



TCU Journal of the Arts

eleven4oseven

Spring 2016 Volume 11.2



eleven4oseven

tcu journal of the arts

www.1147.tcu.edu

eleven40seven

tcu journal of the arts

Spring 2016
www.1147.tcu.edu

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VOLUME 11.2

SPRING 2016

“
**TO BE CREATIVE
MEANS TO CONNECT.
IT’S TO ABOLISH THE
GAP BETWEEN THE
BODY, THE MIND AND
THE SOUL, BETWEEN
SCIENCE AND ART,
BETWEEN FICTION AND
NONFICTION.**”

— Nawal El Saadawi

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As I've thought about having to write this editor's note over the course of the semester, I've realized that thinking of a way to describe a collection of student's work—their hearts and souls and deepest thoughts—is incredibly difficult. As it should be; eleven40seven roots itself in the principle that each student is unique and has arrived at this point through a journey all their own.

I believe that this semester's journal reinforces the significance of those journeys.

This semester's staff has chosen pieces that illustrate how complex and powerful the human experience can be. From the starry-eyed adventures of childhood to losing someone you care about to questioning and appreciating the role you have in your life-world.

Along this semester's journey we have also had the opportunity to collaborate with the College of Science and Engineering for a science-fiction writing contest. The winner of the contest has composed a piece that boldly confronts society's concept of beauty and identity while encouraging unapologetic individuality.

In a similar way, the winner of the contemplative poetry contest has given us a new way to think about how each of us interacts with our every day surroundings. Even the smallest, most mundane acts can provide us with a new sense of meaning.

So, whether you find solace in the poems that wrestle with the pain of a lost love or the fiction pieces that transport you into a new world, I sincerely hope that my staff and I have provided you with another reason to continue on your own journey.

Without further ado, we present to you the journey of the Spring 2016 issue of eleven40seven.

Brigid Murray

Brigid Murray

P.S. If it weren't for the amazing dedication of the staff, Kayla, and Karlyn, this journal would not be in your hands. I truly can't thank you all enough.

Fight

Elaina Brown-Spence



A Timeline of History

Haley Jacobs

France: 1789
One Day More

Her head, it flew.
Our blade a symbol of hope.
They'll call us Vampires,
We'll call them Geraniums.

Tennis Courts are for matches.
Prostitutes should not be the masses.

Great Britain: 1815
Spoonful of Sugar

climbburnlearnpushingcoalallaround
sweepsweepsweeppushingcoalallaround

cough
cough

climbburnlearnpushingcoalallaround
sweepsweepsweeppushingcoalallaround

United States of America: 1861
Guns N Roses

A compromise couldn't be made,
South Carolina the first domino.
They'll call us a lost cause,
We'll call them brother.

Property is for owning.
People are for voting.

Australia: 1932
Eastern Michigan University Fight Song

10,000 rounds, they came to kill.

We have strength in numbers, skill, and tact.
They'll call us the best defensive team for centuries,
We'll call them milliners.

Farmers are for tilling the land.
The land Understands that it is for all.

Germany: 1933
True

Golden and angelic, he is the perfect specimen.
My nose gives me away. I will die.
They'll call us swine,
We'll ca

Showers are for cleansing.
Diaries are for remembering.

Lancôme, Paris.

Hannah Taylor

Lying on the blue tile
between the toilet and a cardboard box
I found the pink-hued perfume
that reminded me of the winter

night when I smiled so wide
the chapped cracks of my lips split
down the middle and I could not kiss
my fair-haired boy under the mistletoe.

I placed the half-empty bottle among other relics,
and tried to avoid the aching hollow
as I wandered past framed pictures-
remembering

how its scent had lingered, the baby powder
and roses coiling around the tall pines
like a mist snake weaving
through the bitter air looking for a victim.

Keeping an Eye Out
Alexander Parris



Pleasance

Zachary Amato

Rachel did not take Father's death as hard as I did. In fact, she took it rather well. Well-off, that is. Father had died at approximately 10:42 AM on July 16th, 2014. Rachel was in his house, sorting through the treasure that had taken him his 87 years to collect, by noon. A vase from an archaeological dig in Greece; a piece of a spear from the Coliseum in Rome; a cloth from the Silk Roads of China; a picture of Mother, dead for 42 years to the day, blessed by the Pope. Rachel took these items and more from Father's home in Pleasance, Iowa, long before I had fully processed that he was gone.

Rachel and I were different from birth is what Father always used to say. "She's a freight train and you're a sailboat, sweetheart," became almost an incantation for him as we aged. As I settled into a home just four miles down the road from Father's house to focus on my writing career, Rachel was refusing to settle down in New York City. She was always bustling, always working or attending this or that hoopla. In that sense, I understood Father's analogy for us.

I think being far away gave Rachel an easy excuse not to talk to Father or me much. She talked to him on the phone twice a month, me once a month. She would call on nights when she conveniently had something else to do and "couldn't chit-chat too much." I don't remember the last time she asked how my novel was coming, but I do remember how "splendidly energetic" the last seven parties she went to were.

So when she said, "I'm coming back, Kate, for good" just before we walked into the funeral home for Father's visitation, I had to stabilize myself on the tan brick.

"Excuse me?"

She looked at me as if I needed to get my ears checked. "I'm coming home."

Rachel walked through the doors and left me in the summer heat to sweat over this revelation. I sat on the curb, not caring what the butt of my black dress would look like when I stood once again, and felt the burden of my sister's presence stronger than I ever had before.

Pleasance, Iowa was not a big city. I don't even think it could be classified as a big town. Rachel had called it "practically still a settlement" when she interviewed for her scholarship at NYU. If she was coming back, there was no way we could avoid each other, no barrier of space or time or the end button of a phone. We wouldn't be able to

Pleasance

escape our differences, escape the inevitable clashes. Our differences were profound, pointed out by every teacher who had taught Rachel two years before they taught me at our schools, every neighbor that had come and gone from next to Father's house, every friend we'd ever had get to know us well enough.

Really, there was only one similarity between Rachel and I, 43 years into my life: neither of us had ever married.

I never figured out why she didn't; she had received the physical blessings of Mother: the hair the color of sand, the blue eyes, the slim figure. She had never expressed any distaste for the matter. I don't know how many men she had dated, if she had dated, since she abandoned Pleasance for New York. She never acted as if the personal details of her life were worth sharing with me, and if Father knew anything he never let on. But she remained forever unwed and never seemed worse off for it.

I had only dated twice in my life, once while I was a junior at the University of Iowa and once more when I returned to Pleasance two years later. Strangely, both were named Joshua and refused to go by Josh. University Joshua was a painter, always begging me to let him try to find the color combination that would match my strawberry hair. I assume he faded into the ether, as most painters tend to do. Pleasance Joshua was a realtor, and for a second I thought I could see a life with him. He was adventurous and daring, things that I wanted to be. He'd take me out at night on a four-wheeler in the open fields to the west of Pleasance. We'd ride without a word, mesmerized by the stars and the stream of the wind. We'd stop for a time to have sex on a randomly selected hill, then we'd ride back, slower, letting life overtake us rather than the other way around.

I broke it off with Pleasance Joshua when I realized that this was the most intimate we would ever get. It was a thrill, sure, but thrills aren't enough to carry a couple through life. Mother and Father had thrills, thrills from travelling the world and the euphoria of foreign locales. But they also had love. I didn't have love for Pleasance Joshua. Last I heard, he had become Colorado Joshua. At least I didn't have to see him around Pleasance.

I was forced out of my mind as people of Pleasance began arriving at the funeral home. I stood, brushed off my butt with a casual flick, and stepped through the doors to end my life with Father and begin my life with Rachel.

Rachel moved back to Pleasance two months later, into a house on

the opposite side of town as mine. This was only a distance of twelve miles, granted, but I understood the premise. She hadn't explained why she came back, and I didn't ask. I assumed it had something to do with Father being gone, with how I was the only family she had left. I assumed that maybe Father's death was bothering her more than she showed. But I also thought that could have been me thinking as a writer, trying to craft the world around me instead of a world on a page.

We met once a week for coffee at Andrew's Diner. She told me about the job she'd procured in Des Moines as the Marketing Coordinator of the Meredith Corporation. I received some of their publications, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Midwest Living*, *Traditional Home*, so I at least cared a little bit. I asked her once if the commute bothered her, that 45 minutes each way seemed like a hassle. She simply glanced over her cup of coffee and said, "I lived in New York for nearly 30 years."

She had started asking questions about my life, my novel, the other pieces I was working on. I was taken aback by this at first, wanted to practically scream at her for only now taking an interest in me. Instead I replied as pleasantly as I could, revealing only what I wished. I didn't want her to know how much trouble I was having with my writing lately. We barely spoke other than during those meetings, never going out of our way to make other plans or spend time together at night.

I had taken care of selling Father's house. Having removed everything she wanted already, Rachel had no interest in the rest of the affairs. Some of the neighbors had helped. They talked about Father with me, about his stories from far away lands, about the smiles he brought to those around him. We talked about his heart problem, about how tough the last few months had been, about how positive he had remained through it all.

"You are just like him, dear," Mrs. Thomas had said.

"I've never even left Iowa," I had replied.

"But you tell your stories, too, and I have always thought they were such a blessing."

Mother and Father stopped travelling when Rachel was born, and Father only started again when I was planted in Pleasance after college. It was a staple of his life, what everyone he knew remembered most about him. I asked him once why he didn't want to take Rachel and I on one of his adventures when we were growing up.

"It isn't up to me to dictate what adventures you have, Kate. Those are for you to discover yourself."

Those words had found their way back to me after Rachel returned to Pleasance and time rolled on in the way I imagine it only does in a small town. Discover my own adventure. I'd been having a tough time just finding adventure for the characters in my novel. Everything I tried seemed so forced, so stagnant. Stuck, even. Discover my own adventure.

On the one-year anniversary of Father's death, I showed up at Rachel's front door, unscheduled, for the first time. She looked almost scared when she opened the door, even more so when I told her my plan.

"You're serious about this?" she had asked.

"Absolutely."

"You realize we haven't taken a trip together since Dad drove us to Cedar Rapids for your eighth grade graduation."

"I know."

She stared at me for what felt like an hour before saying, "Alright."

I don't know why I asked her to come with me. I think I assumed she'd shoot me down, tell me to leave, tell me I was crazy. Maybe I thought if I told her I was the one leaving Iowa, not her, that she would tell me why she came back in the first place. Instead, she surprised me, held me to just an "Alright" in return.

As I was leaving, Rachel said, "We'll talk more about it tomorrow."

I looked back at her, confused. We weren't meeting at Andrew's for another three days.

"Tomorrow?"

"Yeah, tomorrow. Come by around 7:00. I'll make us something."

"Flight 8119, service to Rio, you have a gate change. Your gate is now D as in dog 39."

The flight from Des Moines to Dallas, my first time on a plane, had been smooth, I think. Rachel had given me the window seat, said, "You'll probably appreciate it more than I would." The skies were clear, and I was able to see as Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas scrolled by below. It had a mystic feeling to it, a feeling that the whole world was at my feet. I felt that I understood Father more than ever.

"Do the gates always change this much?" I asked Rachel as we walked to our next flight's fourth gate. She just shook her head in reply. When

we reached D39, Rachel pulled out her laptop to check her email, and I opened my notepad and clicked my pen. A notepad always felt like more of a home for a story than a computer.

"You haven't written anything," Rachel said, closing her laptop.

I looked at the clock on the wall; half an hour had passed.

"Just thinking," I said in return.

"Do you always think this long?" I don't know why, but her words stung.

"It's not easy. Just because I'm a writer doesn't mean I have stories just floating around in my head waiting for me to write them down. It takes time."

I realized I had said this a little too loudly, a little too forcefully, when the family of five across from us were all staring at me. I looked at Rachel, who was looking at the floor.

"Sorry," she said.

"Yeah," was all I could muster back. I closed the notebook and stuffed it and the pen into my purse. Suddenly, I was hating sitting next to her.

"I'm going to go for a walk," I said as I stood. I took three steps before turning and saying, "Before we're cooped on a plane for hours," not really knowing why I felt I needed to justify myself to her.

"Yeah. Okay," Rachel said.

I walked past the gates, past the shops, past the people. I saw people travelling alone, couples, families. I saw a father looking over two young girls who were leaning against each other, watching something on an iPad. I watched these three for a moment, a pain building inside me. I was watching a world I had never lived. I checked the sign at the gate to see that they were going to Los Angeles. The City of Angels, the City of Dreams. I only hurt more. What was it about this trio, their untold story that afflicted me so much? Was it the girls, peacefully together, pleasantly ignorant of the world around them? Was it the father, hovering protectively over these girls and their futures? Or was it the fact that the three of them had a common goal, a common destination? I turned away and walked back to D39 before I ever conjured an answer. I needed the answer to a different question.

I sat down so aggressively that I startled Rachel. I looked directly at her, really looked at her, for the first time in a long time. Her face was

showing signs of aging: wrinkles under those blue eyes, laughter lines. The roots of her hair had a light gray tint. She looked like someone who was fighting age, but that age was starting to win the battle.

"Why did you move back to Pleasance?" Finally, it was out. What I should have asked a year before.

Rachel closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She looked back at the floor for a moment.

"Rachel. Why did you move back?"

She did not look up from the floor when she said, "I have Dad's condition."

I felt my eyes widen and my body tighten. I don't know what answer I was expecting, but it wasn't that.

She looked back up at me, her eyes watering. "When I found out, I wanted to deny it. But when it finally took Dad, I just couldn't do it anymore." She paused. A tear found its way down her cheek. "I was scared, okay? I was scared so I came back. Because you're the only person I have left and I know I can't do it alone."

More tears followed the first. The family of five was staring again. A few others were, as well. I put my hand on Rachel's back, not knowing what to say or what else to do. All I knew was that I didn't want to leave her side. Not anymore, and not ever again. Father's death had been hard for me, the hardest thing I had ever experienced, but suddenly I felt that if I lost Rachel it would be even worse.

The gate attendant came over the intercom saying boarding would begin momentarily. I reached into my purse, pulled out a handkerchief, and handed it to Rachel. I leaned in and rested my head on her shoulder. She leaned her head against mine.

We stayed like that for a moment before I moved to look at her. For a second, she looked more like Father than Mother.

"Come on," I said. "We have our own adventure to discover."

Childhood

Devin Reeves



To the Little Girl in the Back of Ms. Griffin's Third Grade Class

Katie Ortstadt

I moved to college yesterday and thought of you.

The way your favorite glittery pencil
scratched furiously across the math test.
How you preened the alphabet in literature
because only one letter was truly acceptable.

I can still feel your pink sandals tapping on
the tile floor as you ran
figures through your head
during the lunch break.

My stomach knots again
with memories of sitting in that desk,
the correct answer on your tongue,
but your hand too afraid to announce it.

I remember when your
gentle frown and focused gaze
were mine.

You taught me how to capture ladybugs on your fingertips
and serve high tea to stuffed guests.
you showed me your secret hideaway beneath
Grandma's willow tree, and which stars
at night were the prettiest to look at.

I taught you how to keep your head low,
internalizing criticisms like a broken record.

In my past and your future,
let that innocent princess
know she's worth more
than percentages.

Snap, Crackle, and Pop

Ethan Murray

On a Saturday morning
Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy
Flash across the screen
As my son ditches
The spoon for shovel
Hands in the cereal bowl.

We haven't slept
In months and have spent
More time arguing
About diapers, trash,
dog poop,
And the growing stack
Of dishes, work, and debt.

He just screams,
Red face venting anger
in high octanes
drowning us
both out.

Mom's advice: "put a little
Hotty totty in the baby bottle."
Bourbon, lemonade, honey
And you'll have peace
Of mind and an all quiet
Nighttime –
you.

My dreams have become
day
Steadily trampled by turtles
And Dr. Seuss
Oh, how I wish I were a fish
water
Singing bubbly blues
In the bathtub.

And all I think about is how much
I love him.

I watch

things spill

together

Shitty

Because I was fired

and honesty

*– I drink sometimes,
a slight buzz*

to spend time with

a continuation of the

and could breathe under this

I need sleep.

Pollination

Sydney Peel



M31

William McDonald

Telescopes littered the gravel parking lot and chatter filled the air
as the scroll of an undisturbed night sky was opened
with the anticipated absence of the day.

Whispers of amateur astronomers followed their laser beams into
the constellations
with a childlike curiosity.

I gravitated toward a man with a frail frame
whose thick lenses and silver hair shimmered under the star light.

He carried on with his lecture, unaware and unmoved by my
presence,
his eyes fixed on the fidgeting ruby-red dot,
dancing through the galaxies by the lead of his shaky, shriveled
hand.

Drawing his pen out from the deep-ebony ink,
from which I could not make out a single granule of light,

he began to tell a story of an Ethiopian princess—Andromeda,
who was chained to a coastland rock—all to appease the god
Neptune.

Her mother's vanity left her unjustly helpless at the mouth of a
sea serpent.
So now she is charging toward us at 100 kilometers per second
with a black hole of vengeance at her core.

I doubted his words, gazing into the obsidian void sprinkled
with heavenly bodies who hung harmlessly motionless, so
carelessly I leaned into the eyepiece.

Immediately, my dark pupils were illuminated
with the celestial glory of Andromeda in full stride. I trembled as I
saw her
reeling with her arms wildly flailing in rage—knowing she was
closer now than I could see.

In his raspy voice now vexed with a sober tone, the old
astronomer said,
“And who do you suppose will appease her wrath?”

I Am

Danielle Gutknecht

I am a meadow, my blossoms sweet and fair
I am an aging elk, my presence grand but rare

I am a speckled stone, weathered by the sea
I am a summer's day, but autumn beckons me

I am a redwood tree, a steeple to behold
I am a singing lark with stories to be told

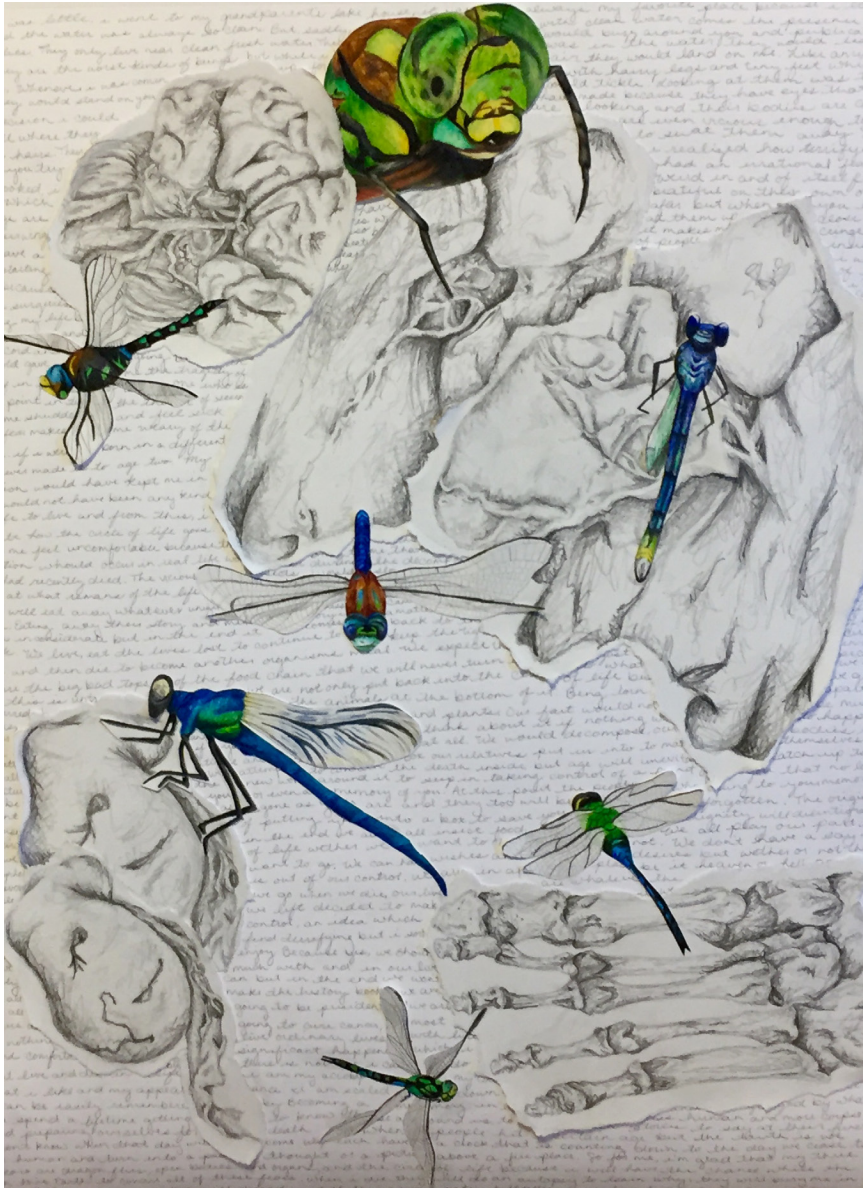
I am a gentle wind, I whisper through the trees
I am an autumn's leaf, carried by the breeze

I am a fading dusk, my colors softly blurred
I am a humming brook, a peace that can be heard

I wonder what the world would say if I could tell it this:
That I am land and sky and sea and all of heaven's bliss

Finding Terror in Realizations

Kendall Carter



The Baby

Caroline Maloney

I had a baby today.

A girl.

She dug her way through my exhausted body.

Tearing my insides apart,

taking them with her.

Her pink lips trembled,

gasping for oxygen like a suffocating fish.

"Her lungs are like balloons,"

they said.

Wriggling and writhing, they placed her

warm body on my chest and

she cried as she reached for me with

her fat rolls for arms.

I cried with her.

Her white skin concealed with the
wrinkles of an eighty-year-old man.

I noticed her hair first,

jet-black like her father's,

sticky, and masking

her cone-shaped head.

Next, I stared at her eyes,

which were glossy and dark

like her hair.

They fluttered under her eyelids,

desperate to see this new world

for the first time.

My hands searched her body and

I felt her wrinkles covered in blood,

its color as vibrant as roses.

They cut her umbilical cord.

He should be here for this.

He should be here to hold her,

to kiss her delicate baby cheeks.

I try to soothe her,

Guiding her to my breast,

she latches instantly.

sifting the ashes

Paige Poe

there are no lyrical odes
to loves lost
without anger, bitterness, spite.
there are no songs
dedicated to loves lost
because time ran out,
boulders of responsibility fell
in the way, and distance ran further
than you could both overcome.
no one wants to sing about
still loving someone
but respecting their needs more
than your feelings.
rationality has no place in poetry.

but already
i am haunted by
the ephemera of us:

art museums and coffee cup collections
letters embellished like religious texts
nature walks and angsty song lyrics
drugstore parking lots and dallas hotel rooms
and books traded like secrets.

it gathers in the dusty corners, litters
across the floor, hides
in my closet, the upper shelf box
that holds your careful, lovely letters
and your photograph marked with a start and end date.
though our parting remains untainted with darkness,
and though we made the cleanest break,
i have a feeling
i can never sweep up enough
to keep you from swirling in my brain,
a feverish dream, dust motes
of my first love.

Ballerina

Carter Howell



Beautifyl

Amanda Anderson

"Science Meets Fiction" Contest Winner

I had known that meeting my clone would be weird, but I had not anticipated that the confrontation would be hostile.

She had the same brown hair, size of figure, and profile as I, but her aura was that of anger, which made no sense to me. She had not been the child that their parents had rejected; she had not had to experience the shame of growing up in the dregs of society; she had never known the sting of being cast away for something that she could not control.

Yet we were identical, except for my lazy eye, of course.

"So the stories are true," she said as she entered the interrogation room, her voice even sounding like an echo of my own thoughts. As she took in my frame, I stared at her perfect blue eyes, unable to mask the jealousy that filled my chest. "The eye thing really is unnatural, you know."

Usually unfazed by others' degrading comments, I stiffened. Her words seemed to affect me more than others', and I tried to ignore the idea that perhaps her spoken proclamations were mirror images of my own self-deprecating thoughts.

"Thanks," I said, unable to say more. Knowing that our parents had tossed me aside and created her - an exact replica of the genes they had chosen for me - disarmed me.

She crossed her arms and tossed back her head. Even if she was a couple of years younger than me, she carried herself with an air of confidence. "Well, as much as I would love to catch up on our long lost years," she started, smirking, "I'm not here for sentiment; I'm here to tell you that your crusade is inept to make any real difference whatsoever."

Shaking the insecurities, I remembered the task at-hand, wondering how far the team had gone in invading the Capital in which I stood. Thad and Araceli must have been almost to the main switchboard by now, which meant I maybe had only a few more minutes to kill before everything went black.

I replaced my disdain with a poker face, focusing on the impending surprise. "What makes you think that?"

Amanda Anderson

"You think you have resources, but you don't." She offered a thin smile. "Your so-called 'beautifyl' friends do not have the capacity to do anything that would really change the world. We have a good system going for us; we don't need flawed human beings like yourself in power."

"What makes you think we're incapable? We have the same hand-picked genes as everyone else." I narrowed my eyes towards her as she started pacing by the metal table that separated us.

"Yeah, but genetic engineering didn't work on you," she said. "Something must be wrong with you for a perfect system to produce a flawed creation."

"That makes no sense," I said, beginning to use my hands in emphasis. "We were made from the same genes; why would we be any different except for an error with your 'perfect' system?"

"You're just mad because our parents didn't love you enough to keep you." Her arrogant comment jabbed my heart, but I was past letting something personal interfere with the goal of beautifyls across the country.

"This may be personal," I said, calmer now. "But this is personal for many more than just myself. Hundreds - maybe even thousands - of people deserve a chance to live. And we're going to get that chance; just wait and see."

On cue, the lights in our interrogation room flickered and died, and I immediately yanked open the now-powerless and unlocked door. On the other side, black encompassed my line of sight, but I touched the wall to my left and began to recall the map I had spent the last two months memorizing.

A blurry of panicked voices surrounded me as I slid my body against the wall, jogging lightly. "Where's a flashlight?" "Call the President." "Do not let the hostage escape!"

Reaching the end of a hallway, I darted towards my right, bumping into a couple of people, but managing to squeeze past without being snatched.

"Which way did she go?" I heard someone ask, and I immediately found the opposing wall to continue my blind trek back to safety.

I would meet Thad, Araceli, and Webster soon, but first I had to get out of the building - and quickly, for the techies at the Capital would soon find a way to start up the power again, perhaps even before security blocked all of the exits. Pressing forward, I found the end of another

wall, and I followed it to the right, finding the next door I would take almost instantly. I turned the knob and crept forward until my hands reached a handrail to stairs. Remembering the map and knowing that my interrogation room had been on the fifth floor, I guided myself down one, two, three, and finally four flights of stairs to land me on level one.

I heard someone open the door to the stairwell, so I slid to the opposite wall of the handrail, feeling the swoosh of a rushing person as he or she began climbing the stairs. As I plastered myself across the wall, a voice sounded from the escalating human's walkie-talkie, and the voice said that security was moving towards the air vents on all floors, closing off any opportunity there.

Smiling briefly, I jumped towards the sound of the door closing, slipping through the opening. My team had anticipated their move to shut off the air vents and had been right. Thus, we had devised a plan for me to exit through a window of a conference room on the first floor. All I had to do was get there, and I would be home free.

Entering the main room of the first floor, I took a moment to recalculate my next steps. I needed to walk right until I reached the third door; then I would need to take several strides across the main room until I reached the front of the building, finally sliding along the wall until I reached the second door, which would open to the conference room.

Proceeding, I remembered the sneering look of my clone and how she had seemed so all-knowing. This move of ours would prove to the world that beautifyls were just as capable as the rest of society, maybe even more so.

As I began crossing the main room, my eyes searched for light. Without the guide of a wall, I was completely blind except for the map in my mind. People seemed to crowd around the outside of the room, not daring to proceed without light. The sound of heavy sneakers echoed throughout the room, but they were frantic, unlike the typical uniformity of security's officers.

A walkie-talkie sounded near me, and someone was instructing the officers to each find a door to guard.

I tried not to panic as I realized that if a guard was at my door, then he or she would foil our plan. Instead, I pressed forward more hurriedly.

As I finally reached the second door on the front wall, I reached for the

knob, but found a belted hip instead. Freezing, I tried to back away, knowing the person guarding my door must have been a security officer.

The person snatched my wrist before I could escape, and he yanked me out of my hunched position. I felt him lean in and expected a blow to my face to knock me out, but instead I heard a familiar whisper.

"Emelyn?"

Blaine. Fear stilled my blood as my body went limp. Blaine - the genetic counselor who had been on the fence about helping our cause; the lover who had stolen my breath with a single look of unconditional adoration; and the one who had finally betrayed me out of his loyalty to the President - held me up only by the collar of my shirt and prevented me from escaping from this prison in which he had placed me.

Easy escape was no longer a possibility. I would have to fight.

I started to struggle, finding some unknown reserve of power in my muscles. But his grip tightened. "Emelyn, I'm sorry," he said, his voice ragged and low. "I should not have turned you in; I want you to escape."

A pang pounded in my chest, and I did not want to trust him again. Yet I did because he had been the first guy to ever look past my eye and see someone beautiful and worthy of admiration.

But I couldn't - not after what he did. Even if my team had used the betrayal for our chance to finally get into the heart of the Capital, I had not expected to infiltrate so suddenly, nor had I anticipated the manner in which our plan would ensue.

"I can't trust you," I said softly.

"You don't have time to trust me," he said as I desperately wished to see his face - to see the truth or lie of his words in his unchanging eyes. "Just go." Now, he opened the door and shoved me into the conference room.

And I did not stop stumbling forward until I reached the window, which let in some light from the early evening. I let my eyes adjust from the strain of the blindness as I opened the sliding glass. Outside, I saw a security van that reflected only red lights - the signal my team had established for me to identify which van was ours.

I crawled through the window and hid behind a tree, waiting for a security officer to walk just a little further from my line of vision. This

particular conference room was on the backside of the building where not as many security officers gathered.

And then I darted to the van that was only fifteen or so yards from the building. As I reached the passenger's door and leapt inside, I heard someone yell, "There's the hostage!" But our van was already moving, Webster pressing on the gas before I could even close the door completely.

Thus, we were off, first to an alley where our next car sat, second to our decoy hideout, and then finally back home, where we would complete our ultimate goal of exposing the secrets behind our country's perfect system of eliminating imperfect human beings from contributing to society.

"Your country thanks you for your service," I said to the camera, echoing the words that so many genetic counselors said everyday across the country. I remembered hearing those same words at a guidance conference, where our low-class school had invited a genetic counselor to speak about the benefits of genetically engineering children rather than spontaneously getting pregnant. The counselor had even provided handouts that informed us of the availability of genetic engineering to all classes of citizens.

But those of us who lived in the lower classes knew the immorality of playing God, and not many people listened to the genetic counselors when they tried to convince us that doing so benefitted our country as a whole. We did not buy into it, though; our country would never benefit from creating a perfect society one scientifically crafted conception at a time.

I continued talking to the camera.

"By watching this video, you are participating in becoming a more informed citizen, and for that, I am personally grateful.

"Many of you have heard of us, but you may not have cared about our cause because it supposedly does not pertain to your livelihoods. However, I am here to tell you that our cause interferes with each and every one of your lives.

"Today, my team and I infiltrated the Capital and found some enlightening information. We already knew that the genetic engineering system that so many Americans trust was faulty, but we

did not know just how inconsistent and manipulative it was." I paused, looking at my hands, remembering the data and trying to come to terms with the unjustifiable behavior of our country's leaders.

"Thousands of parents each year send their first child to live with a lower-class citizen because of a genetic abnormality, despite genetic counselors' promise of a perfectly manufactured child. This means that about one-fourth of scientifically created children will be born with a genetic defect that will prevent them from contributing to the upper class society in which you all thrive. One-fourth.

"From personal experience, I have learned that genetic counselors have instructed parents that these anomalies are rare and have provided parents with an opportunity to give their imperfect newborns up for adoption to lower-class citizens because of the infants' inability to compete with other genetically modified humans such as yourselves. But this happenstance is not rare - it happens everyday across our country; and our leaders are doing nothing to stop it.

"Maybe you have participated in giving your own child up for adoption; if so, I petition you to speak up instead of hiding your decision. Or perhaps you have been using the system and have never had a problem with your counselor; I urge you to come alongside your hurting friends and help them as they cope with this now public information. Finally, regardless of your class or race or profession, I ask that you stop participating in this system of immorality that is actually disallowing children all over the country from living the productive lives that you have created for them. I beg of you to stop trying to create a perfect society - it will forever be unattainable if we build it off of inconsistency and manipulation. We must find our way back to being a country united by freedom rather than a country divided by class and genes."

Again, I paused, letting my words seep through to my audience.

"Your country thanks you for your service."

After playing with the different shots that we had filmed over the last few months and organizing the data into a more readable format, my team and I uploaded the information along with my speech. This video would filter through all channels of television and radio via some method Thad was using that I hardly understood.

As it uploaded, I turned to my team and smiled. We had done all that

we could do to put the information out there and expose the system for what it really was. All we really could do was educate the public and hope that the truth would stir people to act on our behalf. Our greatest hope was for the upper class citizens to stop the creation of human beings via genetic engineering and instead use genetic knowledge to educate. Rather than taking control over nature, we hope that genetic counselors instead admire the intricacies of nature and learn how it functions. With the data public, perhaps people would begin a transition of humility rather than a path of arrogance.

Even if we are anomalies, with one flaw disrupting a perfect creation, the beautifyl from around the country can now have a chance to rise from their low economic class of living and realize their potential for greatness. Despite genetic defects, success can still be attainable for those of us who know we were created for more. And perhaps relaying the flaws of the perfect system will show that perfection is not something to achieve, but something to which we can all - both "perfect" and imperfect, beautiful and "beautifyl,"- aim.

Goodnight Kiss

Hannah Taylor

Was the last time your lips met another's a courtesy for
a night on the town; was it goodbye under a lit door frame;

was it a brief pause between a few staggered breaths; was it a
small sign
of forgiveness in the eyes of your man; was it the punctuation

for years of soft touches and long explanations or notes of what's
to come—

or was it like my last embrace, with his hands cradling my face,

my nodding head tucked in the crook of his familiar arm,
my warm sigh empty, no errant hope for more- just a moment,

the unexpected flood of long-kept secrets finally breaching

Flower

Stephanie Marzan



The Modern Gospel

Ethan Murray

Inside lies:
A list of podcasts
And sermons full
Of self-righteous one-liners.

With guest appearances from:
Penny and Sparrow
Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors

Please, church me harder.

Give me that good
Gospel centered beauty –
Ribcage showing, carved
Of my own.

I want wildflowers
For eyes and summer dresses
With combat boots.

I'll give you a gun –
Shot, wounded heart
Internal bleeding, all waiting
For baptismal rain
To reign over my
Desires.

I'll do it for you –
Manbun, facial hair, and sleeves
Of bible verse tattoos, all
Rolled up – tight jeans
Laced with converse and
Chimney smoked lips.

Innocent Trysts

Abigail Buckley

sheets languidly soak sidewalks
as warm bulbs highlight the fracturing water
and thick white obscures the picture
like layers of patterned static.

glowing pink and children's hands trail sloping prints
on the battered back
of an arching stone serpent;

their shoulders curve beneath
the push and sweep of
each whispering wind as water
clings to squinting eyelashes,

and the ground glitters
atop a sapphire canvas: a million frozen raindrops
dancing under Virgo.

My, My, Marion

Teresa Cenney



On Grief in 2012

Ethan Murray

Stage 1

Denial (dəˈnájəl)

An unconscious defense mechanism characterized by a refusal to acknowledge painful realities.

Deny that she could carve into her arm deep enough to call 911.

It was an accident.

Deny that some fathers are not fathers at all.

He lives in another state.

Deny that my mother's lungs could suddenly stop working.

She had pneumonia a few years ago.

Deny that she tossed my unopened letters in the trash.

Maybe it was lost in the mail.

Stage 2

Anger (æŋgər)

Patient begins to face reality, but lacks the emotional stability to cope with the situation often resulting in rage.

An ambulance took her limp body away, and I was left blood stained at the curb.

Punch drywall until the white holes are lined in red from swollen knuckles.

It was an accident.

He bragged about cheating on his fiancée when we last spoke months ago.

Mom, I fucking hate this family! You're pathetic.

He lives in another state.

Blood clots suffocated her ability to take a breath like a scream under a pillow.

School does not fucking matter.

She had pneumonia a few years ago.

She waited to dump me until I was thousands of miles away.

Who cares where Mozart grew up, this place is shit.

Maybe it was lost in the mail.

Stage 3

Bargaining (bərgənɪŋ)

Patient clings to a false hope that they can in some way undo or avoid the cause of grief.

If only I had the courage to speak up when the counselor asked what was wrong.

My blood and her blood mix in a swollen fist.

It was an accident.

If only I had learned how to surf better, maybe we'd have something in common.

He always wants to know how many girls I have slept with.

He lives in another state.

If only I had gone to her workout classes with her, her lungs would be healthier.

Sanitized smell of the hospital's white walls seem like they are caving in.

She had pneumonia a few years ago.

If only I had bought her a better present, she wouldn't have gone back to her ex.

She waited to dump me until I was thousands of miles away.

Maybe it was lost in the mail.

Stage 4

Depression (dəˈpreʃən)

Condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason

I haven't heard anything in hours, and only relatives are allowed at the hospital.

Steal shots from the whiskey hidden in my parents' pantry.

Take a pull.

It was an accident...

Take a pull.

Right?

He slept with my co-worker last week, she's 20.

Midnight cigarette drags until the cop asks why I'm on the pier.

Inhale black tar

He's my dad.

Inhale black tar.

He's my dad.

Her blood clot is inching toward her leg with each tic of the clock.
My family makes me leave the waiting room.
Vicodin.

She'll be fine.

Sleep.

Vicodin.

She's going to die.

Sleep.

She dumped me over a long distance phone call.

Ride a bike towards the Austrian Alps to get away from
Mozart.

That bitch.

20 miles to Salzburg.

I love her.

*33 miles to
Salzburg.*

Stage 5

Acceptance (ækséptəns)

In this last stage, the patient begins to come to terms with the reality
of situation.

She attempted suicide.

Suicide Prevention Classes. AA.

He is my father.

Abstinence. Cravings.

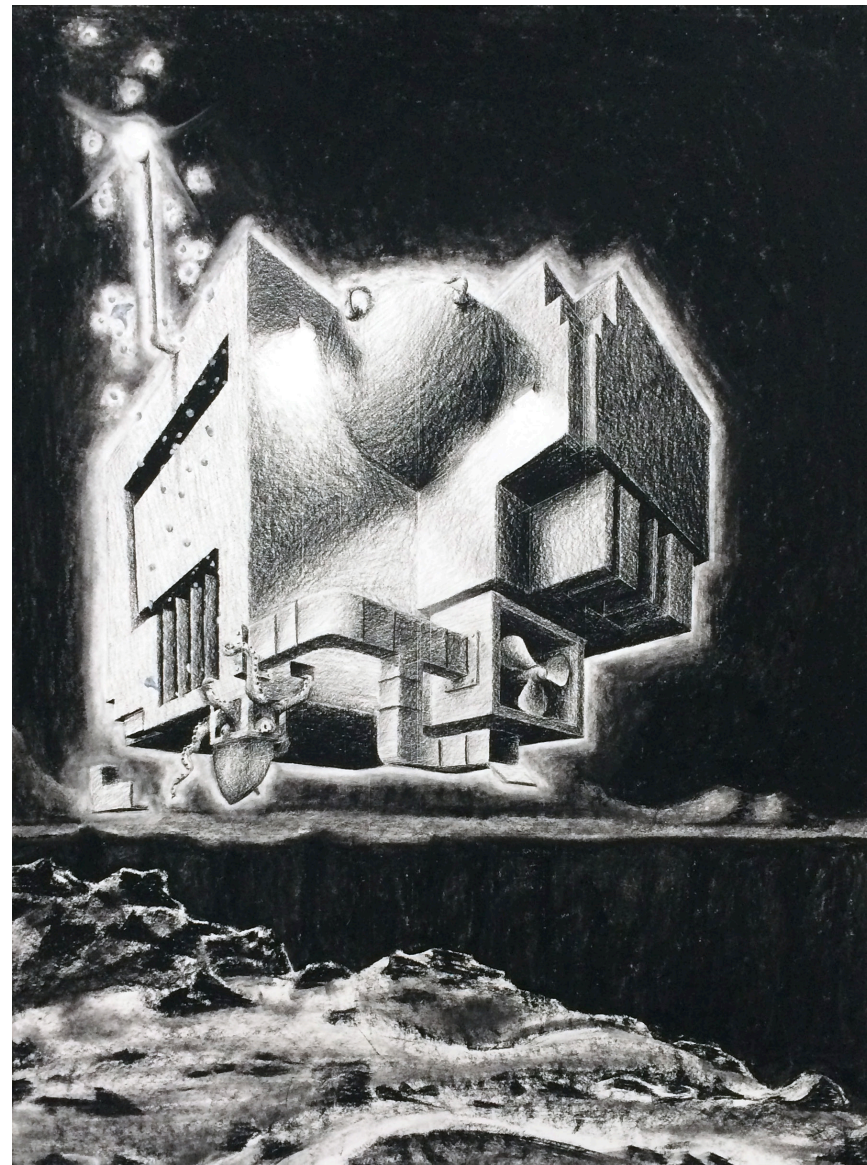
My mother may not live past 50.

Vyvanse. Study. Bills.

She is gone.

I rode across the country searching...

Lost Beneath Alexander Parris



Astronomy Lesson

Katie Ortstadt

"All of the rocky and metallic material we stand on, the iron in our blood, the calcium in our teeth, the carbon in our genes were produced billions of years ago in the interior of a red giant star. We are made of star-stuff." –Carl Sagan

Halley wants to pilot a space shuttle when she grows up.
For her eighth birthday, her foster parents bought her a subscription to Air & Space.
With safety scissors she cuddles up in bed, snipping out pictures of the universe.
Halley's dark blue walls are sprinkled with photographs and scientific sketches.
Andromeda Galaxy—A spiral galaxy, the closest to the Milky Way.
The Eagle Nebula—An iconic star incubator, mixing dust and gas.
Halley likes to pretend the man in her moon is her real dad.
Before tucking herself into bed each night, she blows him kisses.
Red Cosmic Square—A dying star exploding into a perfectly symmetrical polygon.
Nebula NGC 3603—An explosion of brilliantly luminous stars, like a firework frozen in time.
Halley taped up that picture last New Year's at exactly midnight.
Her foster parents believe real fireworks are too dangerous.
Butterfly Nebula—Two ethereal pink wings, their scales handfuls of stardust.
Soul Nebula—A red stellar heart tucked in a ribcage of darker matter.
Radioactive isotopes come in two forms—parent and daughter.
A loss of parent isotopes is known as decay.
Double Helix Nebula—Two pillars of stars intertwine, a perfect set of celestial DNA.
Pulsar B1509—A blue cloud of hydrogen, eerily similar to an outstretched human hand.
Technically, the universe is mostly empty space. Atoms are mostly empty space.
Technically, Halley is mostly empty space.
North America Nebula—A salmon collection of young stars, mirroring Earth's iconic continent.
NGC 246—A pale swirling ball of gases, aptly named the Skull Nebula.
Halley presses her tiny fingers against the cosmic hand.
Then she reaches up and envelopes the flimsy paper Earth.

Teatime

Emily Dickson

Contemplative Poetry Contest Winner

Four, Seven, Eight.
In, two, three, four,
Hold, two, three, four, five, six, seven-
OUT!
Release and breath come like a strike.
I am not enlightened, I am weary.
Breathing is mindless
Yet difficult when your mind offers to help.
Contemplating, meditating, a whole lot of considering
My dinner, which comes free. First, some tea.
The monks do not microwave their water as I do,
They seek nirvana, I seek Teavana.
Round and round the teapot whirls, enveloped in electric heat
I am warmed by the electric heat
Of the computer screen.
Irish breakfast, dark and robust
Like an earthy, forbidden night
Electrifies my senses daily.
Caffeine, wipe my drowsiness clean!
But first, a look out the window.
Blue, blue sky. Green, green grass.
Sun shining bright. A visual lullaby.
Before tea, I breathe again;
not forced, I let it arrive like a welcome guest.
In, out.
Wel-come.
This. Day.
Bright. Sun.
Gor-geous.
Mor-ning.
The rush is like a wave of water
Wiping my senses clean.
I sip the earthy brew, its heat a warming glow in my heart.
In, out.
To-day.
I. will.
Smile.

Untitled

Kahla Watkins



in the secrets, there is a cosmos

Paige Poe

with sore feet and a penchant for damage
I find myself alone again,
not trapped but weary,
not lonely but solemn,
rolling my emotions like marbles
across the floor, allowing them
to ricochet, clash, and spill,
roam every corner of my messy mind
until they lie still, scattered,
glassy constellations of memories,
planetary in weight, oceanic in depth.
later I will gather them, holding
each between my fingers up to the light,
letting the color catch and release photons,
letting myself remember as I slip each marble
back inside the drawer reserved for things
I cannot always bear. And there they'll wait
for another melancholic resurrection, another
day of rain-dulled light.
but for now, I will consider my overwhelming
universe, a gleaming spectrum of my own demolitions,
holding me in a reverie,
a singular, still reflection of the past.

Mouthful

Carter Howell



Solitude Sestina

Katie Ortstadt

Yuri leans on the three-legged table, closing
her eyes and letting the steam from her coffee
tickle her face. Outside, the rich sakura blossoms
signaling the coming of a warm spring
dance in the wind, coloring the sky light pink.
She doesn't even bother to check her watch.

At the sound of a bell, Yuri turns to watch
the little cafe door gently closing
behind a girl clothed in frilly pink.
Yuri reaches out and sips her coffee,
remembering one morning last spring
when she wore the dress made of blossoms.

The bright-eyed girl's face blossoms
into a smile. Yuri smiles back, watching
the girl, spry like a young rabbit, spring
towards a lone figure in the back of the cafe, closing
the distance between the pair. He hands her a coffee
when she arrives, his pale cheeks dusted pink.

She eagerly takes a sip, leaving a pink
kiss on the cup. Her billowing skirt blossoms
around her as she gently sets down her coffee.
Gradually, Yuri loses the desire to watch.
She has seen a thousand times his hands closing
around hers. It is the hallmark of spring.

Fingering her mug, Yuri smiles, a sigh springing
from her lungs. She doesn't have to share the vase of pink
sweet peas on her table with anyone. Her hand closes
around the delicate petals and cupped blossoms.
Yuri knows no expectant eyes watch
her tender caress. Her lips grace the cup of coffee.

Yuri lets the soothing warmth from the coffee
fill her chest. She breathes in the fresh spring
air, gently playing with her simple leather watch.
The sun outside begins to sink, staining the sky pink
and highlighting the white cloud blossoms.
Yuri brings her now empty mug close.

She stares at the coffee shop's walls, colored pink
by the spring sun's rays and cherry blossoms.
Yuri sits and watches until the cafe closes.

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish Joelle Nagy



GET AWAY FROM THE WATER

Allison Marshall

Recipient Helen Hamilton Award

Another one washed up on shore this morning. This one was close, just thirty miles south of Wilmington, on Oak Island. Close enough for me to wonder if I could race down to the beach and catch a glimpse of her before the marine biologists hauled her away.

The first video clips came in the middle of the evening news. Mom and I both fell silent, staring at the screen. The cameraman zoomed in closer than the coast guard cronies would let him walk, focusing in on a crumpled body in the sand that could have been a mass of black netting. Only when one of the white-gloved men carefully turned her over could I see her dark hair clumped over her pale-white skin. Her tail was grey and smooth, like that of the bottlenose dolphins I fed at the marine park. Except half her fluke was missing, a jagged mess of scarlet flesh in its place. Blood crusted over her arms and soaked through the seaweed wrapped around her torso. Words scrolled across the bottom of the newscast. I only caught snippets: complete body, female, total number of corpses reaches over one thousand...

Mom cleared her throat, scrubbing the last of the coral-pink dishes, "Aaron should already be packed. Are you ready to go?"

I stared at the screen. They cut away to a map of the North Atlantic Ocean, hundreds of tiny flags popping up all over the coasts of Ireland, Cuba, and Africa. I focused on the two little flags on Fort Lauderdale, the first reports I had seen. One was just a torso, bright red blood still pouring out into the tide. The other was a tail, charred black as if burned by fire, but what burns on the surface of the sea?

"Miriam?" Mom called. I heard the clink of a plate being set in the dish drainer, but the sound was miles away.

The audio beneath the image replayed an interview I'd already heard. Some scientist who referred to the bodies as "the creatures," "the new species," and my personal favorite, "the previously undiscovered marine mammals." As if we all didn't know what they were.

They were real, or at least they had been. Now they might all be gone.

The television flashed off. I bit my lip and turned around. Mom lay the remote down on the counter and tilted her head to the side.

I finished scrawling the last number on my calculus worksheet. "Yeah, I'm ready."

Allison Marshall

I stuffed the worksheet back into its folder, a colorful thing depicting an Australian coral reef, and shoved the folder into my backpack. Mom watched me cross the kitchen, undoing her bun and letting her silver-brown hair fall to her shoulders. I opened the pantry and pulled out a box of seaweed crackers.

"Text me when you get to your dad's." Her voice dropped lower. "Don't go anywhere near Oak Island."

"I won't." I shut the pantry door with more force than was necessary. My face flushed and I turned my eyes down to the floor, "I'm stealing these." I stuck a cracker in my mouth as I walked past her, pulling the hem of my sweater down to make sure the bright blue swimsuit I wore was out of sight.

Mom smirked, shooing me away. She called for Aaron as I headed out the garage door.

I tossed my backpack into the passenger's seat of my Corolla and stuck the box of seaweed crackers in the compartment next to me. My fingers flipped through seven different radio stations, listening for those keywords running laps in my brain.

"-sent to investigate the unusual tectonic activity on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, but disappeared just as hundreds of other ships and submarines have done in that area. U.S. Navy officials insist that the loss of communication with the Jules Verne is no cause for public alarm. Officials also insist they have no evidence of a connection between the activity on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and the creatures washing ashore."

I sucked all the salt off a cracker and slumped down in my seat as the anchorwoman droned on. The media never said enough to satisfy me. Dry reports from autopsies never focused enough on the questions I really wanted to know the answers to. How did they swim? What did they eat? How did they breathe and live?

I flicked the silver charm that hung on my rearview mirror. She looked nothing like the real thing. Tiny rhinestones shaped like shells dotted through her waist-length hair and made up the scales on her tail. I had hundreds like her. Both my bedrooms had shelves full of the previously undiscovered marine mammal.

The garage door banged open and I shut off the radio. Aaron trudged out, slinging a backpack over his shoulder. His lips were pursed together in an adorable little pout and his sandy hair hung over his eyes. Mom stood in the doorway, waving. I waved back as Aaron climbed into the backseat.

"Buckle up." My smile vanished as soon as Mom stepped out of the doorway. I blew my bangs out of my face and backed the car out of the garage.

Aaron jabbed at my arm as I lay it over the passenger seat. "Are you swimming today?"

"Yes." I pulled my phone out of my bag and handed it to Aaron over my shoulder. "Here, text Dad and tell him Mom's keeping us another hour."

Aaron took my phone. "Even though it's cold out?"

"Not that cold." I shifted the car into drive and sped down the street.

Aaron finished typing on my phone and threw it back into the passenger's seat. A mischievous grin lit up his little face.

"I brought something that'll help protect you!" He rummaged in his backpack.

"Protect me from wha-?" I turned my head back and saw Aaron draw a large silver knife from the front pocket of his bag. "Holy shi-swordfish!" I slammed my foot on the brakes and veered to the side of the road.

Aaron clutched the strap of his seatbelt as the car jerked to a stop. The smile never left his face. "Protect you from the sharks!"

"What sharks? There are no sharks anywhere near Wrightsville beach." I twisted in my seat and grabbed at the knife.

Aaron held the knife back. "The sharks that are attacking them!"

I unbuckled my seatbelt and crawled towards him. "Where did you even get that? That is not approved for children under ten! Give it here!"

I snatched the knife from Aaron's hand. His face fell. I settled back down in my seat and stared at the knife. It had to be from Dad's kitchen. Mom had nothing like it. I looked around for a place to stash it, then stuck it next to the seaweed crackers. I started the car again, sighing.

Aaron crossed his arms over his chest. "What are you gonna do if the sharks attack?"

"Why do you think there are sharks, Aaron?" I rolled my eyes and rummaged for another seaweed cracker.

"The teeth marks on the bodies," Aaron said.

I gagged on a cracker, covering my mouth with the back of my hand. "Where have you seen the bodies?"

Aaron rolled his eyes. "On TV. Duh."

I swallowed, my hand lowering back down to the wheel. "Dad lets you watch that?"

Aaron shrugged his shoulders and unzipped the top of his bag. "Why not? It's just the news."

I slowed to a stop at a red light. "Yes, but..." The rest of my words died in my mouth. But blood and burns and dismemberment and not for children! I shook my head and glanced up at him in the rearview mirror. "It can't be sharks, okay?"

The teeth marks did not match any known species of shark. Neither did the burns. Maybe it was us, with our oil and our boat propellers, shredding their bodies to pieces.

The light changed and I sped away, rubbing my temple with one hand. Aaron pulled a plastic blue shovel and a little bucket out of his bag.

I smiled, "collecting more shells?"

Aaron nodded his head. "I can watch you from the beach."

I laughed, turning the wheel. "I'm supposed to watch you."

"But I can be your lookout!" Aaron puffed out his chest and held up his plastic shovel like it was a sword. "If you start drowning, I can jump in and save you."

"No, Aaron," I sighed, closing my eyes. "You don't jump in after someone who's drowning. If you don't know what you're doing, you'll drown too. It happens all the time."

Aaron's lips went back into that little pout. "But I'm a really good swimmer."

"I know you are. But it's not enough. If you see someone drowning, just call for help, okay?" I glanced up at the rearview mirror. Aaron stayed quiet. "Okay?"

"Uh huh." He tucked his head down and pulled at the loose threads on his backpack.

It took mere minutes to reach my special place on Wrightsville beach. I liked this spot because there was a nice level space to park my car close to the water. It was rockier than other parts of the coast, but it was quiet and there was one long wooden pier leading out into the waves. Aaron sprang out of the car and raced towards the water, his bucket and shovel in hand.

I leaned against the car door for a moment, typing out a message to Mom claiming I had reached Dad's place. Once the message was complete, I pulled my sweater over my head and wrapped the phone inside.

I walked down to the beach in my blue suit, holding my clothes and my goggles in my arms. Aaron ran from one tidal pool to the next, and when he saw me he smiled and waved. I smiled back, my eyes running beyond him, over the rolling blue waves.

When the reports first started, I used to imagine that I could find one of them here, alive and unharmed. Sometimes, when I lay on the pier and listened to the waves crashing in, I could convince myself that there was one right beneath me, watching over me. More than once, the skin on the back of my neck prickled and I was certain if I turned around I would see her, hovering head and shoulders above the tide. But when I looked, there was never anything there.

I picked over the rocks and lowered my goggles over my eyes. Clenching my teeth to restrain the shivers shooting through my body, I saluted to Aaron and dropped my clothes in a pile next to him. He saluted back, holding his bucket up against the overcast sky. I laughed, and then raced across the end of the pier, diving straight into the oncoming tide.

Freezing water poured over my head and enveloped my body. I drifted for a moment, letting the cold seep down into my skin. My eyes opened and I gazed into the murky open water. A few fish flitted by my feet, but otherwise the waves were lifeless.

When my lungs felt tight, I kicked my legs and broke the surface. Taking a deep breath, I turned back to look for Aaron on the beach. He stood with his hand at his brow, and waved his bucket when he saw me. I waved back, and then dove back under.

I swam until it seemed the only heat left in me was my heart pounding in my chest. Silver light leaked through the overcast on the western sky. Underneath the waves there was only darkness and the occasional spotted seatrout.

I emerged, spitting out salt, and treaded water for a moment. Closing my eyes, I breathed in the sea mist and listened to the rush of the tide rolling in.

The skin on my neck tingled. I opened my eyes, searching the waves.

Nothing. I swam forward, towards the beach. If I could just look under the pier, I would find her! I reached the end, slapped my hands down on the wood and ducked under.

Rocks and sea water. I pulled my body up out of the water. It had been a silly thought.

I trudged back across the pier to where Aaron sat drawing circles in the sand with his shovel. His head perked up as I approached. "Did you find one?"

I shook my head and knelt down beside him, grabbing my sweater. Aaron frowned and dropped his shovel back into his bucket. I pulled my clothes back on, removing my phone from the sleeve of my sweater.

I held my hand out to Aaron. "Come on, it's getting late." He took my hand but his grip was limp. He watched the rocks that passed under our feet as we walked.

My phone buzzed so loud I almost dropped it. Not with a text or a call, but with an ear-grating noise I'd only ever heard on television sets during tests of the emergency alert system. I fumbled as I lifted it up to my face.

Aaron's nose wrinkled. "What is that?"

I read aloud, squinting at the words screaming in bold across the screen. "National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calls for an immediate evacuation of the Atlantic Coast." More words scrolled by, too fast for me to read them, and the noise continued. "What? Why?" I let go of Aaron's hand to touch the screen.

Suddenly, a siren blared out, bubbling up into one long continuous note. I screeched, dropping the phone and covering my ears. I whirled around to look down at Aaron.

He held his own hands over his ears, and his eyes were wide. "Is that the tsunami siren?"

"Yes, but..." I turned to face the sea, watching the tide roll in behind us. "That's not possible! The tide recedes before a tsunami."

He muttered something I couldn't hear over the noise. I squinted at the horizon. In the dim light, I could make out something grey splashing against the current. My hands drifted away from my ears. It was a tail, a fluke like that of a dolphin's, I was sure of it! My heartbeat thudded through my numb limbs, bringing them back to life.

I took off running towards the sea. Aaron cried out after me, but there was too much noise. The siren, the ocean waves, the wind picking up around me; all of the sounds bled together into one deafening roar. Rocks cut into the soles of my feet and blood spotted the sand behind

me, but I kept my eyes on that one grey fluke moving further and further out to sea.

It disappeared beneath one last rolling wave.

“Wait!” I screamed out over the noise. I stretched out my hand towards the place where the tail disappeared.

Saltwater stung between my toes and I hissed under my breath. My damp hair whipped around my face in the wind. I searched the dotted clusters of seafoam on the surface of the water, searching for that grey tail. My eyes rested on a line of white on the distant horizon, streaking across the water like the wake of a jet ski.

It took my mind a split second to register that the tide was surging over my knees before the ground lurched beneath my feet.

I didn’t have a chance to scream. The grinding rumble of the earth drowned out the wail of the siren and I could hear it even when my head plunged underwater. Seawater wormed up my nose. All of my limbs flailed, searching for the seafloor, the surface, anything! My toes brushed the ground, but it fell out from beneath me. A current surged against my kicking legs, pulling me out farther to sea. A hundred warnings ran screeching through my mind. Earthquake! Shelf-drop! Riptide! But none made sense. How could I be standing with my toes in the tide one moment and submerged the next?

My head broke the surface. I gasped, whipping around to get my bearings. The beach was hundreds of feet away, and the sea had risen. The tide spilled over the top of the pier.

“Aaron!” I tried to pull my hair out of my eyes. Salt stung in my throat and pain shot into my skull when I breathed. I thought I could just make out the white of Aaron’s t-shirt on the beach.

Heat swirled up the water around me. My heart clenched and my breath froze in my lungs. I looked down into the water and saw two massive red eyes narrowed on me.

I thrashed my arms backward, kicking my feet. My toes brushed up against something that felt like steel and I flinched away, white-hot tremors shooting through my spine.

The eyes rose up. Water spilled down over a black, reptilian head. Smoke poured out from its nostrils. It opened its mouth and thousands of blood-stained jagged teeth rose above me. The waterline boiled at the back of its throat.

I felt quakes shudder through the sea as its feet moved. Behind its head I could make out its long, coiling spine, stretching out beyond the horizon. The scales on its back were like rows of shields packed one on top of the other. My car could fit inside its mouth with room to spare.

Sparks ignited in its throat, surging out over its long, forked tongue.

I dove back underwater and swam. Even from beneath the waves, I heard the roar of fire. I thrust my arms and legs forward, fighting against a scalding current that pulled back against me. The heat was too close, the noise pressed in on me from every direction. The surface seemed to move farther and farther away, and I realized that whatever this monster was, I could not outswim it.

My arms felt like lead. Muscle spasms shot down my legs. Air escaped from my mouth and I felt as though I were sinking down, and down...

A hand grasped the back of my sweater.

The next instant I was moving forward again, impossibly fast. Arms wrapped around my waist. The water broke like a cannon blast all around me and I found myself rolling over the pier. I slapped my hands down on either side of me, coughing. My head whipped back around, and I saw her.

Not one of the corpses had washed ashore with open eyes. Now those eyes stared back at me, wide, vivid green, and dilated. Her webbed fingers dug down into the wood. Shimmering sea water dripped from her dark hair. The drops hit the pier with a sound like thunder.

Her lips, white and pale like the rest of her human skin, moved. I heard her over the sound of the blaring siren, the crackling hiss of the creature behind her. Her voice was like water spilling into the basin of a fountain, rich and ringing with vitality.

“Miriam, get away from the water.”

I clasped a hand against my mouth, shuddering with a sob. I could have lifted my hand and touched her, she was so close, so alive, and so real.

Her head snapped backwards, and she let out a shriek that sounded like a dolphin’s dying cry. Blood streamed down her chin and over her slim neck. Scaled claws wrapped around her torso and wrenched her from the pier. Her tail writhed as she crashed back into the surf.

Screaming, I rushed to the edge. The dark shadows of the monster’s hind legs disappeared beneath the pier. The structure buckled beneath my feet.

"Miriam!" I heard Aaron shout. I turned my head and saw him racing towards me.

"No!" I sprinted down the pier, shouting all the way. "Go back! Get to the car!"

We collided. He kept pointing towards the open water, refusing to turn around. I slung him over my shoulder.

"What about her? Why are you leaving her?" Aaron pounded on my back as I ran.

I heard wood groan and snap, and risked a glance behind me. The pier plunged into the oncoming tide. The monster lifted his head above the waves. Steam streamed through its teeth and its eyes flashed red. Something dangled below its jaw. My stomach churned and I whirled back around.

My legs felt weak as I stumbled to the side of my car. I flung open the back door and tossed Aaron in. His face was red when he sat up. "You can't leave her!"

I shook my head, tears dripping down through the saltwater on my face.

"You don't jump in to save someone who's drowning."

Aaron shifted back in his seat, his expression blank. He reached up and buckled his seatbelt like a little machine. I clambered into the driver's seat and started the car.

In the rear view mirror, I could see thousands of tiny flames flickering on the ocean waves. My eyes shifted down to the silver charm, swinging back and forth with firelight glinting on the rhinestones of her tail.

Survived

Elaina Brown-Spence



Explore

Marrisa Merrill



True Nature
Alexander Parris



Saint Theresa
Joelle Nagy



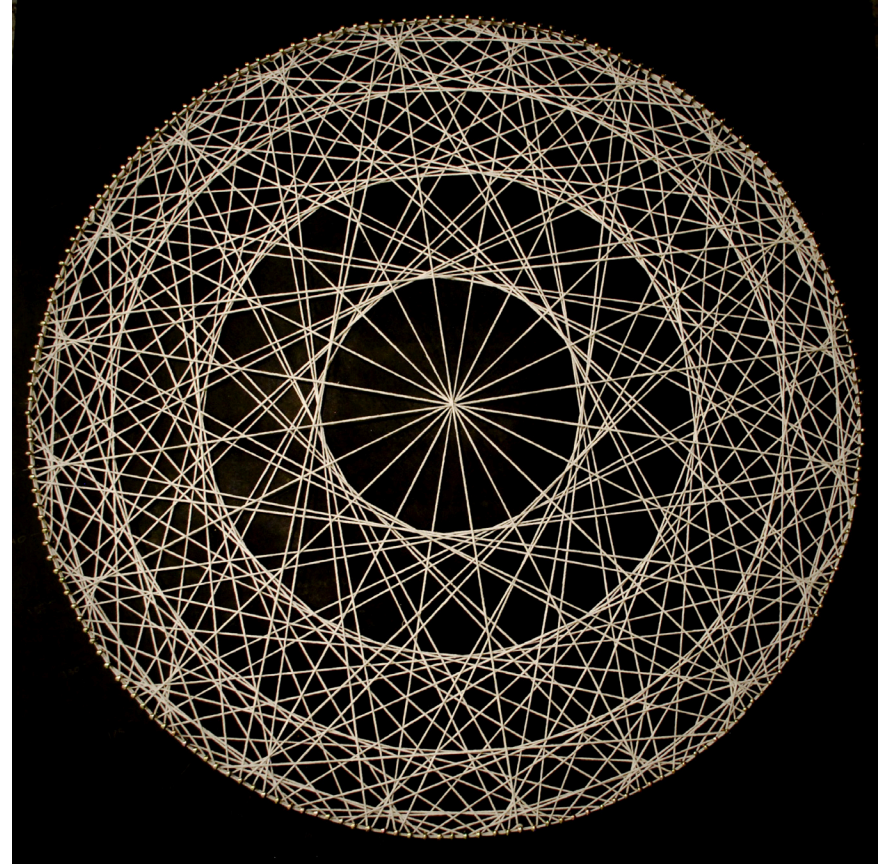
Gone

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21 Timestable Modulo 200

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Abstract Creatures Birthday Party

Mackenna Carney



Untitled
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74



75

Prancer
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Helen Hamilton Award for Excellence in Creative Expression

GET AWAY FROM THE WATER by Allison Marshall

The staff would like to thank the Hamilton Family for their generosity that will allow eleven40seven to celebrate TCU's creative culture for years to come.

Contemplative Poetry Contest Winner

Teatime by Emily Dickson

Contemplative Poetry Contest Honorable Mentions

On Grief in 2012 by Ethan Murray

From Earth by Abigail Buckley

The TCU Contemplative Poetry Contest was cosponsored by TCU's AddRan College of Liberal Arts, Contemplative Studies Faculty Interest Group, eleven40seven: TCU Journal of the Arts, and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.

Science Meets Fiction Contest Winner

Beautifyl by Amanda Anderson

Science Meets Fiction Contest Honorable Mentions

William Dennett, EE by Jeff Gassen | *Chapter 1* by Edward Williams

Arctic Fire by Kit Snyder

The Science meets Fiction contest is cosponsored by SciCom: the College of Science & Engineering science communication initiative and eleven40seven: TCU Journal of the Arts.

SPECIAL THANKS & SUPPORT

Dr. Emory & Mr. Frederic Hamilton

The Hamilton Family eleven40seven
Endowment Fund

Dr. Curt Rode

Department of English
New Media Writing Studio

Dr. Karen Steele

Department of English

Dr. Andrew Schoolmaster

AddRan College of the Liberal Arts

Hayley Zablotsky

Bryson Arts Society



Printed thanks to our friends at



Produced by
nmws
new.media.writing.studio
www.newmedia.tcu.edu

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**“WE ARE ALL IN THE
GUTTER, BUT SOME OF
US ARE LOOKING AT THE
STARS.”**

— Oscar Wilde