a kitchen, and a man looking for his mug, where the heck is it; he just put it on this table, like, a second ago.

THE BUTCHER'S WIFE

Diana Dunigan

Diana is a senior Writing major from Fort Worth, TX.

14

She always stood idly by,
pondering, watching, engulfed in silence,
fascinated by the precise art of slaughter,
committing everything to memory.

One day she asked her husband
if she could try her hand at the slaughter.
Her blade slid effortlessly through the flesh,
separating the meat from the bones.

The blood no longer bothered her,
nor did the agonized cries of her kill.

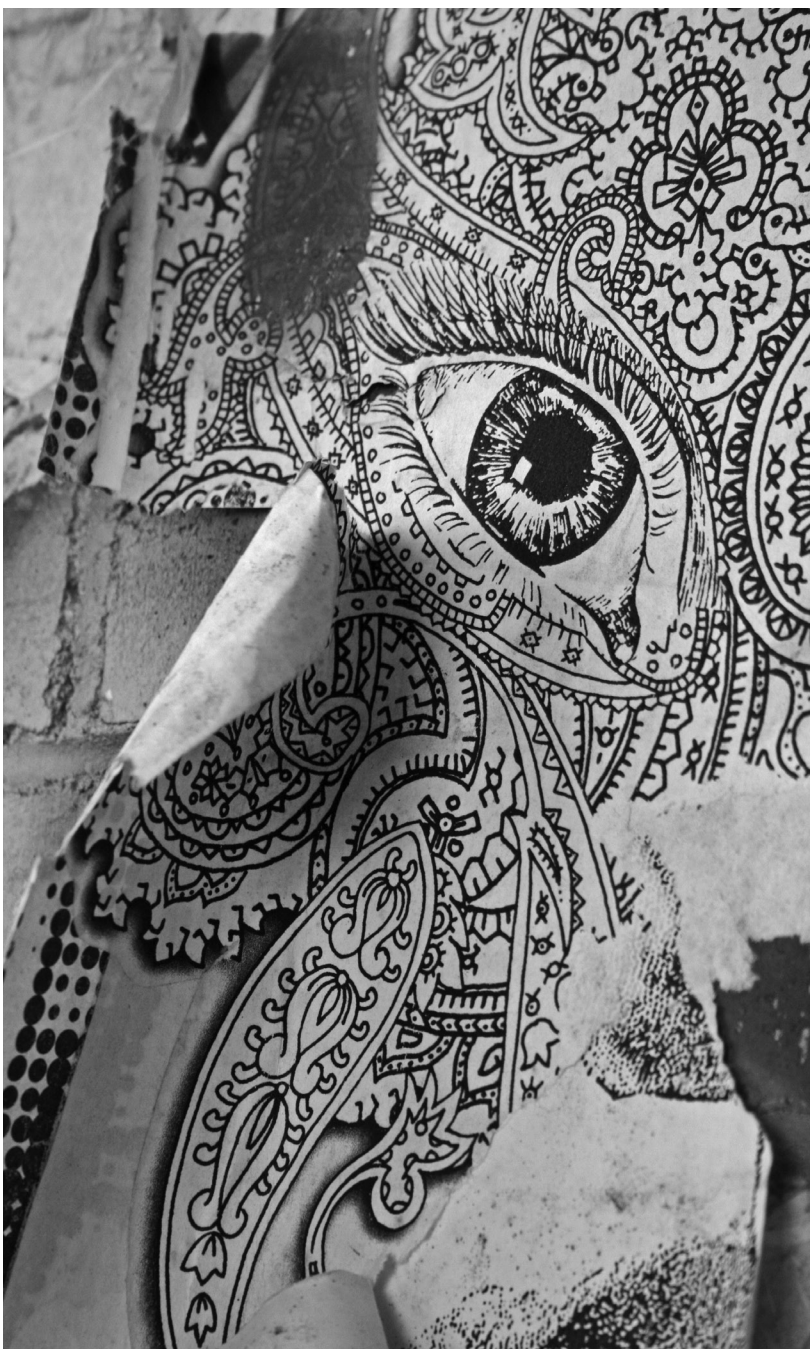
Her heart had grown cold and hard as stone,
but she knew he would never commit adultery
again.

The chasm he had created between them
was now his shallow grave,
and she was all too happy to bury him.

UNTITLED

Tyler Reed

Tyler is a sophomore Film-TV-Digital-Media and Philosophy double major from Albuquerque, NM.



Nicole Johnson

Nicole is a senior Film-Television-Digital Media, Writing and Theater triple major from Sugar Land, TX.

NEW SKIES, THE SAME

Departure

The world has been the same for so long, become white noise in the background. Surroundings blur into forgotten watercolor as your eyes stare forward towards a new destination. The sky no longer exists unless a deviation attracts attention, and the ground is merely a platform to get from place to place, each the same as you remember it. You pass ordinary people that will soon become history. One last look back, and they become memorable. You are leaving behind the familiar world you've grown so accustomed to that you no longer look around or observe the miracles.

Arrival

New sky. It's on the same planet, but it's not the same; somehow it's bluer, and the clouds make graceful shapes that are whiter than before. New earth. It still traverses point A and B, but the path is new and unpredictable. New people. They are the same species, but nothing about them is the same. They are alien but not extraterrestrial. Everything is new, to be uncovered.

Across the street is a beautiful, shimmering building—tall with clean lines. Its windows look freshly cleaned, and they reflect the brilliance of the sunlight. You take a step to cross the street but then get distracted by the cafe on the corner. What would the coffee taste like there? It must be wondrous and smooth, not at all bitter like the coffee from where you left. You pass a street musician playing music like you have never heard. Smile and watch. Listen. Explore.

Honeymoon

The sun shines, even if the clouds, grey and forlorn, haunt the sky. The rays of light illuminate everything with streams of hope and beauty. The breeze, no

matter how hot or cold, breathes a welcoming whisper against the skin, and the world is fresh again. Walking feels lighter and freer as the ground cushions each step forward, never backward. Look back to see the people walk past. Double takes are necessary to retain it all. All of it is so new and exciting.

People clamor past, absorbed in their lives, their magical lives. They look ahead, not noticing the beauty around them. How can they not marvel at the splendor? But they are beautiful too. They are part of the beauty. Each face is new and brilliantly unique. You see eyes of green, brown and blue, but each shade is brighter and more vibrant than any eyes you can remember. Faces of every shape surround you; you can't remember ever seeing such a variant mixture of magnificence. They speak a cacophony of musical syllables, difficult to understand, but so beautiful to listen to anyway. Sit still, and the wondrous world washes past, caressing and kissing with each rush. To be a part of this world would be remarkable. You are in a bubble of pure perfection, a snow globe of sparkling radiance.

Find a place to sit and experience. Be in the world, but not of it. Not yet. It's too perfectly foreign. Try the food—edible treats that reach taste buds never before touched. Experience the music as the elaborate beats awaken your dulled eardrums. Reach out to the people. All of it is there for the taking.

Frustration

The sky opens up in rain and lightning. The city is angry. It has set the trap and now laughs as the wire spring snaps, and you are left broken with nothing but the cheese that you now discover is molded. Each step reaches out to trip feet, and the ground has become cracked, uneven concrete with nails protruding

to penetrate even the sturdiest shoe. Exploring is impossible, deterred by the cruel surroundings. Buildings tower above, looming over you, edging closer and closer to crush you. What was once beautiful in its exotic foreignness is now vicious and petty.

Try to stop and rest, reclaim a sense of balance, and the world shoves and pushes, forcing unsteady progress. Forward movement is impossible. Stagnation. The brain cannot accept such massive changes. Turn to someone and ask a question. They stare. They ignore you and continue walking. They respond with random vowels and consonants. Sounds flow from their lips, but communication is futile. The once beautiful, musical language is now the barrier. Ask again, and they shake their head and ignore the outsider. You cannot be part of their world that you do not understand.

Surely somewhere must be warm and inviting, must have some trace of comforting familiarity. Follow the path of the street, look all over. Brave the treacherous terrain. To the left and right are strange buildings and malicious people casting shadows on your path. Claustrophobic. Search anywhere and everywhere for people like those left behind, places locked back home. Every face is strange and angry; hostile eyes stare back at you. Places are barred and uninviting. Friendless. Homeless. Coping is impossible. Nothing to do but return to your apartment.

Understanding

The world is not as strange as it seemed. The paths lead to the same place every time. Learning the way isn't too difficult. Turn left for the grocery store, where you have learned that they sell fresh vegetables for negotiable prices. Turn right for the best nightclub, where the bartender will give you a complimentary drink

NEW SKIES . THE SAME

every once in a while. Straight ahead and to the right is a delicious restaurant. You like to go there for their half-priced appetizers on weekdays. Getting around is easy enough.

The language isn't gibberish. Each syllable has meaning, a meaning that can be understood. Speaking a bit of it is possible as well. Ask where the restroom is. They understand and point. Ask for a drink and receive one. The people are much more helpful now. They try to help as best as they can with the little communication that can be achieved. A few of them can now be considered friends. They help the most.

The fever of homesickness still rages, but this new place can be home, too. Several places hold a sense of familiarity. The pictures of home spend more time on display and less time being cried over. Reminisce occasionally, but live in the now. Here, in this new home, comfort can be achieved. You have added several nicknacks that have just as many meaningful memories as your former home. The wooden horse was given to you by your neighbor when you moved in, along with a note welcoming you to a dinner where the two of you became good friends. You found the ceramic vase at the market that you stumbled upon during your first month here.

The clouds come and go. Moisture gathers in the air, collecting in the clouds until it falls and waters the earth. Rain and shine depending on the day. Each day brings new experiences and understanding. The storm passes and shall come again, but eventually the sun always rises. Look to the east and watch the orb of hope rise to a new day, new experiences, another step forward towards home.

Acclimation

The sun shines, or it hides behind clouds. The rain falls, or it doesn't. The world is as it is, and to be part of it is to accept it. This once strange and difficult place is now recognizable - known like a book you have read several times. The world moves, and it is now second nature to move with it. Walk forward without paying attention. The path will lead where it always does - where you expect to go.

Several people pass and smile. They are friends, acquaintances, practically family. Smile back, and be home. The home left behind is rarely desired. The tears once drenching the picture frames are slowly replaced with a film of dust. You belong here. It's almost as if you've always been here. The language is easy to speak and hear. Communication succeeds without a second thought. Fluency. Occasionally, your native language gets lost in the brainwaves.

Someone stops to ask you for directions. The way comes easily. The stranger moves at an uneven pace with the rest of the world, throwing off the flow of the universe. The day continues without a hitch, no stumbles in this familiar world.

Boredom

Everyday is the same. Everyday, get up, go to work, see the same people, do the same things. Everyday, following the same path as the day before. No need to look around or explore anymore, because everything looks the same as it did yesterday. You picture your surroundings with closed eyes. It is as if the world has stopped turning. Surely, the rest of the world must be moving forward, but this place has stopped.

You go out and try something new. A new restaurant has opened, but it is just like the restaurant

NEW SKIES . THE SAME

down the street. Everything tastes the same. The language, once so fresh and lyrical on the tongue, is just a collection of familiar sounds and regular meanings. Nothing special. You've seen and done it all so many times. Walk down the street, but everywhere you turn is cliché—seen and done it so many times. Been there, done that. Go to the café, and they give you your coffee exactly how you like it without you even telling them what you want. Just the usual. Always the usual.

Trapped

Everyday in a spinning hamster wheel. You're going nowhere ever. Everything the same.

Departure

The world has been the same for so long, become white noise in the background. Surroundings blur into forgotten watercolor as your eyes stare forward towards a new destination. The sky no longer exists unless a deviation attracts attention, and the ground is merely a platform to get from place to place, each the same as you remember it. You pass ordinary people that will soon become history. One last look back, and they become memorable. You are leaving behind the familiar world you've grown so accustomed to that you no longer look around or observe the miracles.

VIOLENO NELLA NOTTE

Xing You

Xing is a senior Film-TV-Digital Media major from Chengdu, China.



COUPLE BY PONTE VECCHIO

Xing You



Travis Freeman

Travis is a senior English major from
Holly, Michigan.

THE EARTH LAID BARE

We seen the smoke pourin' over the ridge at first light. Ma, she firstly mistook it for locusts eatin' their way across the plain, come now to lay their vengeance upon us. But no, 'twere a fire on the slope, comin' on down quick like a man runnin' towards the sweet hereafter, the devil dogs snappin' at his heels.

It were dry as a pharaoh's bones up there since the Good Lord ain't seen fit to bring the rain on account of Jesse's curse 'pon His blessed being. Jesse, course, havin' lost Sally to the fever winter 'fore last. You know the story—Old Jesse had gotten himself rip-roarin' drunk and made off for the wood, collectin' his axe an' wedge, with aims to fell “the biggest damned pine” he could find. Sally, she followed his sorrowful bones out there, found him asleep not a hundred feet in, snow collectin' 'pon his boots. She drug his drunken body back to the homestead, an' soon after fell ill.

Ma, she tried every damned thing she could—apple-root, tappis switch, radish marmalade, even pulled the witch doctor that lives in Idlers' cave to Sally's bedside, but weren't nothin' could be done. She succumbed to the fever, sweatin' and callin' out for Jesse, who weren't nowhere to be found. After we laid poor old Sally down in the earth, Jesse took up the drink with a special dedicated earnestness. On a 'specially fruitful evenin' of corn mash consumption, he screamed high up above and down the valley, swearin' an everlastin' hatred for the One who had taken beautiful Sally far, far too soon. “By God, I'll never forget the damndable thing you've done!” he proclaimed, howlin' an' baying like a frothin' mad coyote. A storm had been movin' in quick from the west, just over the hills, an' we'd all swear to everything holy that storm up an' vanished the minute them words left his mouth.

But now that fire were up there, eatin' like a beast the dry kindlin' wood. It crackled an' cried in a voice indecipherable—but wicked, otherworldly. Jesse came runnin' on down the hill, black with soot from head to toe, a terrible fear in his eyes. "It's all on me! Oh Lord, it's all on me!" he says. Seems Old Jesse had been fiddlin' with that still of his when it burst right open, spark an' flame shootin' out like the stars had descended from the sky. He had hoofed it 'fore the fire really got a'goin', rippin' down that hill like an avalanche.

I yelt up to Ma to get them kids an' kin an' hustle like a bee, for I knew that fire was all consumin' an' unlikely to stop on its own accord. But Ma, she didn't take kindly at all to no discomfort. I seen her last standin' at the foot of the hill, yellin' up "Go on now, you beastly thing! You ain't got no home here! Get'cha back from whence you came!" wavin' her broom like some witch outta hell. Ma, she burned up quick like a January Christmas tree.

I gathered up the children with a quickness an' we all hitched fast to a rock in the middle of Keechie Creek, Jesse moanin' for Sally an' a sweet release out of this world. "Take me! Take me! Burn me to the bone!" he said, but he weren't about to move outta that water. The kids and me, we all hung on real tight, holding close to that rock as the river washed by cold an' dark. Our eyes stayed 'pon the shore, watchin' that fire race on down with speed unimaginable.

That fire, it crawled back and forth, vicious an' cruel, spyin' for anyway to get at us. It turned its rage onto the homestead, leapin' tree to tree, branch to branch, finally burstin' in through the door an' back out the windows. The old house, it finally gave way under its own weight, gutted an' empty.

I seen a few of them mares we'd set loose runnin' southward down the river bank. That fire came 'pon them in nothing flat, an' they burst up real quick. They was ashen remnants in seconds. A terrible gale came roarin' down the valley, scatterin' 'em straight up to heaven like a dark blizzard—maybe kinda like them pillars of salt from Gomorrah of yore.

We all stayed put through the night, till there weren't nothing livin', nor nothin' worth burnin' left on the shore. We made our way back through the current, draggin' Jesse and his burden all the way. 'Tweren't nothin' left standin', save for the skeleton of a tree or two, maybe a smolderin' fence post or a gutted bee hive. The children, their faces all blank stares and open mouths, kicked through the wreckage, salvagin' what they could. Jesse, he just stood motionless for a while, seein' what it truly was he had wrought.

'Twere a reckonin' that day, to be sure. I believe that fire were after Jesse hisself. An' I know Old Jesse believed that for certain. He done gave up the corn mash and renounced the Devil an' all his wicked ways. An' the rains did return, like clockwork, and I do believe that Old Sally, well, she smiles down at that man, an' all that he has become. The fields, the trees, the bees and the mares, well, they all did return as well—all that ash sweetened up the ground, an' the crops were as good as any as I have ever seen.

Ain't it just like a fire to lay bare the earth—to clean out all the underbrush an' old dead wood. A clearin' out of all those residual things that build and build, takin' up space a man needs for living. An' it's a shame, surely, that so much pain is necessary in the great burn - the Fire, it don't know innocent from guilty, deservin' from undeservin'. It only knows how to burn.

T H E E A R T H L A I D B A R E

At the end of the day, the fields heavy with wheat, the limbs of the trees hangin' low with fruit, the clouds blowin' in quick over the hills just waitin' to drop their burden, well, Ma, she is always there in my mind. I think of her an' her words that day, an' the horrible lesson of nature provided to me—Fire don't stop for nothing, not even the truth. Best just hold close what's dear, and get the hell outta the way.

Anannya Mukherjee

Anannya is a senior English and Philosophy double major from Mumbai, India.

TODAY'S ASSIGNMENT IS

When I said I'd paint the archway,
I was lying to your face, and
they were lying once again, and they were
lying once again
My trashcan's full of crumpled art, it's really crap,
because I can't
make head or tail of beauty and of living and of
bowls of fruit, or
naked girls with
pearls around their
skinny throats;
Art's a fucking waste of time.
It's all about abstractions now,
"The concept," said my
teacher as he
pointed at the picture of Duchamp's upside down
urinal he likes to call a fountain.

If dirt were art and beauty ugly, I could probably
paint the archway redpurplegrey, couldn't I?
But they'd make me stone myself if I did
something like that, and your eyes would
bob around the room, and she'd be
throwing her head back as she part-
took of champagne, her earrings
swinging while she sampled finger foods,
and her laugh
reminded me that she won all the
competitions
purely out of talent alone.
And that would seal the deal for you,
so what's the point? Why
work at building my technique?

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

I may as well just fling the paint;
pour it on the canvas, let it
fall to where it will, and hope
that somehow, when it
trickles down the
surface, it'll fill a groove or two, and somehow
be considered
abstract art.

HARDBOILED DETECTIVE

Paige Perry





I found our mixed CD from 2002
 and I remember you told me,
 "More speed, more power!"
 The iron horse will float-
 past the rainbow wall.

A stallion lighter than air,
 and heavier than water,
 slipping, faster, restless
 like the sleds from Christmas
 thawing under the deck.

Gliding on a
 sheen of elixir
 and as long-gone
 as the days guitars,
 we chose playing laughter
 instead of memories.

So I promise you
 I will remember
 the handsome
 strength of the blank
 CD,
 a friend who
 never says
 goodbye.

i wonder

if someone else called you
to tell them a story
because the nightmares wouldn't cut their ropes,
would you kick your heels
upon your desk and spin
a tale as long as the night itself
until they fell asleep?

you were always writing me
into fairytales
and sometimes they helped
fight the darkness

did I ever tell you about those nightmares?
how I heard an old folktale
about La Llorona
a story of
the wailing woman
maestro of a symphony of screams
and how she came to me in a dream
weeping and screeching
and clawing at her eyes
through the tangle of the black woods in front of me
twisting riddles through my slumber.

do you remember when
they took me to a grave
and you told me about cancer
and how you thought that you'd die young?

(stanza break, poem continued on next page)

you said it
so calmly
as if the dead around you
were offering up their Easter lilies
as a bridal bouquet
to be tossed to a lucky relative
and i just looked at you
with sea-glass eyes
and you kissed me
as the tears spilled over
into silent rivers
down my cheeks

and am I La Llorona,
the weeping woman?
because that's all I ever
seemed to do

the dreams are gone now
or, rather, the nightmares
but there are some things
more haunting in reality.

i wonder
if the story has a different beginning now
or a middle
or an end
or if you've written me out entirely

i wonder
if you love her
more than me.

THOUGHTS

Emily Vinson

Emily is a sophomore Studio Art-Photography major from Sunnyvale, TX.



like any sage
he expected nothing yesterday

the sun curled behind his eyes
stillness spread

but out of morning

something thunder
whispered out of night, red
blooming ocotillo

and through boiling heaven—hawk!
that sandchewed flag
that draught-eye
that breath
preyed upon a hare

but it was horsefly
who really taught him

he was facing west again, listening
for the golden hum

she was hanging around his shoulder
sharpening her tongue against his cheek

you should be expecting something, she says

tomorrow

SHARDS

Ananya Mukherjee

Tonight we're all walking: me you pavement
club beats tinkle smash.
pulse of revelry. throb of color. encircling us like
arms or laurels. juiced and blended, we are knots
of bodies, saliva, souls, sex, and fights
young legs hips elbows, and faces
smashed together, struck by glorious light
dancing in spots. it rained upon us,
drew us out. so we emerged
like fireflies, pirouetting above the concrete,
tiny kings, half-blown and exultant.
Now we take breaths, now we lean in for a light.

I'm happy, right now, and it's fleeting, but it's right.
And right now is stained glass, and we have wings.

COUPLE ON PONTE VECCHIO

Xing You

38



FROM THE MOODY SHORE OF LIVORNO



Xing You

DEAR CARRIE. REGARDS. YOUR TV

No interlaced fingers
linked to a clammy palm.
Never shared secret whispers—
only your tears yellowed with redundancy.

I wish to feel.
Something,
anything.

I have been seen, heard
but never have I
empathized,
treasured,
experienced.

The front door slams open.
“Hello?”
You’re on the phone.
“Are you there?”
I’m still here!
Why can’t I be the one to leave?

But no, I remain.
Always at your service.

Your gaze meets mine. Look closely.
Don’t you get it? I know you.
I’ve seen you.
Still you don’t see me.

Click.
Click.
Click.
Hollow eyes absently watch

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

family reunions, best friends' weddings—
scenes never to be reminisced.

So quickly ignored but never unseen
I am voiceless atop this dirty table—a
potentially permanent next to
unread books and dusty photo frames.

A spectator to your existence:
huge heaps of tissue papered presents,
countless rolls of monopoly dice—
for years have I observed silently.

It's hopeless—
you trying to change me.
Flipping channels only channels your displeasure.
Don't you understand?
I will never satisfy.

I've witnessed you at your worst:
screaming matches,
empty cartons of Ben and Jerry's,
one night stands only resulting in regretful mornings.
Have you ever seen me?

Still I reflect you in this desolate corner.
Remaining.
Watching.

Paused.

There was a time when “inhibition” was just a word in a dictionary.

When I was at middle school dances,
 All 13 years of arrogance and pizza-faced pomposity,
 The chaperones, full of grasping hands
 And angular eyebrows that once knew better
 Tried to keep me from dancing.
 I flipped them my ring finger and kept on doing The
 Sprinkler.

I guess that was what you liked about me.
 You were the time I carved my name in snow and
 watched it cry,
 And I was this giant awkward silence that no word could
 ever break.

One of those things that you never knew about,
 Or knew but forgot, like
 The feel of the air in your childhood house,
 What it smelled like.

Maybe your house smelled like sawdust,
 And every day you came home from school,
 You were greeted with a shout
 That bounced off all the colors.

Maybe green was your good day.
 Sometimes you walked through the door
 And said hello to the earth through
 Your wide-open back window.
 Maybe the leaves would smile at you
 Before they melted into starshine

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

And the trees would bow in deference.

Maybe you carved names
Into the walls of your brain
On your red days. Maybe you
Tried real hard to hear the earth
Speaking to you, but all you got
Was the stove's indifferent hum,
And the city lights far away
Were the ocean you couldn't cross.

Maybe I was what you were missing.
Maybe everyone has that secret joke that only they
know,
And that stay-at-home smile that they only wear on days
When girls are in summery dresses.

Maybe the days we thought we'd remember
Are the first ones we forget.
Maybe we can't seem to recall anything
Until the sky is burning
Like a sheet of a thousand of your days
Woven from the fluttering of a million hearts
And the moonlight in your hair.

But none of it matters now.

This is the poem I'll never finish writing for you.
This is the song you'll never hear me sing.
This is the sunlight clenching its fingers on the street.

This is the angel who told me
The hardest thing about writing

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

Is seeing the printed page.

This is the night I'll walk with myself
As my arms feel the weight of water
Coming from every angle.

This is the maybe.
This is the hope that becomes an uncertainty.
This is the night where I wonder about
The expression your mother wore
When you bloomed through her ground.

This is the aspen tree
Whispering to the snow that it has no chance.
And the snow whispering back
That it knows, but it will go ahead anyway.

Because trying, to it, is defying gravity.
It's taking a hand and stretching it up
And managing to paint the sky.
It's taking the baton from God
And running with it until the rain
Can't listen to your eyes
And understand them.

I will walk through the voices.
I will listen to the pine and the creek.

I will let my voice fly off the mountain
Until it finds its wings. I will
Trust its body to the grass.

I will let my silence be broken.

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

N A T U R E T H R O U G H G L A S S

I will fold the flowers into
A hundred delicate cranes
And seal each one with a kiss.

I will let the wind hold them soft,
With the fervent wish that at least
One of them will travel to those
City lights that eluded your fingers

And make its way to your gentle palm,
Swaying in the wind.

I pray that
You find me in my routine, that
You catch me on a Wednesday.
You take my hand and tell me
"It's time," and I shake my head
But I know I'll be ready.

I pray that
You catch my secret smile
In your eyes like a firefly
And only let it out
When yours joins it.

I pray for your voice;
I pray that it plays
A violin chord,
And strikes my skin to sound
The same note.

I pray that
The rainbow will be lit by your treasures,

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

And the clouds will be loud with our names.
That the mountain will shout
That the flowers will hum
That the grass will whistle to us.

I pray that we join the chorus.
That our entwined hands speak softly
And say just enough
To break the surface of the sun.

SHADES OF GRAY

Tyler Reed



LESS THAN ENOUGH

Anannya Mukherjee

Today while breezing past, I passed you
dragging your limbs inch by inch along the ground,
I wanted to haul you out of the gutter molasses to drip-
dry
and strain away the excess mess as though gently
peeling your back raw.

These days I've been waking from sticky dreams
to a world that is stroking my hair, brushing my cheek
with its knuckles,
and saying, Wake up, girl, because there's more yet.
And I've been holding my arms out, trying to catch it all.

So when, today,
I wondered if you believed in something more (I saw you
talking to a saint that wasn't there),
or whether it was me (with my morning tea, rhapsodizing
about the sunrise, caressing individual breaths
on my tongue), I was amazed

that I'm the one who walks with trusting arms
outstretched, while you are sorting scraps, picking them
up from the ground, dusting them off on your skirt, and
gnawing at each until your teeth pierce your palms.

Bill Hamlett

THE SONG OF SEEKING

We turn our eyes to see within.
 Sky's divvied skin dismounts by moon,
 and what envelops us again.

We face the world, what has been
 is now wind's white-noise, a swoon.
 We turn our eyes. To see within

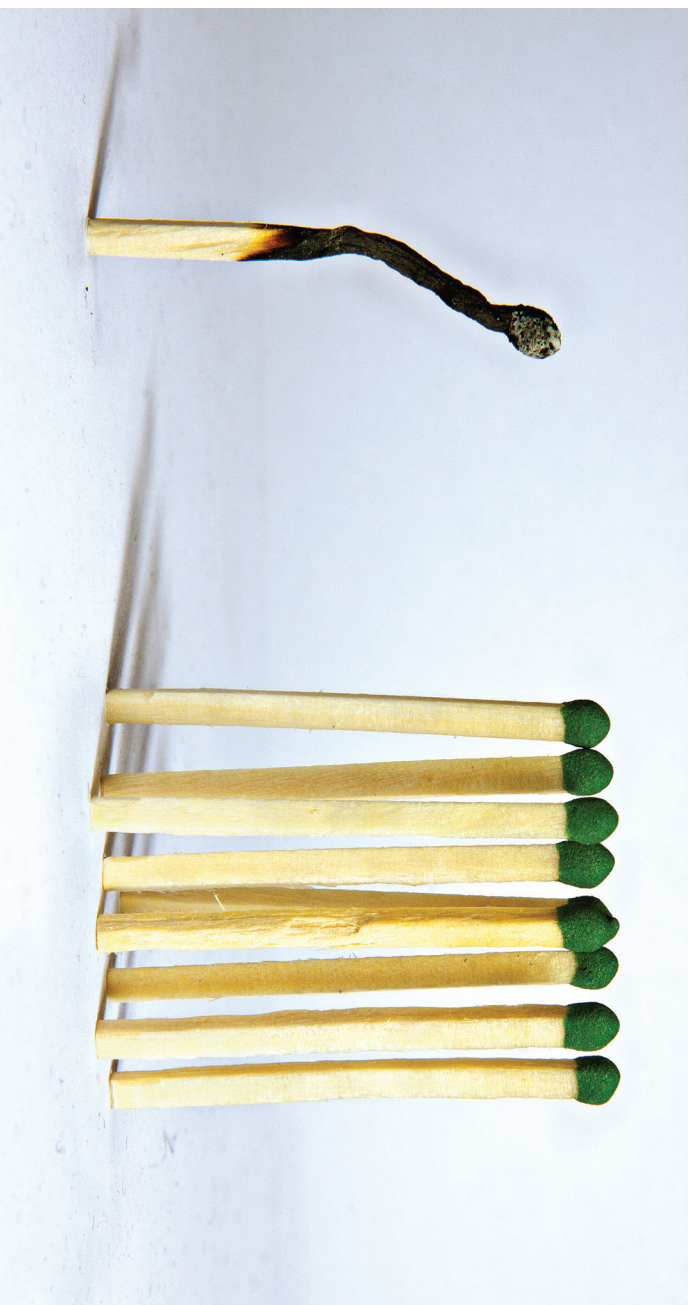
is cacklemind. The thought dies, thin
 against our chests; what beats, we croon
 and it envelops us. Again,

as strangeness gnaws our earth and skin
 and silence sounds its simple moan,
 we turn our eyes to see again.

The stars, ourselves, consume us then
 in stillness—breath of bleeding noon,
 and what envelops us again?
 We turn our eyes to see within.

DISCRIMINATION

Minh Nguyen



THE ROUND UP

Helen Hamilton

Helen is a -- Writing major from San Antonio, TX.



EL CURANDERO

Helen Hamilton



“Hello?”

The world stops. I can hear the incessant, echoing “tch...tch” of the second hand but it’s not moving. Beside me, two Hispanic students are frozen, mid-laugh, in their card game. The unearthly, thought-you-heard-it hum of white noise fills my ears. Slowly, I reach through the curtain of nostalgia back to the filing cabinet of faces I keep in a corner of my mind. It’s badly organized, but somehow I find the right one.

Inhaling feels like taking your first breath of NYC air after living your whole life in Denver. I blink once, manually—it feels forced, somehow— and the word is exorcised from my body.

“O’Hallen?”

“A-HA! You DO remember me, you sonofabitch! How ya been?” There it is, sounding tinny and thin, but just as goofy as ever. My confirmation, my defibrillator. I breathe again, slowly, and my face breaks into a smile. “I’ve been fine, man, how are you?” I excuse myself from the crowded miscellany of students, both bright and not-so, and slip out into the hallway.

“Good, man, good. I, uh...” He pauses, probably to swallow some excess saliva, and continues, “I saw your number in my phone, so I had to call.” He chuckles.

“Classic O’Hallen.” I shake my head, grinning. I go into the obligatory small-talk mode, trying my best to listen but knowing that I’ll tune him out. “What’s been going in your life?” I silently chide myself for not sounding more interested.

“Not much...I, uh. I got married.”

My body has been dipped in liquid nitrogen for a microsecond. I can’t find the words, can’t find any words.

“Miller?”

I clear my throat. “Yeah, dude. I’m here. I just...Married?”

“Yeah, man. Shannon. You remember her from class,

dontcha?"

To be honest, I didn't. But I nodded anyway, just to be polite.

"Dontcha?" I remembered that he couldn't see me.

"Yeah, I do. Jesus! Congratulations!"

"Thank you." I hear the smile in his voice. "Yeah, it was back in November. Didn't you get the invitation?" Vaguely, I recall a slightly heavy cream-colored card in my PO box.

"Oh, yeah! I remember now! Yeah, I couldn't, uh, make it. The invite got a little late, and the RSVP thing was the day before I got it..." I finish lamely.

"We didn't really pay attention to the RSVP thing." Shoulda known. They weren't really preoccupied with details.

I laugh, to fill the silence. "Tell me about the reception." It seems like such a grown-up thing to say. The words feel foreign in my mouth. I realize that the last time I heard that sentence, it was coming from my parents' mouths. I get the shivers.

"Well, it was a very small reception. Just us and our close friends and family. It was at Lovers' Leap, very romantic."

I knew the place. My family and I have explored Waco one Saturday when I was still in high school and we wanted a little escape from the humdrum. I grunt the appropriate "Awww," and he continues.

"We had NO electricity. None." He emphasized the word, and I could see him swiping the negative to the side with his hand. O'Hallen talked with his hands.

"None at all?"

"None at all. And we didn't have the money for a DJ, so I sang to her for the music."

"Oh, O'Hallen." I chuckle. It's just like him, really. Always had a plan B. Do it right when you do it yourself.

"Yeah." Another long silence.

"How's Shannon?" I ask. I wonder if he knows I'm tilting my head to the side.

"My wife?" I get goose-bumps again. "She's good. She hates me, and I hate her, so naturally we love each other."

"Huh!" I snort appreciatively. "That's good, I guess."

"Yeah, always. She's pregnant." He tosses the phrase aside, like another person would say "I like pizza," or

"You look nice."

"What?" I breathe. My legs feel like jelly.

"Yup! Six months now." I force myself to sit down.

"O'Hallen...that's awesome! Way to go! Is it a—"

"I have a boy on the way," he interrupts me. His pride is shining through every syllable in that sentence.

"Have y'all thought about names yet?"

"He'll have my name. It'll be Christopher O'Hallen, only it'll be the Third instead of the Second." I find it strange that he feels the need to clarify what it would have been. There's a pregnant pause as I ponder this.

"So, what's married life like?"

"It's going well. I love my wife, I'm ready for my kid...it's the best." I can tell that it's true, at least to him.

"Yeah, last time we talked you were in the Marine Corps." I segue.

"I am in the Marine Corps." The emphasis he puts on "am" is enough to intimidate me a little bit, but not enough to crack his happy-go-lucky veneer. He says it very brusquely, very professionally. For a moment, he is the anti-O'Hallen: he has a job, and he follows orders to the t, dotting every i, with no time for anything reckless.

"What do you do?" From nowhere in particular I remember that about ninety percent of the military doesn't actually face combat.

"I'm a welder."

"Really?" Why the hell am I surprised? He loved cars.

"Yeah. I, uh, I play with hot things." He cracks a couple of lame puns about his reproductive organs. I'm simultaneously taken aback and unsurprised, and I laugh politely. "So you're going to school now, huh?"

DELIVERANCE

"Yeah, man." I sit up a little straighter— familiar territory.

"I'm a Writing major at TCU."

"TCU, huh? Where's that at?" I cringe at the placement of his preposition but continue.

"It's in Fort Worth," I say, casually, assuming he knows where I'm talking about.

There is a long pause. Then: "Like, is that by Fort Hood?"

I blink in surprise and somehow stutter out, "No, it's not by Fort Hood." Fort Hood? Thirty minutes from our hometown? "It's around Dallas." Seriously, how has he never heard of the DFW Metroplex?

Another long pause. Then, sliding back into conversation a little clumsily:

"Oh...that's a ways away." It's two hours. "You're pretty far out there, huh?"

Writing major. That's pretty...over my head."

I smile. "Yeah, it's what I love. But there are people from, like, Pennsylvania that came here. They're really out of their comfort zone. It's insane."

"That's crazy, man. I can imagine you're doing good there. You were always the smart one."

"I'm managing alright." Not this semester, but in general, yeah.

"Your dad owns a car dealership, right?" I close my eyes and nod. Everyone remembers that.

"Yeah, Miller Mazda Kia Suzuki."

"Miller..."

"Mazda Kia Suzuki."

"Mazda...Kia...Suzuki. Do you think that's where you're going to work when you get out of college?"

I chuckle. "Naw, man. I'm planning on getting a Ph.D. and teaching college."

A silence. "Well, that's cool, Miller! That's awesome. I'm happy for you." For an instant, I can see him on the other end of the line, looking exactly the same as I'd

seen him last: blond hair, buzz-cut to near-invisibility, the wide forehead, the careless grin, the shining green eyes. Nothing's changed about him since freshman year of high school— at least, not that I can remember. But the sepia tones of the past are always slanted. I'm sure, years from now, I'll get a call from him by pure happenstance and his voice will be strained—maybe a little raspy from working around so much hot metal. But no matter how he sounds, or even if I see him in person, he'll always be that kid with the eternal smile, sitting on the desk in my ROTC classroom and swinging his feet to an inaudible rhythm.

I snap back into focus. "Thanks, O'Hallen. I appreciate it. Hey, uh...I'm gonna be in town over the weekend..." I trail off, hoping he'll finish the sentence. There's no passion behind my statement.

"Yeah, dude! I'm living out in China Spring, and you can stop by if you want. Shannon says she'll let you feel the baby."

"Of course, man. If there's anything I can do for y'all, let me know. I'd be happy to stop by, clean up around the house, take care of anything that needs it." He and I both know I'm not stopping by. The fragility is in his voice as well as mine. Is that what being an adult is like? Being polite, making small talk, and then to avoid being rude we spin a gossamer web of promises and dreams and what-ifs that only the sleepless breath of Fate can unravel?

"Yeah, of course. I'll give you her number."

I know I'll never call.

"Give me a second to find some paper." I scramble back into the classroom I'd left, asking if anyone had some paper. The entire time I'm cantering among the desks, he's cracking jokes about how I'm a Writing major and I don't have paper. I endure them, hoping he can hear

DELIVERANCE

the smile that is now pasted onto my face.
I scrawl down her number, repeating it back to him when he finishes so I make sure I have it right. I'll never use it. I don't know why I verified it. I think it was for my own peace of mind. So he felt like I'd take some action. We ended the conversation there, with some feeble, "If I ever go to Dallas..." or "Next time I come down..." sentences neither of us had the courage to finish. The goodbyes were short, because to O'Hallen a goodbye was never permanent. Every ending to a conversation began the temporary lull before the next one. I hit "End" on my phone and sit there, in the hallway, on the nondescript cushion, trying my hardest to comprehend the feeling in my chest. I wallow in my thoughts. It was too soon, I think. I've grown up so fast. Where did my childhood go? Was that really it? I'm not supposed to be dealing with this stuff, talking like my parents talk. I'm only...God, I'm almost 20. Why do I feel like I'm eight? Are we all kids, still? Do we all just go through life in a body that's too big, ad-libbing at every crisis? Will we always be unprepared for everything that comes our way? Do we ever lose the sense of feeling small when something so out-of-body ends up happening? We'll never really get it back. And I know that. But as I tangle my fingers in my hair and stare between my knees at the carpet, that knowledge doesn't stop me from wanting to. Waco is a planet, I think. No, it's not. Planet implies that sense of something bigger, something notable. Los Angeles is a planet. Austin is a planet. Waco is a dying star, someplace that is noticed but not particularly acknowledged. And the strange thing is that there's a pull, a gravitation of sorts, around this collapsing nebula. Everyone seems to go back there, I think. Most people

from my high school go to Baylor, or the local community college. They always say it's "just to get their basics out of the way," but somehow it never ends up that way. People who go someplace else always come home for the summer. And the summer after that, until they have a family and are showing them around the places they used to know. Here used to be a tattoo parlor. There was my old high school. Around here was where all the kids used to hang out.

People who go to school in Waco usually find a job around there, or meet their sweetheart and settle down, or drop out and start a family. If they go there, they stay there. They live out their lives in the same county they grew up in. There's no desire for change, no wanting for more. And even if there is, it's quickly quashed. It's a town constructed on stilts of compromise. Everyone is content living in their own photo album reality.

When will someone finally get it? When will anyone that's past college there - I can't say they'll be an adult - just get into their five-year-old car, with a layer of dust on the fuzzy passenger seat, and grip their steering wheel with the leopard-print cover, and just drive, and press their foot down on the gas pedal, and travel down the long and meandering road out of the city, out of the atmosphere, out of the flatness of the plains, past the place where they went to elementary school and middle school and high school, out of the daytime darkness, out of the imploding suburbia, past the RaceTracs and the Whataburgers and the chain restaurants and the modern-day ruins of Americana, out of the grazing blue wetness of the sky and the horizon, through the maze of headlights and street-lamps and flickering neon signs and green rectangular metallic flyers, following the linear taillights of the car in front of them, driving until they don't know where they are, until they see a semblance

DELIVERANCE

of something bigger, of complete and utter – more, and get out of their car, and turn their faces to the sky and revel in their unknowledge?

When will someone realize that there is an escape, and yes, they want to escape, and they want to be free of the suffocating small-town attitude and the folksy accents and the subtle hints that everything is at a one-degree tilt and nothing is sacred here? When will they understand that what they are doing is creating a bubble where the world can't touch them? When will someone fall to their knees on the side of the road and weep for the second psyche of the unconscious world they left behind, and feel the grass digging into their shins, and understand that they are part of something – a small cog in the Great Watch – and things are in Technicolor, and you can see things and do things you've never come close to experiencing?

...

I stand up, and walk back into the classroom.

There is here, and there is now, and there is this. There is everything, and there is me.

And some long-forgotten day from now, when the dissatisfied housewife with the patterned dress or the taciturn college graduate that desperately needs a shave or the assistant principal of a low-income school puts their foot on the brake, miles from home but knowing the world is their home, and crawls awkwardly over the passenger seat to get out of their cars, and try to pull the handle to open the door—

I will be there, and I will be smiling. And I will be the first to welcome them from the womb into their all-available world:

“And now the ears of the ears and the eyes of the eyes and the heart of the heart is opened. Welcome to forever. Make of it what you will.”

MI ABUELA

Margaret Fleming

Margaret is a junior English, Writing & Spanish triple major from Dallas, TX



PULP CELEBRATION

Margaret Fleming



THE DESERT

Wyn Delano

Wyn is a freshman Musical theater
major from Los Angeles, CA.

From the West what silence comes!

Guardians of withered rock, who wait beneath a
burning sun

For what, I wonder?

I ask.

Rain.

And the wind tells me secrets

What I would give to know what the wind knows!

Then I begin to carry some of its weight

And change my mind.

I converse with my fellow poets:

The burned and broken wheat writing of days when it
flowed golden in the sun,

The unwelcome weed, singing its off-tune song in the
only place no one will hear,

And the rock—sobbing and writing of lost loves that he
will never share.

Now the sun hearkens me back to the wild

Where there is no wheat or weeds or rock,

Only dreams.

CLOCK

Caitlyn Nygaard

Caitlyn is a senior Studio Art-
Painting major from Abilene, TX.



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