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***As my artist statement explains, my
work is utterly incomprehensible and
therefore full of deep significance.***

~Calvin (Calvin & Hobbs)

CONTENTS

Rockies	6	Trip Starkey
Broken Brain	7	Natalie Kasling
Only	8	Kylie Martin
Baptism	10	Justine Grace
Old Man	26	Miranda McKinney
Club Six Feet Under	27	Laura Cisneros
The Twins	28	Lauren Pennington
Validity	29	Abigail Buckley
Sleep Tight	30	Kelsey Keys
Red Lips	32	Laura Cisneros
Overlook	33	J. Lynn Kelly
Two Sides to Hair	34	Jenevieve Williams
Abyss	44	Sarah Morris
The Wedding Vows of King Henry VIII	45	Elle Carnley
Stipple of Nike of Samothrace	46	Tomlyn Borgan
A Mother's Child	47	Evan Anglin
Froth Foam Broil	48	Kylie Martin
Elegy with a Silver Thread	49	Paige Wells
No Air	50	Sarah Hall
Holding Water	52	Bailey Betik
the marusaks	61	Bailey Betik
John O'Callaghan	63	Caroline Chandonnet
3D Design Quote	64	Constantine Zgourides
My Sweater	66	Laurie Meguro
Clipped	67	Tessa Salomone
Within a Dilemma	74	Tessa Salomone
College	75	Peter Trigg
Forgotten Whimsy	76	Thomas Merryman
Ain't No Grave Sometimes	78	Trip Starkey
The Courtyard	79	Rebecca Semik
Hero's Chariot	91	Thomas Merryman
Q&A	92	Cody Westphal
A Place Called Home	96	Claire Shelton
Stuck	104	Claire DeJarnett
Sitting In A Urinal, I Prayed	105	Cale Downs

EDITOR'S NOTE

I fear, with the easy accessibility of art today, widely available via the internet to our all-powerful fingertips, it has become easy to forget how much courage it actually takes to produce art. To write a story is to bring into existence characters you all of a sudden care about and feel emotionally connected to, to invent an environment you too live in, to explore issues that exhaust your brain and yet still keep you up at night, contemplating, creating. To paint, to draw, to take a photograph is to put a little bit of your soul onto a physical plane—this is how I see the world, the representation says, this is my perspective.

All art, no matter the medium or format, involves at least a modicum of this self-exploration and public sharing. The created comes from a creator, and, as a product of the creator's mind, is a permanent diary entry from the creator at the time of creation. This makes art an immensely personal affair! And yet artists share their work for the whole world to see: art is courageous, artists are courageous.

Arthur O'Shaughnessy's beautifully simple *Ode* is a testament to the power of artists:

"We are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams.
World-losers and world-forsakers,
Upon whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers,
Of the world forever, it seems."

— Arthur O'Shaughnessy, *Ode*

Take heart, artists, take heart and find your courage because in doing so you become the "movers and shakers/of the world forever."

I want to thank the contributors to this issue of eleven⁴⁰seven for their courage in sharing their art with the editorial staff, with the TCU campus, and with the world (once we get it uploaded—check out our expanded online edition at www.1147.tcu.edu/). This act takes bravery I can only applaud. I also want to thank the wonderful editorial and creative staff who worked so hard to advertise the journal and gave students the courage to send in their artwork and who so carefully, thoughtfully worked through each submission, making sure that every piece was carefully considered. This journal would not be possible without the support of SGA, who continue to believe in this little journal's ability to make a big impact at TCU. And, of course, a huge thank you to our fearless advisor, Dr. Curt Rode, our behind-the-scenes champion.

The pages that follow are filled with hard work, beauty, creativity, and an enormous amount of courage. Enjoy.

-Allana Wooley

ROCKIES

TRIP STARKEY

There is a roof
on fire somewhere
in these mountains.

I build my tent
under the tallest pine.
Waiting for the red –

tailed hawk to rise
on his perch, and sing
over the valley. I drop

into the river, resting
as trout make a new home
underneath my feet.

As I lay down to sleep,
I see my mother smoking
ribs in a boulder pit.

The stars over me flash
like wildfire trapped
in a mason jar.

My father sits beside her,
leafing through a field
guide on the native birds

of Colorado. I dream
that midnight purples
to morning, and I

become the waning
moon, fading across
the empty riverbed.

BROKEN BRAIN

NATALIE KASLING

My brain works backwards in a sense of wrong
I was told always that I was broken
You will learn to read me like, to a sing song
because that's what they say. Write with a pen

Natalie, you'll have a permanent voice.
I don't want my voice permanent. I fail.
Connections lack and do I even have a choice?
Blind eyes within me, I might as well read brail.

"Again" teachers me to say. "Again"
I harder focus, gripping tighter my chair to.
Drained eyes. With sweaty palms and dry skin.
"I don't how know to this can't see you do"

Broken brain, you say? I don't sort out a thought.
I'd like to see you read backwards without being taught.

ONLY



KYLIE MARTIN



BAPTISM

JUSTINE GRACE

I'd only seen Mama cry once.

My brother and I were getting baptized at Greensboro First Baptist Church on a clear Sunday morning. I can remember the white baptismal gown whipping around my ankles from the breeze and the sun shining off David's golden curls. Mama had decided to dedicate our whole family to the glory of the Lord. David went first.

"Do you accept our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior?"

David looked to Mama; she nodded.

"Yessir," he responded.

"Then I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

Then he was dunked into the depths of the baptistery font.

Two heartbeats passed before he emerged, shaking his hair like a dog and grinning like a fool. He stepped out of the tub and onto the asphalt of the church parking lot.

Greensboro First Baptist liked to make religion a public affair.

David came out dripping and winked at me as he passed. It was my turn.

The beaming sun made everything look like a movie as I approached the tub, the reverend beckoning me with open, soggy arms. An Elder helped me climb the ladder up and over the blue lip of the tub, and my

body settled into the tepid holy water. The white gown quickly became transparent, revealing my white bra and underwear. The reverend aggressively averted his eyes from my general direction.

Sun rays beat upon my head, heating my hair.

Members of the congregation smiled at my skinny form. God bless her.

The reverend looked above my forehead.

"Do you accept our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior?"

Silence fell.

A member of the congregation coughed, a baby started to whine.

I made eye contact with David, who was sneaking obscene gestures at the other witnesses in the folds of his soaked gown.

David had just turned seventeen and thought he knew everything.

I made eye contact with Mama, her eyes were red, and the bags under her eyes were more pronounced than usual. Tears pooled in the bags. She kept nodding vigorously.

"Yessir, I do."

"Then I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

Then all became dark as the reverend's gentle hands nudged me into the sacred bath. The water cooled my hot head and flooded my sinuses.

Then as soon as the water had come, I was propelled to the surface, wheezing and eyes stinging. I looked to David, who was still flicking people off when they weren't looking. Then I turned my gaze to Mama. In that moment I thought everything would be all right. Her crooked smile filled with too-large teeth took up half of her face. She had saved her children from eternal damnation.

I glanced back at David and I wasn't so sure.

I hadn't quite been sure why Mama was so Hell-bent on getting us baptized. Going to church was enough of a stretch. Mama was raised as a Southern Baptist, but Dad was a retired Presbyterian so we never went to church. Mama would go by her lonesome to the small congregation and pray for our souls and we would get dressed all frilly for Easter and Christmas to rejoice the end and beginning of Jesus' life, but that was the extent of our religious experience.

Then the outbreak happened.

Mama came storming into the kitchen two days after we evacuated Charlotte for Greensboro. Dad couldn't come with us because he was hung up in the city. Dad was an ER nurse, and more and more people were getting sick every day.

Mama was raving about how David and I were going to Hell because she'd neglected her Christian duty to baptize us as babies. We just exchanged glances across the card table that served as our apartment's kitchen table.

We were lucky enough to find tenement housing because we left Charlotte just before the government

finally publicly recognized the outbreak. Dad had told us to leave.

"They're not telling us something, Mary," he whispered to Mama in the living room after he thought I was asleep one night.

"People are dying every day, I can see the body bags. They won't let anyone besides CDC personnel into the infection zones. It's bad."

"Simon, do we need to leave?" Mama asked tersely.

"Yes. And soon."

We left the next morning. I clung to Dad, burying my head and tears into his shirt.

"It's just for a little while, sweetie. You'll be back before Christmas!"

He and Mama shared a glance.

I still remember his small form waving from our driveway.

We followed Mama to the white steeple on Sunday morning, dressed in the nicest clothing we could dig from the suitcases we'd packed in 15 minutes. We entered the front pew, Mama gazing adoringly at the pulpit. The congregation was composed of a mix of the obscenely elderly and young families, likely newcomers from big cities like us.

The service began with a Gospel revival of "How Great Thou Art." I mouthed along so not to embarrass myself by messing up the unknown words. David just stared blankly at the space above the choir pit.

David hated going to church because he could never pay attention for too long. His brain worked too fast.

After the resounding choral echoes subsided and the congregation was seated, the sermon began. I immediately tuned out the fervent assurances of destruction from the reverend and examined my socks. One was a distinctly different shade of white than the other.

I began to slump further to the ground in my investigation of off-white versus alabaster. Mama finally ripped her eyes from the pulpit to notice her children's less-than-rapt attentions.

A quick slap to the side of my head straightened me out. An icy glance in David's direction returned his attention to the balding reverend. The rev's shiny head had turned purple from his passion about the end times and our need for salvation.

"The Horseman of Pestilence has made his descent! WHAT SHALL YOU DO BUT PROCLAIM JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAV-I-OR!"

The last word was drawn into three distinct, drawn-out syllables, in a way that I thought was used only by movie pastors. Clearly, I was wrong.

David and I weren't convinced by the rev's argument, but Mama certainly was. Hook, line, and sinker. Before we knew it, David and I were wearing what looked like our late Grammy's nightie and were about to take a dip with the very same plum-faced reverend.

Weeks passed and Dad's phone calls got more and more sporadic, shorter and shorter.

"Hospital's sure busy, but everyone's in good spirits! The CDC says they're close to cracking a cure. I'm sure I'll get time off to visit soon. I'll grill burgers and Mama will make potato casserole. How does that sound, huh?"

We could hear the moans of the dying in the background. The continuous shouting of the PA system:

"WE HAVE A CODE BLUE IN WING SEVEN, REPEAT, CODE BLUE."

Then we stopped getting calls. Mama's forehead was constantly furrowed and her big-toothed smile withdrew to a blank line.

She called the hospital every day, but they refused to tell her anything aside from Dad got sick. Nothing serious. He'd call her when he was better.

I guess he never got better.

After three weeks passed, Mama stopped calling. Something inside her died. I think it was the part that loved Dad, but I came to think it was the part that loved us too.

One night after a dinner of beans and toast, David kept talking about the plans he was making for when Dad came to visit Greensboro.

"We'll go fishing, and then we'll watch Sunday Night Football. Maybe he'll let me have a beer like old times."

I didn't have the heart to remind him that cable had been knocked out a week ago, but Mama cut his reverie.

"The cable's out," she said.

"What are you talking about?" David's voice cracked.

"I said the cable's out. And Dad hasn't called for three weeks."

I guess David's brain had been going too fast to realize what was happening in front of him.

"Davy," I tried.

"But that doesn't mean –" David pleaded, his lips pursing just like Dad's.

"He hasn't called for three weeks. Your father always calls. He's dead."

David stormed out of the kitchen, his head bumping the single hanging light bulb, sending it oscillating above the card table. The spinning light created ghastly shadows; David's beans grew cold and congealed.

Dad was dead. The words had been said. Somehow I had already known, deep inside where the sensible part of me lived. But the foolish part of me broke into a million jagged splinters. Somehow it just kept festering and hurting no matter what I did. Mama quietly scooped her beans onto her toast, her mouth a flat line. Her eyes were wet, but no tears fell.

I knew that Dad was never to be spoken of again. I mourned him during the lonely times just before dawn in my cot.

The CDC's quarantine of large cities was failing. Logically, you trap an animal and it immediately wants out. People would hire guides to smuggle them out of the cities. The radio talked about entire squatter colonies being established in the nation's subway systems. The outbreak ran rampant through the country.

Greensboro decided to take action. The mayor asked for volunteers to donate their fences to the city. They were going to fence us in, or as they liked to phrase it, "make our borders selective."

David and Mama hadn't spoken since the night Dad became no more. She turned to her Bible and housework. He used his anger to build the fence around the city limits. He came back hungry and silent, his skin tanned and his muscles ropey. He was no longer the boy who flicked off the Elders at our baptism. The brother I had known for fourteen years was as dead as Dad.

Greensboro became a safe haven after the fence was completed. People flooded the gates, their eyes haunted and cheeks gaunt, but none were allowed into the town. The city went on with business as usual, despite the wannabe immigrants' desperate calls for help day and night. I had even become used to the sound in time, a sort of horribly depressing white-noise.

That is, until the mayor died.

He was found in his bed, skin gray and deflated.

The coroner confirmed Greensboro's greatest fear: the mayor's insides were completely disintegrated, his innards turned to pink mush by the intense fever brought on by the outbreak.

The city council was in shock. How had the outbreak reached our paradise?

I remember the town hall meeting to elect the new mayor.

Blackouts were common by July when we all filled the hall. The AC was out and the heat was almost unbearable.

The arguments and petitions for mayor were increasing in decibel.

"They still think it really matters. They think God hasn't already judged us all," Mama murmured.

Mama's monotone froze the sweat on my spine. My gut turned to ice. I held David's hot hand. He tried to squirm it out of my reach, but I grasped it as if it was the only thing keeping me from drowning in the icy sea.

We were doomed.

A newer, handsomer mayor was chosen. He made promises of "getting down to the root of this outbreak."

Mama just laughed, a rough, hard sound.

It was eventually discovered that the old mayor had a mistress. They found her body in the shower when they were clearing out the mayor's mansion for the new tenant. Deflated and ashen, she was an obvious victim of the outbreak. One of the cleaners recognized her as one of the desperate masses outside the city gates.

Citizens cried for more safety procedures. David joined the newly-formed Greensboro Guard. Mama didn't even try to stop him.

I pleaded with him while he put on his hand-me-down police jacket.

"Davy, please don't go. It's a death wish!"

He gave me a look in the single-bulb light.

David and I had always been close, before the outbreak. We were only three years apart.

I have this memory, locked deep in my heart where no one can steal it. It's of a Tuesday morning before school in Charlotte. I'm about six and Mama made pancakes for David and me before school and for Dad after he got off the night shift. She let me help pack our lunches for school, and pretended to not notice when I slipped candy into our lunch sacks. The aroma of syrup

and batter on the griddle made us all giddy. Dad was exhausted, but made smiley faces on our pancakes with chocolate chips and strawberries anyway. We all sat down, David dipping his fingers into my syrup while Mama said grace. It was perfect.

It was over.

David looked me over, his eyes buggy and bloodshot. My elbows and knees were starting to protrude further than usual. My stomach rumbled to break the silence. The city council was enforcing rations.

He turned his back, grabbed his nightstick, and walked to the doorway of our shared bedroom.

"Goodbye, Sarah."

His wiry frame walked down the hallway and out of sight. The slamming door shook the apartment. I cried in my cot for Dad and David while Mama prayed in the living room.

Ten people died that week.

Twenty the next.

I tried to keep my hands busy to not worry about David. I cleaned the apartment with Mama, but there was only so much to clean. I attempted to plant a garden on the balcony so we would have something to eat other than rationed beans and stale bread.

Mama cleaned and prayed, and then would make dinner (if that's what you could call it). She always gave me the biggest portion. I don't think I ever saw her eat. Her cheeks became gaunt and her eyes became hollow. I heard her sobbing in the middle of the night. David's anger made him a soldier. Mama's anger nearly killed her.

A knock on the door interrupted Mama's prayers. I was thinking of ways to cook my newly sprouted onions. She didn't get up, so I lumbered to the door. A man in a police jacket asked if we were the next of kin to David Johnson.

My breath halted. My blood solidified in my veins. I could feel my heart trying to pump the sludge to keep me alive.

"Yessir, we are."

Mama was still murmuring over her Bible.

"David has fallen victim to the outbreak. He served our city bravely. You should be proud."

I staggered to the couch. Mama was nearly shouting excerpts from Jeremiah.

I had to shake her to get her to stop.

She looked me dead in the eye and whispered, "He finally gets time with Dad."

Rage thinned the sludge and my heart beat fast. This was no longer the mother who had acted out stories for David and me at bedtime. This was not my Mama who kissed my knee when I fell off my bike, the Mama who danced with Daddy in the living room when she thought David and I had gone to bed.

That woman was as dead as Dad and David.

I couldn't separate Mama from her Bible long enough to get her to the funeral. It was more like a mass burial, as they slipped his gray, deflated body into the pit with the other corpses. His ghastly pallor contrasted with his vibrant pink lips. He wore a defiant smirk. Death had brought back his humor.

I stopped going to church after David died. The cross above the pulpit mocked me with each passing moment. Daddy and David's voices swam through my thoughts. David's post-mortem smile was emblazoned on the inside of my eyelids.

Months passed in that miserable apartment. The days shortened and the temperature dropped. With it came hopes of the end of the infection. My crops died. Mama stopped making dinner and cleaning the house.

I tried to feed her, but she wouldn't eat. Her eyes ran wild in their sockets when they weren't closed in prayer.

Mama never left her prayer post in the waking hours.

In her moments of lucidness, she would grasp my shoulders and tell me I was her "special girl" and "chosen by God" to live through this. She would tell me to go to church and to pray with her. I never did.

Mama would slip out of sanity and I would go back to my business of keeping her alive. I force-fed her and read to her to make her sleep. My life was not my own, the outbreak took it.

I awoke one day to fire. My body was aflame. I looked down at my toes, but could not find the blaze.

I realized I was infected.

I was going to die in this thin cot in this miserable city, and Mama probably wouldn't even notice until my corpse stunk up the house.

I tried to use the tap to cool myself, but the faucet was dry. I drifted in and out of sleep. Visions of Daddy

in his scrubs playing doctor with David and me came to my brain. At one point, I saw David sullenly looking down at me in his police jacket, nightstick aloft.

Mama did notice my absence. She creaked down the hallway and stared at my slight form: a ghost in my doorway. She turned her back and left me to burn for hours.

When she returned, she brought the reverend who baptized me. The color left him when he spotted me.

"Do it," Mama commanded.

"Mrs. Johnson, I don't think it's—" the reverend stuttered.

"DO IT!" Mama screeched.

The reverend placed his clammy palm on my burning forehead.

He murmured something in Latin. An exorcism.

He sprinkled holy water from a washbasin all over the cot and my forehead. The water felt like ice on my skin.

Mama thought the infection was a demon, and was doing the only thing she could to save me, or the idea of me. She was crazy. But at least she wanted to keep me alive. God knows why.

I started to convulse. Not from the reverend's words, but from the final throes of the infection.

"NO, NO, NO!" Mama screamed.

That was the most I heard her say in months. Then all was dark. I saw Daddy and David. Daddy was in his UNC sweatshirt with his arm around David. Pre-Greensboro David with the mischievous smirk and dirty sense of humor. They waved at me. I ran to them, but

there was a fence between us. The same fence that surrounded Greensboro. I slammed on the chain links until my fingers bled. I slammed again and again, desperate to reach them. Then there was a yanking at the back of my belly button. Daddy and David bled into white, and I was pulled into darkness.

My eyes snapped open. I was blinded by light. It was morning. My body was not on fire anymore. Mama and the reverend were nowhere to be seen. I got up from my cot, legs shaky. I noticed the Bible on the floor, spine down. I picked it up. Isaiah, Mama's favorite. The washbasin that was full of holy water was upside down, the water pooled in the middle of the sagged floor.

"Mama?" I tried, my voice raspy from fever.

A weak moan down the hallway answered me.

I walked against the wall, leaning all my weight into the peeling flower wallpaper. I turned the corner and found Mama in her usual position, praying on bended knee.

"Here's your Bible, Mama."

I set the book by her knees, trying to shake the images of her standing over my bed while the pastor exorcised me. But something was off. I looked at my mother. She was a deathly pallor. Heat radiated from her body.

I infected her.

"The reverend's already dead," she croaked.

My eyes widened.

"I, I —"

"But it's okay, you're here. God saved you, my special girl." She put her burning hand on my cheek.

"Mama, you need a doctor. Here, drink some –"

Her eyes opened. They were red with broken blood vessels. Her dilated pupils dug into my contracted ones. Her lip quivered, her resolve broke.

"Sarah, honey, I –" she whispered as she collapsed to the floor.

I stood frozen, fixated by her crimson eyes.

Then she blinked. The trance was broken. I bolted from the apartment, and flew down the stairs. I ran until my still-shaky legs gave out, heaving. I reached the fence.

This town took everything away from me.

One member of the Greensboro Guard spotted me.

"Honey, get away from there! You'll get infected! Where's your Mama?"

This was my one chance. My fingers clawed the chain links. I hoisted my body up.

Dad.

"YOUNG LADY WHAT ARE YOU DOING??" the guard demanded.

David.

I hoisted another foot. Seven more to go.

Mama.

"GET DOWN NOW!!"

I had to leave this place; anything was better than this.

Four more to go.

I survived the outbreak.

The guard blew his whistle.

I hesitated for a second; I survived, I can help.

Two more.

I looked back, able to see the town spread out before me. The church's spire cut the rising sun into halves.

Three more guards came running to the patch of fence.

Flashes of Mama's eyes and David's body cleared my judgment. This town killed my family.

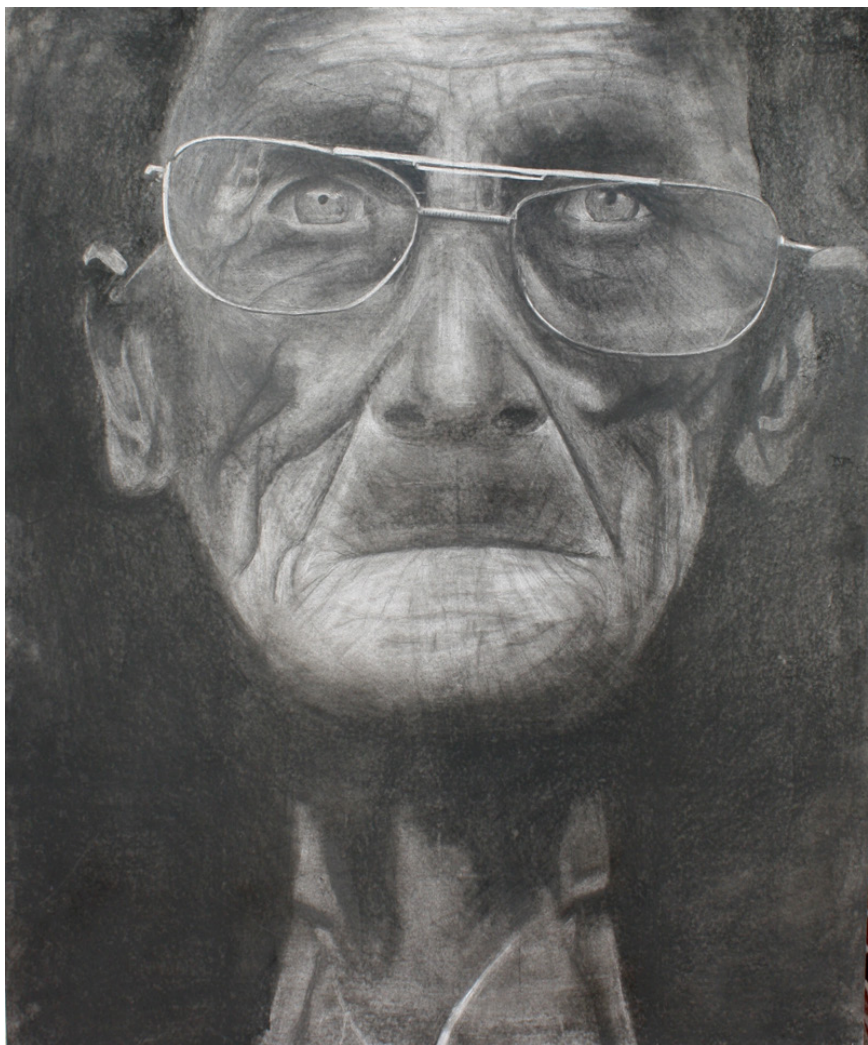
Let them burn.

I hoisted myself over and let myself drop to the other side. I was free. The guards continued to shout, but the blood rushing in my ears drowned them out. I tested my legs. They were intact. I ran. I ran until I couldn't hear the guards anymore. Until all that surrounded me was brush and a broken highway.

The heartbeat in my ears drowned out the shouts of the guards. The adrenaline in my veins cleansed my sin.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

OLD MAN
MIRANDA MCKINNEY



CLUB SIX FEET UNDER

LAURA CISNEROS

114

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

suitable noise to accompany the end of the world and himself. He ran towards the disturbance, each strike of his boots on the pavement sending an echo through the empty circle of buildings, rebounding from each festal corner.

"Come on," he called to himself.

Several people already stood near the undertaker's window as if they had sprung out of the ground, and by the doorway a woman held the bewildered corpse of an old woman. She peered closer and saw another woman younger and wearing an army uniform—the colour of which immediately prejudiced him—had taken the body and sent someone to fetch the doctor. Red glass from the window lay in a crack running

in all directions. Headstones, earthen flower vases splattered with glass, he laughed at the wreckage washed down the gutter with a street cap.

"What's up, missus?" a raincoat and pipe-smoker wanted to know. "What's happened?" "At the window," he said, "a woman held a jar at her wrist, who grinned with great friendliness at each new arrival.

"Chucked a pint jar at that winder," Arthur said.

"He did *that*," the woman in khaki told him, pointing at the wrecked window like a museum guide showing off a prize exhibit. She was a woman of about thirty-five, her prominent bosom emphasised by highly polished buttons. Arthur noted her thin lips, high cheekbones, eyes that did not open very wide, a low forehead, and hair that just curled out of the back of her peaked cap and rested on her shaved neck. Weighing her up, he wondered if she had ever been loved. He doubted it. She was the sort of woman who would spit in a man's eye if he tried to be nice to her, though at the same time he supposed her to be the sort who wanted most of all in the world to be loved. Only you could tell by her face that she would kick you if you tried. Old Rat Face, he said to himself, that's what she is. Potatoes and Horsemeat.

THE TWINS

LAUREN PENNINGTON



VALIDITY

ABIGAIL BUCKLEY

Taken with a grain of salt,
we rarely confirm the truth in words.
Perhaps pigs do sprout wings and fly.
Certainty, the sky is blue.

Or does it begin a soft periwinkle, that
fades into candlelight and iris and powder?

Contesting will only put you between
a rock and a hard place,
so why bother?
You'll simply bite off more
than you can chew,

when you start arguing what
seems self evident and true.

Yet, if you dare to play devil's advocate,
you may find that the blood of the covenant
is thicker than water of the womb,
and it's not so simple after all.

SLEEP TIGHT





RED LIPS

LAURA CISNEROS

Death did bleed
from the crevices between,
anchoring the ships to
moors that floated away
sending men out to sea
during a hurricane.
Whilst ashore they watched
their lovers drifting out,
sending love and farewells
on wicked wind that diverted
soft messages to the tops
of snowcapped mountains.
Too late they saw, and too soon
black veils were drawn
down to cover bright red lips.

OVERLOOK
J. LYNN KELLY



TWO SIDES TO HAIR

JENEVIEVE WILLIAMS

“Whatchu nee’ baby?”

“I was wondering if you had time to do a relaxer, like next or now or...” my voice trails off, rather than stating what I need.

I’ve been getting my hair done at salons on and off since I was 10. My mom tried to do my hair when I was six, but it didn’t turn out like the girl on the box of the Just For Me relaxer kit for kids. I really wanted straight hair. Mine is curly, wavy, and nappy at the root. So for my tenth birthday we went to a JC Penny’s salon. It was ridiculously expensive. It cost \$200 when my mother already wasn’t working because she was in school, but my Hannah paid because she felt guilty.

“Mmm ya.” It’s more of a smack than words. “Well whatchu wan’ dun wit it?” says the owner of the salon. The salon is called Yvonne’s, but I don’t think that’s her name. I come here once a year and every time it looks different, she looks different, but it’s the same place. Same cheaply painted walls and windows with bars on them, but different furniture.

I remember her from the first time I came. Wide curvy hips and large lips colored in with a perfect magenta. We have communication difficulties because I “talk white,” but we can usually make it through. Today though, in my TCU long sleeved shirt with a book in hand, I am very out of place.

“Okay, you wanna get’t set, wan’ it curled? You wan’ me jus’ letcha wash, dry and leave it?” She looks at me and thrusts her hip out to the side, waiting for my answer.

The woman in her chair right now is laughing because she can see I obviously don’t understand the question

- TWO SIDES TO HAIR -

Ms. Yvonne is asking. (Oh, you call black women Ms. So and So. I don't know why, but it's been my experience that they are nicer when you do, usually.)

The woman joins in our attempts to communicate my desires, "Take yo' hair outta dat ponytail and les see't."

I pull it out and shake down the back of my hair with my hand. I think back to all the years my mom did my hair at home. Even if she could get it straight I was too lazy to maintain it past a ponytail. My mom is white, so she wasn't raised with an innate knowledge of how to do hair, and she definitely wasn't prepared to deal with my hair.

The first few years she did it, I had horrible chemical burns. Little scabby dots here and there where the relaxer was left on too long or where I had scratched the day before and forgotten to coat the skin extra thick with Blue Magic hair goo. They weren't excessive, but I always had more than one. Once, she got me really bad all along the top of one ear. I think she cried more than me. After that, she started taking me to salons again.

"Oooo gurl! She got some hair! Now, how you wear it baby?" asks the client already in the chair. She seems to be entertained by her new role in the conversation. At least I can kinda understand her.

This is a silly question to me. I'm going to explain to her how I want it and it will be done her way. At a black salon there is only one way she's ultimately going to style my hair even though it's specifically what I will ask NOT to have done. She's going to sit me under the dryer for approximately 20 minutes. After that she will use ancient curling irons to straighten my hair, which she will curl under at the ends, making my hair look ridiculous. This is what I don't want, but I know it's coming. Maybe it's the language barrier. Maybe it's that I don't explain myself very well.

"I like it straight with a part...?" I'm not good at giving sure answers at black beauty salons. I'm never sure what they expect me to say..

"Well 'ats what da relax'r gon do. I'm axin you how you wancha hair dun baby?" This woman wasn't getting much further than me and Yvonne on our own until "You gotta pictchur of ya' hair when ya like it?"

"Yes." I also nod so they know I've acknowledged the question and begin scrolling through my phone to find a picture. I'm still standing awkwardly in the entrance to the salon.

"You go to TCU?" Yvonne asks, glancing up at me as she moves around the woman in her chair who is also our translator today. It's the closest thing to polite conversation that we're gonna have.

"Mmhmm. Yes ma'am." I regret wearing my TCU shirt in this moment, but it's too late.

"You payin' fo'it?" Our translator asks from the chair. Her head doesn't move while Yvonne keeps working around it.

"Some of it, but I have a grant from the school that covers most of it." I'm really proud of this, but I don't want to brag in this situation. I try to smile. I feel mostly awkward about talking about school with women who probably haven't had the opportunities I have. I shift my weight and try to anticipate what response is coming while still searching through my phone for a picture to explain my hair.

The last time someone asked me about school I was with my cousin who is also mixed. Our dads are cousins, but somehow she's more black than me even though her mom is also white. We went to get our hair relaxed and styled for the first day of real middle school. I sat down in the pink chair in front of some black woman who

proceeded to rake through my hair mercilessly. I'm what they call "tender headed." I'm not sure if I started crying at the beginning or at the end of the appointment, but I bawled like a baby. My parents and anyone else who had done my hair had always been gentle given my tender headedness. Not this lady. She called me a baby and pointed to a girl half my age who wasn't acting half as badly as I was. I didn't care. That shit hurt and I cried shamelessly.

I finally find a few pictures on my Facebook page of my hair last October. I hand my phone over to the translator woman.

"You real smart den?" Yvonne asks me, angling the rattail comb out as she looks over at me.

"Mmmhmm. Ya gurl dat looks real gud." She holds my phone up to show Ms. Yvonne. "Look at'r righ here."

"Thank you. blush a little and smile at her compliment. "I guess I'm smart. I'm just really good at doing school."

"I'h statchu after her. Go'on n have a seat." Yvonne points with the comb at some old leather couches facing an old tube television.

"Okay. Thank you."

I take a seat on the cream couch that reminds me of the 90s. In the 90s I had braids because my dad didn't know what else to do with my hair. Sometimes when he was very busy or very tired from work he would leave me with women who ran salons out of their homes. I remember him telling one woman, who was a member of our church, that I was very tender-headed and to please be gentle. "Oh sure, Brother Michael," is what I imagine she said as she smiled and flirted with my father, who wasn't ever interested in another woman. Then, when he left, she attempted to pull through my hair like she would have with any other little girl. I'm also pretty

- TWO SIDES TO HAIR -

sure I screamed bloody murder. I maybe also said I was gonna tell my daddy, which was a something I used in many situations as a kid. It was the one hair battle I won with someone other than my parents. This woman, this Sister Something Or Other, quickly decided to follow my father's instructions.

I keep my head down and begin reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The translator woman scratches the top of my head as she walks back to the hair dryer section of the salon. The feeling startles me. It's also a no-no at a salon. It's taken me nearly a month to get my hair dirty enough to get it relaxed. The dirt and oil help protect the scalp against potassium hydroxide, lithium hydroxide, or guanidine hydroxide, depending on the chemical in the relaxer. Scratching the scalp exposes the skin, making it more susceptible to chemical burns.

"Ooo. I'm sorry ba'by. You prolly don' wan' me doin that when you bout ta have hu do yer hair." She smiles and waves her hand at me.

"Okay baby, come'on ova here n have a seat." Yvonne pats the vinyl backing of the chair at her station.

I calmly walk over and take a seat. I keep reading my book as she begins applying a layer of Blue Magic goo around my face and ears to protect them from any chemical burns.

Our translator lady walks up, looks at me in the chair, and then says, "Whatchu mixed with gurl."

It's a statement more than a question. It's also something that I'm very familiar with being asked, so much so that I often make people guess before I will tell them. I think back to my favorite ladies who have done my hair. I met them while they were still in beauty school. They had both asked what I was mixed with, which makes sense because my mom looks Italian, Mexican, or something

else brown, but not white. The question is not limited to the women who have done my hair though. When I worked in retail customers asked. Almost any time I go on a date it comes up. It's usually phrased something like, "I was curious what your background is?" or "I don't want to be rude, but what race are you?" Or some other variation; it's always surprising to them that I have such a simple answer.

"Black and white."

"Oh ya. I shoulda known. See you gots dat white hair up dere n dat back theur, well dat's da niggas hair back theur." She announced this to the whole salon of about four other black women. "Dat's ya niggas comin' out in da back baby. Dat's why yous here." Then, finishing her explanation of my hair, she heads back to the dryers, swishing her hips and laughing.

I smile because I have no other defense prepared. I'm not angry and I'm not feeling disrespected. Instead, I feel very white. Like I'm white, but for some reason just as it's always been for my white life, my hair is black. I laugh a little at her comments. I know exactly what she means. The only time my hair fits who I am when it's relaxed and flat ironed.

When I explain my hair to a white stylist my first question is how many black women they have worked on. Then I feel the need to go through my specific expectations of how they should process my hair. I haven't let a white person relax my hair in years. Every once in a while I would find one that knew what they were doing. Sometimes it was okay, but usually my hair wasn't as good as when a black woman did it. Maybe the personal experience gives them an advantage. The last time I let a white woman do it was because she swore "I've been doing them for years! My nieces and nephews are mixed." She gave me one of the biggest and nastiest chemical burns ever. Then again, that's the risk of going to a beauty school.

- TWO SIDES TO HAIR -

I found a regular salon not far from the beauty school. It was a white salon, but there was a black woman who worked there. I liked her because she had years of experience working on different types of hair and we didn't have communication problems. Then one day I went back and she was gone. The white woman who owned the place would neither tell me where she went nor touch my hair. The blonde highlights freak people out. They think all my hair is going to fall out if they relax it. It won't, although I have over-processed it myself and broken off lots of expensive bleached hair. That's why I'm at Yvonne's today.

As Yvonne starts parting out my hair, "You know, I gots a niece ov'r theur at TCU. Ya she gots her a job cuz see it was temp'ry 'sition but ten da oth'r lady, well she just din't come back n my neice was doin' so well dey kep 'er."

She's obviously trying make polite conversation, make me feel a little more comfortable. The first time I came here was a few days before my 21st birthday. As the years have progressed, keeping up the conversation has become more and more difficult. I'm from a neighborhood similar to, but not as rough as, where Yvonne's salon is. However, I don't feel like I have anything in common with her. And, in all honesty, I find the conversation aspect of the hair session very uncomfortable and difficult.

"That's really good that she got to keep the job. I hear they pay pretty well and they have some pretty good benefits. Does she like it?" I really have no idea what a job at TCU might pay or anything about it.

"Mmhm." Again, the response is more like a smack and just rumbling vocal cords producing a sound of an affirmative answer.

I go back to my book. I brought it knowing that conversation would be awkward. Once Yvonne really

- TWO SIDES TO HAIR -

starts to do my hair I realize that I forgot to tell her that I'm tender-headed. This causes a bit of panic in me. Once she starts it's too late to tell her, but I now have to fight back the urge to cry as she pulls through my nappy roots.

"You okay baby? You not gonna cry is you?" Yvonne said, I guess, sensing my pain or maybe my eyes do start to tear up. I can feel her eyes peering around my head, trying to see my face.

"No, no I'm fine. My contact just itches. I'm fine though." In reality, I'm digging my fingers into my thigh with one hand and my book with the other. I know to keep quiet. I suck in the edge of my lip as Yvonne rakes her comb through my roots spreading the relaxer on them to break down the curly parts.

Okay, so I do tear up a little.

"This one time," Yvonne begins a story, "I had dis white friend n she axed me ta cut hur hair. So I's star' cuttin' it. Well she jus' start cryin'. I mean really dis gurl was cryin'. I wasn't even doin' nothin'. I finished her hair but oo I wan' ever ever do hur hair 'gain." Then she continues to pull through the nappy parts of my hair, holding my head steady with her free hand.

This is a veiled warning. I know the rules. If you cry as an adult at a salon, they will never do your hair again. It's not that I like Yvonne's so much, but I've been here before and the language barrier is bearable. So I stiffen my upper lip and focus on not crying. I can feel she's almost done anyway, based on the parts of my head that tingle.

The rest of the appointment goes by silently. I keep my book in hand and never look away from the page. We rinse and relax in a dark room in the back with only a light in the corner. I hear voices around me, but in all honesty I only recognize every few words because

- TWO SIDES TO HAIR -

I would have to focus very hard to understand everything. It's like they're speaking French (I might actually be better at proper French than black dialect).

In the dark room I drift to memories of my mom. My mom has always been disappointed that I'm not more connected with my "black side." I don't feel like I'm missing out as I look around the salon. I don't think my mom really understands what her hopes were for me and why they were so misguided.

Yvonne moves me from the sink in the dark room to the dryer where our translator was previously sitting, but she snuck out even before her hair was dry. I read quietly and mull over the day's events. I text my current best friend and coworker who's working my shift so I could get my hair done and tell her about the lady's assessment of my hair in racial terms. She "LMFAO"s and I make her crappy day better. I laugh a little more at the situation before Yvonne moves me back over to her chair.

Now that the hair is straight it doesn't hurt as much that she's just pulling through it, tangles and all. I wince periodically, but she just keeps going. I can feel her styling it into precisely what I don't want. There's something about when a black woman does my hair—they like to roll the ends. I don't know how to explain it other than they curl the ends under and it looks ridiculous.

"You wancha ends trimmed, baby?"

"Mmm, no thank you." I'm very weird about anyone cutting my hair and I'm not willing to risk it given the communication problems we have already had about the relaxer. Different stylists take the word "trim" to mean a variety of lengths. I once got my ends "trimmed" a total of six inches. It takes too long for me to grow my hair out to risk it here. She moves around my head, blow drying it layer by

layer. Her blow dryer has an end piece attached that allows her to comb and dry in one motion. It's also kind of painful. Her next step is to use the ancient gold curling iron, which will straighten my hair. Of course she is also going to curl the ends under so they frame my face. It's not worth explaining what I want. I can fix it myself when I get home.

When it's over I ask a question I already know the answer to, "How much do I owe you?"

"Fity."

I pull out a crinkled but fresh one hundred dollar bill from my pocket. I wish I'd brought twenties, but Yvonne takes it and returns my change and I give her the ten.

"Thank you," I say as I stand to leave.

"Is yo' name Kim, girl?" Yvonne asks as I look my hair over in the mirror quickly. It looks much more white now. After I get home and style it myself it will look like a white girl's hair.

"No." I smile. I wish I was this Kim. She always asks me that when I come.

"Oh no, 'at's right. You look jus' like'r." She smiles. She must really like this Kim person.

"Well, thank you. Ya'll have a nice day." I make my way to the door. I'm already thinking of going home to fix the stupid curl. Then again, I have so many errands to run. I get in my car and pull out my phone to use as a mirror. My hair is perfectly straight all the way around and lies flat against my head. I hate the stupid curl at the end. I snap a picture making a funny face to send to my friend Erica, so she can understand the stupid black salon curl. I put my hair back into a loose ponytail to hide the curl until I can get home to fix it. I've got errands to run, so that will have to do for now.

ABYSS
SARAH MORRIS



THE WEDDING VOWS OF KING HENRY VIII

ELLE GARNLEY

I take thee to be
My lawful wedded strife,
To seize and to mold,
For better or naught,
For riches and for power.

O, God, what have I undone?
From this day onward,
I bestow upon you
One-sixth of the *sang réal*
My darling, I promise to love you to pieces.

I pledge to be forever false,
For I love you as I love God—only when convenient.
And so I give you my hand, my heart,
My fickle tongue, and roaming hands—
For I am Your Majesty and thou shalt obey me.

My dearest lover, of smooth alabaster skin,
And the eyes of an innocent doe,
Beware the rage of a king
Who will let slip the dogs of war.
I am yours, but above all you are mine.

Every fairy tale must have an ending—
Divorced, beheaded, died,
Divorced, beheaded, survived.
Ladies first,
'Til death do us part.

STIPPLE OF NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE
TOMLYN BORGAN



A MOTHER'S CHILD

EVAN ANGLIN

Here it goes again – Ok Go

Running water shocking to touch
cupping the soap through your hands
while *flipping* the faucet off and on,
like teeter-totter rapidly bobbing up and down.

Counting—one, two, three, four...
Hell itself has captured you.
The body *shakes* like a nervous rabbit.
Damn you lose your count. Time to start at the race line again.

Wash, touch, wash, dry like a fucking assembly line.
Two, three, four—oh no!
You forget to say one.
Again and again, you think you are saving Jaimie's life.

Lights—*flicker* flapper off and on,
off and on, you want to give up.
Wanting to cry out, for someone just to hear this ominous nightmare.
Why hide your obsessive compulsions in fear?

You say you are saving me, but you are actually killing me.
Boy, this time will pass.

FROTH FOAM BROIL

KYLIE MARTIN



ELEGY WITH A SILVER THREAD

PAIGE WELLS

I used to believe that a star-catcher wasn't a net
but a wide-lipped bottle, like the ones
we used to catch water bugs with in early spring.

Your fingers made maps in the dirt and drew
wind chimes that plinked together, or a
spyglass you said could see through the sun.

Our Februarys were damp and cool, the careful buds
blooming too early. The smoky mist
stirred the apple blossoms, heartened the soft pink

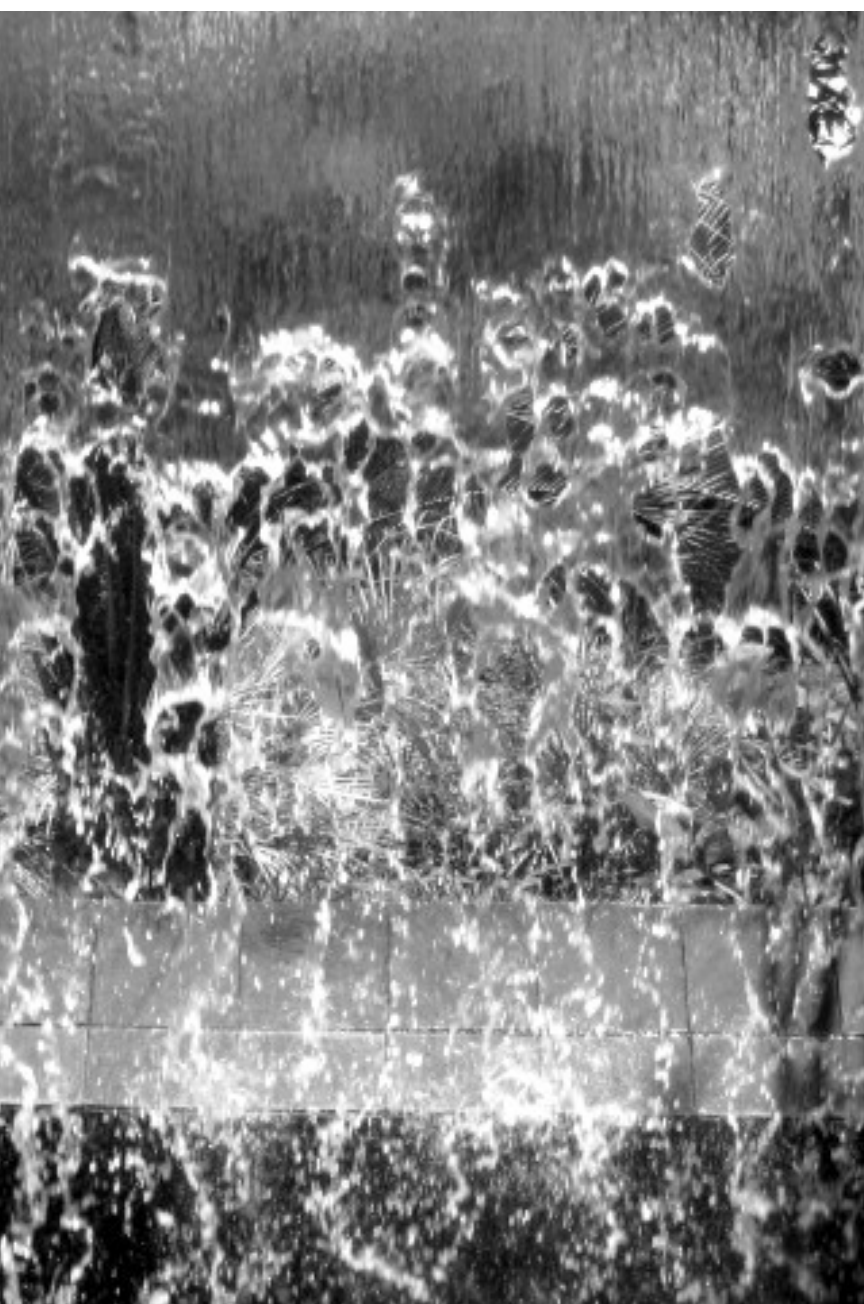
glow of the dogwood, and whispered melodies
of hayfields into our ears. We traced the wild
strawberry spines, painted them into kaleidoscopes,

into ink stains and earth. But now I pretend
my mouth's not filled with horsefly wings,
that the brook doesn't sing to be noticed.

That the quiver of dawn—the dread that flutters
in my stomach like fireflies in a hailstorm—
promises that the stars weren't meant to be swallowed.

NO AIR





HOLDING WATER

BAILEY BETIK

1. My mother does not believe in hugging. She does not believe in cable television, or in going to football games, or in giving incentives for having all A report cards, because "our education was a good enough reward." She believes in Irish hymns and Presbyterian stoicism. She believes in road trips to Canada, fresh fruit, and Downton Abbey. She does not approve of chess or Cheez-Its. She does not believe in crying.

2. As a child I remember Doodle Tops, smearing shaving cream across the table, turning water into lemonade when I got bored at restaurants. The ingredients were all there: lemons from my father's tea, sugar from the rack. My mother always flagged down the waiter to bring a glass of real lemonade, which was infinitely better tasting than my concoctions. But I liked that I had made something of my own, out of things people often overlooked.

3. I remember exploding at the smallest things, bottling up until I snapped; snot-sobs running down my face when I couldn't figure out where my other sock had gone, what I wanted for dinner, how to take the rollers out of my hair. Was this because she did not hug me? Was this because I never had a doorpost record of my height marked into a wall like everyone did in the movies?

4. Underwater at the Sokol pool, my cousin and I would sink to the bottom and sit, swaying seaweed hair reaching for sunlight. I could count to a hundred-thirty Mississippis, blood thumping through my head. From there, under the dancing kaleidoscope light, I wondered what would happen if I swallowed. Would I really drown? Or would I strain through the water like the whale that swallowed Jonah, filling myself, storing it for later?

5. This is not to say that my childhood was scarring. I was not saddened, I had many friends who came over

to jump on my trampoline. We went to zoos, made LEGO castles, danced in ballet recitals, volunteered at libraries.

6. I made a nest out of words, stuffing cracks in foundations with book pages. They insulated me. My mother provided these in piles, perhaps to make up for words she could not say. When the test said my comprehension levels were post-high school at age seven, eventually the books stacked around me, enveloping me until I forgot what it was I was missing.

7. I became drum majorette, lead actress, state oboist, spelling bee champion.

8. I had buckets of words then at my disposal. I freely flung them, watched them assemble into wit. But the Bible does not make disciples out of sharp tongues and glib gospels. "Clever" was not an attribute of saints, and my mother never laughed when Mrs. Emsley told her I had too many questions and not enough Blessed Assurance.

9. Was it because I always held my breath the longest?

10. In sixth grade my language arts class read "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury, a story about a girl who waits her entire life to see the sun through years on years of Venus rain, but her classmates lock her in a closet so that she never gets to see it. I didn't live on Venus, but I felt a tugging in my stomach, a magnet pulling toward metal unseen. I didn't know what that feeling was called, that pulling, but I knew that I should have, knots of irrevocable guiltiness sitting in my throat.

11. If I squinted my eyes for long enough, pinched my nose and sat softly on the bottom like a shadow, it was almost like I disappeared.

12. When I meet other people's mothers, I wonder how they feel—like soft blankets, like sturdy bridges. I wonder how I would be now if they had been my mother, if they had stroked my fevered forehead, if they would have

asked me who I was asking to my senior prom. Did I miss formative hugging years? Did a genome of emotion skip me? Would my heart be as hard as it is had I been able to touch?

13. When my brain began to flicker, my mother did not believe me. "Just headaches. You're overworking yourself." The tests meant I could not eat, drink, or sleep for 24 hours. The doctors said, "Partial-complex seizure disorder." She said, "Check again." She did not want a broken daughter. So they checked again, 24 hours later. For the first time, my mother was wrong.

14. I knew a boy once who sang soft as the wind with my head in his lap, who knew what I said when I couldn't remember words. Stroking the honey out of my hair, tracing my lips, he'd hum hymns his mother hummed him.

15. Disorders imply that there is a checklist that you can go down to find out every single shitty thing about yourself, as if there is a perfect form who can be called completely "ordered." Totally, utterly flawless. Religion teaches that a human in perfect form is God, but if science does not believe in Him, who in nature can be ordered? A person, or just an idea of them?

16. People do not need feelings when their life is made of doings.

17. Laughing and running through ankle-swishing pastures, I never realized my ribs held hollowness.

18. Last year I knew a girl who couldn't see the value in her carbon, etching secret razor-blade codes into her skin. They told her the medicine would cure seizures and insanity, neither of which she suffered from. She did not admit this to anyone but her bathroom; her faucet watched the water wash the Ativan blood of her sins away.

19. DIS-order. OUT OF order, like a gas station restroom. Taking my medicine was supposed to fix me, but I was

chaos poured into a skeleton. The Big Bang raged inside of me, whirling.

20. People did not understand how such loud lives had a song so soft. Some days we would sit on the steps of the wildflower shed, saying nothing, listening to cicada music, not touching. When the medicine gave me nightmares, he called every night to tell me stories until I fell asleep, strings of gold strung tenuously between two tin-can teenagers.

21. La Llorona haunted my dreams, black tangled hair matting her face as she drew herself slowly out of the water. The weeping woman killed herself in a river when her lover would not take her. I was not Spanish, but my dreams were. A language I did not speak clawed at my head and drowned me.

22. As a kid, my friends and I would play games that always ended up with questions. What animal would you be? Which N*Sync member would you date? If you could have any superpower, what would it be? I chose invisibility every time.

23. If people's lives were sounds, mine would be the split second between when you tell people you're hanging up but you haven't yet. Before the soft hum of breathing, the click of the receiver kissing the cradle. Wishing to say something before you leave.

24. The boy believed in Paris, and in summer porch rocking chairs. He believed in swear words, leather journals, and fundamental socialism. He did not believe in Andrew Jackson or in Eminem, and firmly disapproved of my Peachio addiction. He believed in forehead kisses and bread. He believed in ideas that he thought were mine.

25. Debate champion, public speaker, library volunteer. My mother watched on sidelines, sat on bleachers, full of suggestions for improvement.

26. Sometimes I forgot how to speak. He assumed that I ordered Diet Coke; I didn't. He gave me Camus for my birthday even though I told him I hated it. Once his grandmother made a comment about "when we get married," and I sat frozen as he beamed. It was then I realized that I had finally become invisible.

27. My mother liked him decently; he was Methodist, which was close enough.

28. His mother hugged me for a solid minute when I met her, and told me that I made her proud. Proud of what, I did not know; she had only heard of my medals, seen only crumpled black-and-white smiles, but she was the first mother to tell me that, so I automatically believed her.

29. It doesn't rain in Texas. We've been in a drought since my sophomore year of high school. Water levels are so low that docks have turned into community theatre stages; water markers have become obstacle courses and horseshoe targets. Every time we pass Lake Bardwell, my mother shakes her head. I ask her when the last time was that it was full. She says she can't remember it ever being full. She says she remembers always having to make do with a limited supply. But we did it, she says. The whole town did. We adjusted.

30. He was my first reason to cry from something besides frustration; hot parking-lot tears fell into his hands because I told him I couldn't love the way that he did—in Indian paintbrushes and Beatles records, out loud. He told me I could. He told me I did. I shook my head and remembered the word for "no."

31. One talent I never got an award for: I was always really good at near-death experiences.

32. I told him he was not in love with me, but the idea of me. When held up to the light, though, are they really all that distant?

33. I wondered how long you can watch someone struggle before you try to give them help they don't want. I wondered how many people have wondered that about me.

34. It wasn't until I had a seizure in front of my mother that she believed me.

35. Published essayist, homecoming runner-up, top student in humanities. But how can you study humanity without living it?

36. Once it was raining on the interstate above Woodall Rogers. The car in front of mine's brake lights flared red, so I hit mine. I skidded across lanes, swinging left, reversing right, until I hit the railing of the bridge. Metals ground against each other. I sat in my seatbelt, taking gulping, shuddering breaths. My tires did not know what to do when the sky was crying.

37. People always think that doing things for other people equals love. But I think sometimes people blur the lines of doing things for other people and doing what they think other people should do.

38. I left him with stanzas stuck to the bottoms of his shoes.

39. I read somewhere that a nineteenth-century theologian believed that the universe was like a poem, a perfect love song to creation. I hoped that he was right, that eventually at the core of it, everything could be broken down into rhyme, into meter, into words.

40. The girl wrestled with doubt in a different way than I did; she cried because she loved too much, changing religions, following phone calls across interstates, curled into a ball on the hardwood floor, clutching for corners of rug while paper-bag sobbing. They said medicine would cure her, but every day I saw the shadows

darken under her eyes, sinking deeper under curtains of black hair.

41. I unbuckled myself. The metal crunched as I pried the door open. I stood at the edge of the broken railing and watched the cars below rush past like a hungry river grinning beneath me. Raindrops stung my eyelids. Fifty feet down. Headfirst, like a swan dive.

42. People always talk about dreams coming true, but they never mention the nightmares.

43. When my brother got into Harvard, he wanted to go to Buffalo Wild Wings. I came home for a celebration dinner, my parents congratulating, my sisters talking of Ivies. They gossiped about football games and pregnant teenagers, talking about nothing at all. No one asked about what I was doing, about the 3 ams I spent soothing panic attacks on the floor. No one wondered why everything I ate ended up in the toilet. No one even noticed. I sipped lemonade, sugar stinging the cracks in my February lips. Pressure burned inside the back of my throat.

44. I cried for the first time in six years in the middle of a Buffalo Wild Wings in a town of 12,000 residents. My mother told me to leave because I was making a scene.

45. When I was five years old, I broke my arm. My cousin had a swim party at the pool, but I couldn't get in without water wings, trash bags, and a float because I couldn't get my cast wet. Water wings made me feel like a baby, so I took them off. I hated the float, so I wiggled out of that too. Mother said that without them I could only sit in the kiddie pool, but I pitched a fit and told her that I knew what I was doing. I didn't need to be treated like I was broken.

46. So I pushed through the doors of the wing joint as redneck families were ushered in. It was like someone had tapped a pile in my chest, the water trapped

inside me pouring down my face, onto my sleeves, dripping off the keys as I stuck them firmly in the ignition and sped back home.

47. The paramedics told me that if I had spun out four feet earlier, I would have gone over the edge.

48. Before she got home, I found her sapphire necklace and broke it, the snapped strands of half-silver like guilt on my palms. I took out the plug of the sink and dropped them down the drain.

49. She thought I was crying because my brother had gotten into Harvard. I wasn't upset about where anyone had gotten in; I was upset because I couldn't get out.

50. I jumped into the pool before I was healed, convinced that I wasn't capable of sinking. But I sank anyway, under six feet of water. She had to jump in to save me.

51. When my parents came home, my mother asked why everything had to be about me. I slammed doors like floodgates, told her that the last time she had hugged me was thirteen years ago.

52. The utter impossibility of order in humanity is what kept me going back to church, the hope that somehow, someday, everyone would make sense.

53. She said she didn't know I needed a hug, a kiss, an affirmation. She said that I had never asked.

54. Life is not a perfect story. There are blips on the way, boring lulls in chapters. There are parts that seem longer or stronger than they actually are. I only knew him, a summer at most, in a town that was not my own. Like we were frozen in time, stuck inside pages. I'm afraid now I have made him into an idea of a person, of coffee cups and feeding the ducks, the very thing I accused him of doing. But there are also reasons people leave, reasons they have to go.

55. How do you tell someone you are sorry?

56. Is it possible, do you think, to use up all your poetry? Should I dock my boat now, before the lake carves out height markers in the sides of memory banks? (Age 4. Age 16. Age 20.) I'm afraid I'm going to lose these years like I lost my Confirmation cross, swimming, memories left sifting into the deep East Texas mud, impossible to retrieve.

57. He kept them, I think. Words are hard things to find and even harder to lose.

58. But people do not become recurring characters you can just take from the shelf and read again. You have to pass them on.

59. The girl still haunts my dreams. I did everything I could to save her, but I know eventually I have just staved off the inevitable a tiny bit longer..

60. I can't sleep anymore without listening to rain.

61. That night, I crawled into my mother's bed and wrapped my arms around her. My head nestled beside her neck. She kissed my forehead as I drifted off to sleep.

62. The water levels this year are the highest they've been in years.

63. You cannot go back and make revisions. But there are always more chapters to write.

64. If I could catch a sound, I would put bedtime stories in my locket.

65. My mother does not believe in drinking, or Black Friday shopping, or the state of Oklahoma. But she believes in me, quietly, silently; an unanswered question, a river, a book.

THE MARUSAKS

BAILEY BETIK

Do not let them make you
a paperback fiction:
underlining half-sentences,
creasing dog-eared favorite parts,

wanting only cherry bomb
wit, bold like phoenixes and blistering
cigarette ash, tumbling
sharply from your mouth.

They will piece you together
entirely wrong; skipping chapters,
filling gaps with sidewalk chalk.
Do not let them dwell on goldfish

boys who tried to fold stars
out of father's-footsteps dreams.
They will ask why
you will not ride in pickup trucks
or come home to meet their sisters.

Do not let them make you doubt.

They will skip your Barrett Brownings
the empty ballet barre afterhours,
trying to spin the world into focus
through leotard sonnets
that no one ever read.

They will ignore your porcelain 5am
pleading for mercy, rusty spigots
flickering when your brain
short-circuited
again.

They will stay ants in amber,
anchors in the summer floods
as Moravia erodes beneath them
through your raining copper penny
laughter.

- THE MARUBAKS -

There will come a field of sunflowers
nodding over your head
thick like honey,
a *miluji te* whisper
drifting over mockingbird nights you spend
curled on the rooftop quietly watching
instead of being watched.

These things they cannot take from you;
inhale the scent of wind chimes,
sound of pasture, taste of calm.

Wear these, your life's charm bracelet,
glitteringly, and sing.

JOHN O'CALLAGHAN
CAROLINE CHANDONNET



3D DESIGN QUOTE



CONSTANTINE ZGOURIDES



MY SWEATER

LAURIE MEGURO

Dear A,

This is the letter I'll never send
about the moment that stopped time,
the day in my kitchen where I asked if we could end
the journey we were writing
together. And you looked at me with oddity—
an ant discovering fruit rotting in the grass.

You smiled, taking my hand in yours, and I was certain
we would say goodbye,
but then your fingers tightened, my fingers turning
a dark shade of blue, sensation fading quickly, and in that moment,
I knew
you were unwilling to let go—a canine with teeth locked in flesh,
jaw snapping, mixing blood and breath.

Every muscle in my body—a soldier at attention,
tall and stiff, slightly
shaking,
saying goodbye to a fallen friend.

Tell me, did you hear the
crack
of my head against the tile as you released me from your grasp?
You slammed the white kitchen door behind you,
the hood of your car the next victim of a dent, and then

I crawled to the door and turned the lock,
and upon hearing the
click,
you came flying back, pounding your fist into the frame, and

I could barely hear you screaming that you're sorry, that this was
just a mistake—
an accident,
a simple snag in a sweater, just a knot in the yarn coming undone,
slowly but surely unraveling, precariously unwinding until
the wearer is left naked on display;
the sweater—a memory, just scraps and threads scattered
on the floor.

CLIPPED

TESSA SALOMONE

1. I sympathize with ratites.

2. Our wings are useless, weighed down by layers of feathers. We didn't ask for so many of them. Hell, do you think we enjoy sticking our heads in the sand? At least penguins can swim.

3. *Across the tautly painted sky he ran—
the Shadow of his wings disturbed the sand within the hourglass
that lay open on its side,
spilling timeless dreams that washed themselves upon the shore;
once, and then again but now no more, they dance across the
final mile
unwitting and alone beside the walrus and the sphinx
who hides behind its beguiling Mona Lisa smile.*
—an excerpt from *Shadows* by Jerry Salomone

4. Birds have always been my favorite animals. Not by choice, but I never rejected the idea. It was all I knew. It defined who I was. I suppose I could now... I suppose I could change my identity. I am an adult after all. That's not by choice either.

5. "She says that your neck is too short. A ballerina should be long."

"Ah, yes. Look!" Madame V., Associate Director of the Kirov Academy of Ballet, pointed behind my father and me, following her broken English.

A photo of a Mariinsky Theatre ballerina portraying the White Swan, Odette, hung on the wall in a gold frame.

"Tessa's only fifteen...She's barely started her growth spurt," My father said, reaching towards me and taking my hand.

Madame V. slurred something in Russian to her translator.

"She says, 'You will never look like a ballet dancer.'"

6. "Art is the only way to run away without leaving home." –
Twyla Tharp

7. The majority of my posed photos from infancy look like they could've been taken in the late 19th century if they weren't in color and if I hadn't been wearing a onesie or jumper. I'm not smiling in a single shot. I look rather unamused, as if I'm thinking, "Why the hell is that guy behind that black machine waving a

teddy bear at me? Smile? Who, me? HA."

When my dad was behind the camera, it was different. He made me laugh. I could trust him.

8. As early as the 18th century, ballerinas began dancing on the tips of their toes to give the illusion of flying.

9. For 365 consecutive days, beginning August 21st 2007, my mother dressed entirely in black.

10. Icarus's father, Daedalus, gave him the gift of flight in the form of a pair of handcrafted wings held together by wax. Before Daedalus flew off on his own pair, he instructed his son to follow his path, keeping equal distance from the sun and the seas. Ignoring his father's warnings, Icarus soared higher and higher towards the heavens. Unable to endure the heat, the wax began to melt, deforming the wings and sending Icarus plummeting into the sea.

11. While my mom was getting herself ready to feed me, my dad cradled me, swaying back and forth to soothe my impatience. When he looked down for a smile, I was staring intently at my mother, lips parting and sealing incessantly as if I was chirping.

"Hey Marti, look at our Little Bird!"

It's stuck ever since.

After twenty-two years, my birthday cards are still addressed to "Little Bird."

12. "He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying." – Friedrich Nietzsche

13. When I was four years old, I fell in love with the Sugar Plum Fairy. Adorned with pink tulle and satin, she glided across the stage effortlessly. Ruler of the Kingdom of Sweets, she led her court in dance with the gentle warmth of her mime. With arms rounded softly above her tiara, she circled her hands around each other, offering the stage to her dancers, joy spread across her smile. Powerful, serene, and kind, her beauty was undeniable. I couldn't peel my eyes away from her. I wanted to know her. I wanted to be her.

14. My mother came home to shower a total of three times during the last two and a half weeks of my dad's time at Houston's Hospice House. At 3am on one of those mornings, I woke up to a short series of earsplitting BANGS and POPS.

"Jared! Tessa! Wake up! I think the garage is on fire!"

15. "Silence is so accurate." – Mark Rothko

16. During the two years I spent studying ballet in New York, I could barely afford to fly home with the money I made babysitting on the Upper Eastside. I'd take the cheapest flights available, which meant that I'd have to pay extra if I wanted to watch a movie. As soon as the flight attendant's voice boomed through the intercom, "Ladies and gentlemen, you are now permitted to use portable electronics," I'd immediately pull out my iPod. The first song I'd like to listen to was *At the Bottom of Everything* by Bright Eyes.

17. My dad made sure that he had the best seats in the house when I was cast in my first lead role as Clara in my dance studio's performance of *The Nutcracker*: he watched the entire party scene from the stage as the father of Family #3, a Victorian-style top hat hiding four holes left by the brace screwed to his skull for radiation treatments.

18. "I told them how excited I would be to go into space and how thrilled I was when Alan Shepard made his historic flight, and when John Kennedy announced on the news that the men had landed safely on the moon, and how jealous I was of those men." – Christa McAuliffe

19. I'd always been *Daddy's Little Girl*. I'd follow him everywhere, around the house, to the grocery store, to his adult league soccer games... Eventually I wasn't allowed to watch those anymore. My mom decided that the violence was becoming too inappropriate and the language on the field was getting too offensive for my little ears. I'd surely end up mimicking every cuss word that my dad yelled at the ref. She'd mistaken me for my brother.

20. *Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,*

Do not go gentle into that good night.

—from *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* by Dylan Thomas

21. Some girls grow up being best friends with their mothers. I was not one of them. Not that my mom wasn't wonderful to me, she was and still is. She never spoiled me, but always stressed independence and diligence. She wanted my life to be perfect, free from the pain of failure and rejection. She wanted me to be perfect, never giving anyone a reason to halt my dreams. She'd fought too hard to get out of the border town she grew up in and make a name for herself. She'd fought too hard to be perfect. As a coping mechanism for her past battle with anorexia, which nearly took her life, she focused on my body.

"You don't look like a ballerina, Tessa. It's better that you hear it from me..."

22. My brother had an obsession with World War II airplane fighter jets when he was in high school, not long before he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. His bookshelf was stuffed with aviation encyclopedias and history books detailing the ins and outs of the U.S. Air Force. Bottles of super glue and miniature planes of exact make and model of the real thing scattered across his bedroom. Being a nosy pre-teen, I'd sneak into his room when he was out to look at the carefully put together replicas, imagining my great uncle flying across Germany, his aircraft engulfed in flames.

23. In the age of Romanticism, beauty was the ethereal. Dressed as sylphs and nymphs with tiny wings attached to their bodices, ballerinas transported European audiences to another world, a dream world filled with mystery. Inside the opera house doors, they could escape from reality, entranced by the dancing goddesses, if only for a few hours.

24. For Father's Day when I was 14, I found the perfect gift for my dad: a small, sky blue ceramic banner with white clouds and the phrase *My Father Taught Me How to Fly* painted on by hand.

25. One of my earliest memories is of my mother frantically chasing after my brother at Sea World while I remained latched onto my father, crying when he tried to put me in my stroller.

26. *Marti is counseling the kids who've been looking warily over their shoulders as they exit the room, saying things like, "It's OK, he didn't really mean it that way. Don't mind your father. That's just the drugs talking."*

27. When I was in middle school, my dad's twelve-year remission ceased. We started going for walks together on Sundays just before dusk, both aware that these opportunities would be sparse in the coming years. Watching the sun's rays slowly fade away as we made our way down the neighborhood set an eerie yet calming mood. I remember hearing a cooing sound one day as we passed an oak tree rustling in the wind. "Do you hear the mourning doves, Tessa?" "But Dad, it's not morning . . . why are they called that?" "They don't like saying goodbye."

28. Since I was 12 years old, I've spent at least one month of every summer at an intensive: ballet boot camp during the day and slumber party at night. I'd become such a frequent flyer that I knew Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport, one of the largest hubs in the country, inside out. Every goodbye peck over the span of seven years felt the same: excitement and sorrow lingers on the lips as they part and go numb.

29. *III. HOME*

*Here is a thing my heart wishes the world had more of:
I heard it in the air of one night when I listened
To a mother singing softly to a child restless and angry in the
darkness.*

—from *Poems Done on a Late Night Car* by Carl Sandburg

30. When you visit New York City, I suggest flying into LaGuardia at night. The feeling of floating above the brightness as you peer down at the hope built into every bridge and mile high building stacked upon another is surreal.

31. Some days I wonder what quotes I'll leave behind for the world to read.

32. "Break a leg" is too cliché for my mom. She prefers to wish me luck before auditions and performances by saying, "Put your game feet on."

33. I used to spend every summer outside (much like the majority of kids living in the growing suburbs of the 90s). Samantha, my neighbor, and I would follow our brothers around, playing in the mud, riding our bikes to the park, attempting to play street hockey... Basically, we were proving that we were absolutely not girly girls. One day to prove our she-manliness, we decided to climb trees. Samantha went first, easily reaching the highest branch then making her way back down. I analyzed her every step to make sure that I'd have the right footing. I made my way up the pecan tree much faster than Sam had. *Piece of cake.* Then I looked down. And that's when I had my first panic attack.

34. *And then suddenly there was this huge mechanical failure and one of the engines gave out, and they started just falling thirty-thousand feet, and the pilot's on the microphone and he's saying "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, oh my god... I'm sorry" and apologizing. And she looks at the man and says, "Where are we going?" and he looks at her and he says "We're going to a party. It's a birthday party. It's your birthday party. Happy birthday darling. We love you very, very, very, very, very, very, very much." And then he starts humming this little tune, it kind of goes like this: 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4...*

35. Will my life end ironically? Will I have foretold my own future without realizing before it was too late?

36. I didn't smile much in general when I was a baby, especially for strangers. I spent my first Thanksgiving dinner rocking back and forth in a wind-up baby swing, staring sharply at a dining room table full of loud adults that I'd later discover were my family members. Not once did my wide brown eyes ever lose focus of their faces. This, for some reason, slightly concerned my parents. Having a little Wednesday Adams crawling around the house wasn't quite what they'd expected when they signed up for parenthood.

37. No matter what, my dad would always come to my rescue. Defending me in every quarrel, he'd save the day, *my day*, time after time. My hero.

38. "Flying might not be all plain sailing, but the fun of it is worth the price." - Amelia Earhart

39. After eight years of performing in *The Nutcracker* with my home studio, at 16 years old, I finally got to be the Queen of The Kingdom of Sweets. That afternoon, I'd made sure that I was the first to arrive at the theater. I wanted to be the first person in the dressing room so I could take my time in transforming myself into Sugar Plum. Perfection couldn't be rushed.

40. Unfortunately I hadn't gotten the memo about the crew's union contract and wound up sitting outside the locked stage door for forty-five minutes, shivering.

41. I remember pushing my dad in a wheel chair around Methodist Hospital as he repeatedly whispered between hoarse breaths, "Let's go home."

42. In Nickelodeon's prime, there were such things as *Children's Game Shows*. Crazy to imagine, I know. As a prize for winning the game, some kids got a ticket to NASA's space camp, all expenses paid. My brother and I would beg my dad to let us go to space camp after every episode. He'd say, "Sure! Just ask your mother first." My mom didn't like us watching those game shows.

43. "Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return." - Leonardo da Vinci

44. My brother and I ran out of our bedrooms and downstairs, following our mom to the backyard. Behind our fence, one of the pecan trees planted on the median of Edgewater Drive was engulfed in flames, split in half by a red pick-up piercing its trunk.

45. The silence between the screams and the sirens still haunts me.
For the next 8 months, until we sold our house, I slept downstairs next to my mother in the master bedroom.

WITHIN A DILEMMA

TESSA SALOMONE

(INSPIRED BY W.S. MERWIN)

What is the cranium?

Canvas

What are the ears?

Our waves rise once, never in mirrors.

What were the ears?

Over our concerns are answers;
some sewn in rain, some woven on crime,
uneven evermore.

What is the nose?

A rose or vine in wax
moves on as seasons roam.

What are the arms?

Scars

What were the arms?

Risen in air as mazes rim our senses,
we mimic survivors, not war:
races never win.

What is the noise?

We wear veins near our woes.

Who are the insane?

I can see the eraser's remains.

COLLEGE

PETER TRIGG

People keep expecting me
To know what I want to
Do with my life.

"What do you like?"
"Where do you want to go?"
"What's your *passion*?"

Three years into my
University education,
I'm finally getting an idea.

Months of morning drudgery
Have informed this decision.
I want to work with bacon.

FORGOTTEN WHIMSY



THOMAS MERRYMAN



AIN'T NO GRAVE SOMETIMES TRIP STARKEY

There are times I bleed
from the eyes down
into our moonlit meadow.

I wrote this on a branch
of dogwood, and sent it
in a bottle upstream.

My mother found it buried
beneath a pile of firewood.
Filled her dress with stones,

and drowned in the river.
Sometimes I can see her
dancing in silos of light,

reflecting off the prairie.
Sometimes I dream she's
sweeping our porch at night.

In winter, I can taste her
cinnamon butter as it paralyzes
my tongue in a trance.

It leaves me thirsty
for that moonshine river
where we all go to bleed alone.

THE COURTYARD

REBECCA SEMIK

FADE IN:

EXT. COURTYARD OF OUTDOOR SHOPPING CENTER - MORNING

THE BIRD LADY, a 53-year-old woman whose wrinkled clothes don't match and whose wavy hair has small, almost unnoticeable gray streaks, sits at a bench in an open courtyard. The rustic courtyard has three other benches surrounding the stone water feature in the center. The Bird Lady's smiling as she tosses bits of bread for the birds to eat; this is her daily routine. CARTER (a tall, lanky guy of 21 years that carries himself shyly and always wears his glasses, beanie and hoodie) walks over to the Bird Lady.

CARTER

Hello.

BIRD LADY

Why hello, young man.

CARTER

(smiling sadly)
Can I sit?

BIRD LADY

Please. You wanna feed them?

CARTER

Sure.

CARTER takes some bread from the bird lady and they toss pieces as they talk.

BIRD LADY

I used to bring my son to feed them
when he was little.

- THE COURTYARD -

CARTER

Really?

BIRD LADY

Oh, yeah. My husband didn't like it though. Always going on about bird flu, but he'd come with us anyway.

CARTER

Where's he now?

BIRD LADY

I, uh, don't...I'm sure he's on his way. *(to herself)* Must be on his way.

CARTER

(concerned)

Is there anything I can get you, ma'am?

BIRD LADY

(chuckles)

Ma'am. Such a gentleman. I'm fine, sweetie. Thank you.

He tosses his last bit of bread.

CARTER

Thanks for sharing.

BIRD LADY

Of course.

CARTER gets up and looks at her, heartbroken. The BIRD LADY already forgets about him and redirects her attention to the birds. CARTER walks past the SHOP OWNER of the store across the courtyard from the BIRD

- THE COURTYARD -

LADY's bench; the SHOP OWNER is a short, stout 60-year-old man. The SHOP OWNER places a firm hand on CARTER's shoulder as the two exchange sad smiles.

CARTER walks away with his head down, the shop owner looking after him.

EXT. COURTYARD OF OUTDOOR SHOPPING CENTER - NEXT MORNING

CARTER walks over to the BIRD LADY as she's feeding the birds; he looks tired, more disheveled than the previous morning.

CARTER

Hello.

BIRD LADY

Hello.

CARTER

(smiling sadly)

Do you mind if I sit?

BIRD LADY

Please.

CARTER

(pause)

I used to come here with my mom when I was a kid.

BIRD LADY

I came with my son, too. People don't make the time anymore. *(beat)* What'd you say your name was?

- THE COURTYARD -

She grabs his chin, roughly turning his head from side to side, examining his facial features.

CARTER

Ow. I didn't.

BIRD LADY

Huh, you look just like my husband.

Her train of thought is immediately derailed. She checks her watch.

(to herself)

Where is he?

CARTER

What's his name?

BIRD LADY

Who?

CARTER

Your husband?

BIRD LADY

His name's...His name's,
uh...Jas--No! Mason. His name's
Mason. Have you seen him?

CARTER

No, sorry.

BIRD LADY

Who are you again?

CARTER

Carter. My name's Carter.

- THE COURTYARD -

BIRD LADY

Carter. That's my dad's name. I've
always liked that name...

She stares off into space.

CARTER

(concerned)

Is there anything I can get you,
ma'am?

BIRD LADY

(distracted)

I'm fine. Thank you, sweetie.

Carter gets up and leaves, heartbroken.

EXT. COURTYARD OF OUTDOOR SHOPPING CENTER - NEXT
MORNING

CARTER walks over to the BIRD LADY. She's not feeding
the birds today, just watching them. Before CARTER gets
to the bench, she spots him and smiles big.

BIRD LADY

Carter.

CARTER

(misty eyed)

Mom.

He closes the gap between them and they hug each
other. She pulls away and holds his face in her hands,
then pats his beanie down.

BIRD LADY

How long?

CARTER

About a month this time.

- THE COURTYARD -

BIRD LADY

How was I?

CARTER

Oh, you know, crazy as usual
(laughs)

BIRD LADY

Isn't that the truth.

CARTER

(attempting at casual)
You're still mentioning Dad.

BIRD LADY

Too bad I can't seem to remember
him leaving us.

CARTER

You almost forgot his name.

BIRD LADY

Ah, good news.

She grabs his chin, examines his face.

BIRD LADY

You look thinner? Is Anthony not
feeding you?

CARTER

Yes, he's feeding me. He's on this
vegan kick now. He doesn't think I
know but he's planning this big
dinner for our anniversary. I just
really wanted to go out and get a
steak.

- THE COURTYARD -

BIRD LADY

Oh, let him be. He wants to make
your two-year special.

(feigning excitement)

I got tickets to a football game from your
father for our two-year.

CARTER

(laughs)

Yeah, I guess I'll keep, Anthony.

BIRD LADY

(pause)

Maybe you should stop coming to see
me.

CARTER

Nothing's changed, Mom.

BIRD LADY

Honey, you're celebrating your
two-year anniversary. You're
getting married in a few months.

CARTER

So what? That's got nothing to do
with me visiting you.

BIRD LADY

Exactly.

*Carter's catching on. He's looking straight ahead,
away from her.*

BIRD LADY (CONT'D)

Don't worry, honey.

She nods at the shop owner who is pretending to

- THE COURTYARD -

sweep the store front but is really watching them from the corner of his eyes.

BIRD LADY (CONT'D)

George will keep an eye on me. You deserve a full life with Anthony, not a half life with both of us.

BIRD LADY takes CARTER's glasses off his face to wipe the lenses with her blouse and then puts them back on his face. He savors this very maternal gesture. He hugs her tightly, kisses her cheek, and pulls away.

BIRD LADY (CONT'D)

I love you.

She cups the side of his face in one hand.

CARTER

I love you.

He gets up to leave and starts walking away. BIRD LADY calls after him:

BIRD LADY

Carter.

Carter stops and turns around.

BIRD LADY (CONT'D)

Don't.

CARTER

Love you.

He continues leaving.

- THE COURTYARD -

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

CARTER is scouring his room looking for his keys. He's shuffling papers, flipping through books, lifting up pillows, going through drawers. ANTHONY, a fair-skinned athletically-built man of 23 years, enters in pajamas, carrying a bowl of oatmeal.

CARTER
Did you move my keys?

ANTHONY
No. Where'd you leave them?

Carter frustratedly gesturing a hand to his nightstand.

CARTER
Right there.

ANTHONY
Take a break. Breakfast's in the kitchen.

Carter's search continues.

CARTER
I'm already late.

ANTHONY
Don't worry. If you forgot I'm sure--

CARTER
(frustrated)
I didn't forget.

ANTHONY is a bit stung and looks away but something catches his eye. It's CARTER's keys behind his laptop, hidden from his view. ANTHONY coolly grabs the key,

- THE COURTYARD -

puts them in CARTER's hand and holds his hand while he kisses CARTER's forehead. ANTHONY heads back to the kitchen, spooning oatmeal into his mouth along the way, leaving CARTER to stare at his keys in his hand.

EXT. COURTYARD OF OUTDOOR SHOPPING CENTER - SAME MORNING

CARTER walks into the courtyard, still trying to shake off the earlier events of the morning. He sees the bench but no BIRD LADY. He does a 360 degree turn looking across the shopping center looking for her. He's starting to get frantic. He runs into SHOP OWNER's shop.

INT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The classic old shop has walls lined with rows and rows of shelves overflowing with books.

CARTER runs over to the SHOP OWNER who's talking to a CUSTOMER, a 30-year-old woman.

SHOP OWNER

I personally prefer Austen to Bronte. She's got a sharper wit.

CUSTOMER

Really? I heard--

CARTER

Where is she?

SHOP OWNER

Carter.

CARTER

She's not at her bench.

- THE COURTYARD -

SHOP OWNER

I'm sorry. I had to help a customer.

CARTER runs out the door before the SHOP OWNER can finish.

EXT. COURTYARD OF OUTDOOR SHOPPING CENTER -
CONTINUOUS

CARTER is racing around, goes up to a young couple, a 33-year-old MAN and 34-year-old WOMAN.

CARTER

Have you seen a woman about this tall in her fifties? She normally sits over there feeding the birds.

WOMAN

No, sorry.

They walk away. While he is talking to them, the BIRD LADY goes to sit down at her bench. CARTER is on his toes, craning his neck looking everywhere but the bench. He finally sees her and races over.

CARTER

Christ, are you okay? Where have you been?

BIRD LADY

(cautious)

I had to go to the restroom. Is that a crime?

CARTER

(partially composed)

Oh, no. Not at all.

- THE COURTYARD -

BIRD LADY

Was there something you needed, sweetie?

CARTER

(softly)

Mom?

BIRD LADY

Mom?

CARTER

(louder)

Ma'am. Sorry, ma'am. Didn't mean to disturb you.

BIRD LADY

No problem....Are you alright?

CARTER

Yes...Thank you.

The BIRD LADY resumes feeding her birds, only occasionally glancing from the corner of her eye at the strange young man inquiring about her restroom habits. CARTER takes one last look before leaving her. He walks past the SHOP OWNER without looking at him, but the SHOP OWNER looks after him with a hint of pride, smiling a slight smile.

HERO'S CHARIOT

THOMAS MERRYMAN



Q & A

CODY WESTPHAL

I was a curious little kid.

Ever since I figured out the whole
Sentence thing I could not
Stop ending them with question marks.

Why do bears sleep so long?
How do the stars stay still but when I wake up they're
gone?
What makes the grass grow
And the leaves change colors
And spaghetti go from hard and crunchy to
Floppy and delicious?

And there was always an answer.

From someone two feet taller than me rained down the
keys to unlock
The world.

When I was small, the world was a series of boxes,
On the wings of butterflies
Or in the blue of the sky
I found questions and once expressed
I was given answers.

I probably annoyed all the grown ups more
Than they could handle-
This tiny blonde-haired, blue-eyed
Ball of energy,
Questioning everything from
Caterpillars to what I figured was Eve's nonexistent belly
button.

But they always answered-
They knew everything.
And I thought,
If I keep asking

(POEM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

And raising my hand
And begging for explanation,
It won't be long before I know everything too.
It won't be long before I know everything.

So I grew up,
And though I collected answers
Like baseball cards,
It seemed like I was never getting
Any closer to having them all.

And then the questions got harder as I inched toward the
sky, and with every day they would multiply.
Ms. Stowe was so nice, why did she have to die?
Or dad is so strong,
Why did I see him cry?

The light of my answers
Was eclipsed by the questions-
The wind couldn't clear the clouds
Away fast enough.

The questions were bigger,
more. So many more.

I remember the day when
I asked my dad how
Does a car know when it's dark?
-Sensors, son.
I was content.
Then I asked how do I know
That you aren't going to have another heart attack and
die this time?
Silence.

The power found in the hope
That one day I could know everything evaporated
Into a cloud that blocked out the sun,
That said

(POEM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

"Darkness is all around you,
And you cannot bring it light.
You will walk in darkness.
You will bathe in darkness.
No one has answers for the cold, black questions you
find,
And so it is and so it will be.
There is no safety from drowning,
You cannot get out of the ocean.
Learn to swim or be dead."

I didn't want it to be like this.
I didn't want to have questions whose existence made
me sad.
I didn't want to have questions whose answers don't exist.
I didn't want to have to accept darkness.

Where did the butterflies go?
As a kid I meant it literally,
And now I mean it as a metaphor.

It's not mom and dad where does wind come from,
It's mom and dad why do you love me more than you
love each other?

It's not tell me because I'm curious,
It's tell me, god dammit, because I'm scared and I can't
stop crying.

Remember when we raised our hands in class?
Now
I want to hold the world ransom,
Torture life's henchmen
Until they tell me what I need to know to sleep at night.

Mom, mom, mom, MOM!
What honey?
I heard a noise and it scared me-What was it?
It was only the door, see? Go back to sleep.

(POEM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE - STANZA BREAK)

Son, son, son, SON!

What is it mom?

I sometimes feel alone and there is so much hurt. What makes it stop?

We don't know, we don't know.

A PLACE CALLED HOME

CLAIRE SHELTON

Christian summer camps are a big deal in Oklahoma. Generally, your parents heard about one and would send you there when you were five years old and that's where you stayed. I went to Shepherd's Fold Ranch, the smallest of the options, tucked away just outside a town called Avant, which had no working businesses and therefore wasn't a town at all. I found myself thrust into a world of bonfires and Chaco tans and Holy Spirit encounters at the ripe age of eight. The modest sign at the front of the property boasted the motto "a place called home."

The term "home" generally evokes images of children and dogs running through yards and smoke rising from chimneys, carrying the scent of dinner out from the oven to the open air. At camp, children frolicked through the uncut grass only to end up in the nurse's office with blood trailing down their shins. There is a certain "camp smell," I suppose, of frozen chicken fingers and bonfires and chunks of reddish clay stuck beneath fingernails. But these days the smell of my childhood is slightly tainted, and I strain to hold on to the positive memories of that refuge in the country.

There was the hill up which we had to trek every time we wanted to eat or swim or go to the barn. It set our thighs afire until we couldn't bear to take another step, so we'd stop, take a deep breath, and sprint the last few feet, collapsing on the grass sprouting over the ridge. On the way back down, we'd take off running, the gravity pulling us faster than our legs could run.

After lunch, without fail, we had three hours of free time, during which campers could do whatever they chose, as long as they were outside of the cabins. I rode a horse for the first time at The Fold. Years later, I would acquire a horse of my own and, when my family could no longer care for it, donate it to camp. Down the hill

a ways was a pond that went by the official name of Lake Shiloh. I was terrified of that pond. I was terrified of the bullfrogs that croaked as dusk fell and the moonlight cut through the shadows and projected an eerie glow upon the rippling surface of the water. I was terrified of the tower from which campers and counselors jumped, slapping against the water and causing everyone present to hold their breath for a moment or two. Will they come up? Are they dead? It was bound to happen eventually. For years we heard rumors of cotton-mouthed serpents that could kill you with a single injection of venom.

"There aren't really snakes in the pond, guys," said the counselors.

"Come on, do you think we'd let you swim if there were snakes?"

They told us myths when we were little. That, although there were no snakes or snapping turtles, there was a whale named Sparky in the pond. Sometimes you can hear him early in the morning, when the dew-dusted grass is still untouched, before all the campers stampede past the pond on their way up the hill to breakfast.

Logan Briggs used to dive down into the deep end of the pond and come back up some minutes later, his hands full of mud-covered Frisbee-golf discs, lost for years. Many had fading names written on the backs in Sharpie. Some we knew: Jared Montgomery, Noah Bishop. Some had long since grown up and left: James Fowler, Riley Duncan.

"Just make sure you don't get any water in your nose or mouth," my mom used to say every summer. "There are amoebas in there."

Once, a kid took a shit in the pond and since I saw that clump of brown float up to the service, I haven't jumped willingly into that water. It's been years. When I was eleven, I refused to touch the bottom of the pond; it felt like slimy quicksand beneath the soles of my sandals. In fact, the grayish concoction had been known to consume a Chaco in one bite. I climbed onto the shoulders of the older campers, explaining my fear of the pond floor. A description of the other things at camp that scared me usually followed: spiders, scorpions, Port-A-Potties. Eventually falling would join the list.

When I was fifteen, I met Austin Weaver, who held the Shepherd's Fold namesake and so thought himself the shit. Stanley and Margaret Weaver stumbled across the property on a cruise through the country in '72 and felt God calling them to dole out some money and start "a place where people could do business with God." So the Weaver grandchildren were like summer camp royalty. And yet somehow Austin chose me. I'll spare you the details of our four-year affair, long-distance, dysfunctional. But suffice it to say that it tainted my high school years, unable as I was to let go of the first boy who'd told me he loved me.

The seven Weaver children had grown up at the fold when their dad, Brian, the eldest son of the founders, took the position of executive director. Eventually they moved back to the city, and then away from Oklahoma all together—to Colorado, then to upstate New York. They left quietly, without explanation, but they came back every year as campers.

When I was sixteen and Austin was fifteen, we planned to sneak away from the group one night and kiss in this hollowed-out pine tree. We could pretend that we were hiding in the tree as part of a night game and inconspicuously steal what would have been both of our first kisses. We were more innocent than most teenagers and to our prude minds, it was the perfect plan, the

perfect escape. There was a girl named Michelle who was volunteering in the kitchen that week. She was the only person I told about our plan and she encouraged it, promising to tell no one.

We never did it though; it felt like blasphemy even to talk about kissing on such sacred land. I had my first kiss a year later, in the back of a car parked in front of my house with a boy I didn't even like.

Worship was a nightly ritual, and it was during those times that Shepherd's Fold felt the most sacred. It was while singing to the Lord that I learned that some places are kingdoms of their own, sanctuaries set aside for nothing but bringing glory to the Father. Sometimes kids would claim to see angels. I heard stories for years about heavenly beings coming up from the horizon, washing over the Eagle's Nest atop the hill, knocking people over with their power. Counselors collapsed on the ground and started to laugh so hard they cried, children danced through the crowd, running after someone only they could see. I thought I saw an angel once nestled between some clouds.

"But what if it's just my imagination?" I asked.

"Well," said my counselor. "Who gave you your imagination?"

Some nights we would cry out to the Lord, scattered around the top of the hill. "Come and fill this place." We sang over our families, our schools, our country. And some nights it was quiet, an intimate conversation, a steady hum against the chaos of the outside world. But no number of songs or rhythms of the djembe could stifle the inevitable.

There were the kids who, all the way through high school, found themselves on a perpetual annual loop. My friend Denver, for example, would get back into

drugs and alcohol and sleeping around every winter, ignoring any Foldies who tried to contact him. Every spring I badgered him until he responded, and every summer he ended up back at camp, thanking me and telling me I'd saved his life. And then he'd do it all over again. And then there were the full converts—kids who disappeared for a year or two and then popped back onto the social networking scene, changing their religious affiliations on Facebook and never looking back. And then there were the kids like me—the quiet sufferers, the goody-two shoes who were screaming on the inside.

Take me back to camp. Take me back to camp. July 17. July 17. During every school year, I counted down the days, unsure how to be a Christian away from The Fold.

"You can't appreciate the hills without the valleys," they said. That didn't seem right, though. I felt like I spent 358 days stuck in a canyon for a week on top of a mountain.

I used to look up to the counselors like they were gods themselves, like they had some divine knowledge that I wouldn't—and couldn't—possess until I was old enough to take their place.

A few months after I graduated from high school, I entered into The Furnace, the name of the discipleship training curriculum in which staff members participated. It was so named because of Proverbs 25 and the process of removing impurities from silver by putting it through the furnace. Basically, while on staff at Shepherd's Fold Ranch, you didn't just look after and witness to children. The Furnace was also a discipleship program that turned up the heat until you had no choice but to confront whatever was holding you back from stepping into God's glory and whatnot. To be a part of The Furnace had been my dream since I began attending The Fold. But less than halfway through the summer, I found myself

sitting across a gray folding table from David Weaver, uncle of Austin and current executive director.

"I just don't think you're ready to step into a counselor position right now," he said.

"I have given my all for this. I've wanted it my whole life."

"None of that matters if you can't submit to authority."

The week before, I had requested to leave camp early so I would have time to do laundry and pack before I hopped on a plane to DFW for college orientation. David had responded by telling me that in doing so, I wouldn't be fulfilling my duty to the team. *Maybe you should pay us then*, I wanted to say. But instead I just called my mom and listened to her when she told me to leave anyway.

"Well, maybe you should listen to what I have to say."

"All authority is God-given," he said. "I've dealt with this before. The Furnace is too much for some people. Some leave after one summer and never come back."

"I *am* submitting—"

"Claire, do you ever actually listen to anyone but yourself?"

"I'm done with this conversation."

I stood up and walked out of the room, knocking over the blue plastic chair in the process. Out into the mocking sunlight, down the gravel road, into my little Honda Civic. I couldn't see through my windshield

for the tears welling in the corners of my eyes and so parked my car just before the start of the paved road that led into town. Hannah, a former counselor and now coworker, came up to the passenger window, knocked, opened the door, and ducked down to slip inside.

"What happened now?" she asked.

I reenacted the encounter I'd had with the man I used to see as a sort of second father figure.

"Well, maybe God is breaking your heart so he can rebuild it in his image," she said, leaning over to wrap her arms around my shoulders. The tears continued to fall.

I was talking to my friend Connor Curtis, whom I'd met at camp when we were children, a few weeks before I started college. I had just finished my first and only summer on staff at camp, the responsibility having skewed the magic from my childhood. It felt like someone had removed my glasses and told me that they had made everything better than it was. That the world was nothing but a blurry mess with lines that meshed together and colors that faded beneath the sunlight. That everything I'd seen was just an illusion. We were reminiscing about camp and the olden days of lying awake beneath the stars, listening to the cicadas hum along with the ever-present strumming of an acoustic guitar.

"I don't know," he said. "Someone told me something about camp, and it's never been the same for me since."

"Really?" I asked. "What did you hear?"

"Sorry, I won't tell you. I don't want to ruin your childhood."

"It's that bad? Come on."

"Trust me, Claire," he said. "You don't want to know."

Connor never told me what he knew about the place called home, and eventually I stopped asking, because I'd already found enough evidence to prove that home was never as perfect as it seemed. Years later I learned that Michelle Prater had been banned from working at camp because she'd been caught straddling Tom Cooper atop a log a ways off the beaten trail. And Brian hadn't decided that his family was better suited for the Rockies; he'd been caught having sex with someone who was not his wife. The year the hideout tree was chopped down to make way for a new pavilion, I learned that "we sold some of the horses" meant that the horses had died and that Foldies could turn into atheists and that the snakes in the pond were real.

STUCK

CLAIRE DEJARNETT



SITTING IN THE URINAL, I PRAYED CAKE DOWNS

Oh Almighty God,
if I'm sitting on a urinal cake
I pray the lord my pants to take.

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I cannot live without.***

~Cecil B. DeMille