



TCU Journal of the Arts

eleven4seven

Spring 2018 Volume 13.2

# eleven4seven

*tcu journal of the arts*



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# eleven40seven

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VOLUME 13.2

SPRING 2018

“

EVERY ARTIST WAS  
FIRST AN AMATEUR.

”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson



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# EDITOR'S NOTE

As I sat down to write this note, I found myself struggling to put the overarching themes of this edition into words. Each individual piece represents a wildly different, yet important, perspective. But as I reflected on our editorial process this semester, I discovered that the one common thread that seems to run between each piece is emotion. Art is a funny thing in that way – it can be aesthetically pleasing or well-executed, but it truly finds its power when it has the ability to evoke an emotional response in its audience.

Looking back, I think that is what we strove to do in putting together the Spring 2018 edition – to provide each and every one of our readers with the chance to simply feel something as they engage with each and every piece of creative work in this journal.

I don't think I will ever cease to be amazed by the talent and dedication demonstrated by the TCU student body. Each semester, we strive to showcase the best and brightest that our community has to offer, and each semester, our contributors always find ways to innovate and rise to the occasion.

I will always be grateful for the time I've spent as a member of the eleven40seven team. It has been an incredibly humbling experience and has opened my eyes to a myriad of new perspectives that I might not have been exposed to otherwise. I will cherish everything I have learned here and will move on to my next chapter with a special place in my heart for this journal and the people who work so hard to make it great.

Thank you to each and every staff member, both past and present, who have spent their time and energy making the journal the best it can be. Thank you to Dr. Rode, for your constant support and sage advice. And most importantly, thank you to our amazing contributors. We truly couldn't do this without you.

Catherine Lillie

Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2018





# Simplicity

Erin Ratigan

A lovely humming  
from the overgrown basil.  
The sweetest of sounds,  
as nature's little workers  
bring peace to a troubled world.

Bird  
Elizabeth Keenan





# Listening

## Wellington Owen

"We might well have avoided this disgrace,"  
He glares at us above his azure tie,  
"Had you been listening in the first place."

Returning to the class, he moves apace,  
While I am left to contemplate how I  
Could ever have avoided this disgrace.

That violently blue tie, the furious race  
Of chalk across the board seem to decry  
Our failure to listen in the first place.

He writes swiftly, like nothing's out of place;  
Perhaps he thinks that we'll accept the lie  
That we could have avoided this disgrace.

The board fills up, it's running out of space.  
But not once does he stop to turn an eye  
To us, not listening in the first place.

He knows his duty, puts us in our place,  
And yet I know, no matter how we try,  
We could not have avoided this disgrace:  
He wasn't listening in the first place.

# Tilda Swinton

Nick Martin



# Colors

Olivia Chambers

I've always seen myself  
In the color yellow

With the power to  
Be in the sunrise in the morning

Or to hold the simplicity  
To be the petals on a soft rose

Or have the capacity  
To sting like a bee.

I see the world  
In the color blue

With the enormity of  
Of the ocean crashing wave after wave

Or to behold complete freedom  
In the way it fills the sky

Or with the juxtaposition  
To be both perfect peace and surpassing sorrow.

I see people  
In the color gold

With the glint of  
Unique incomparability like a rare metal

Or to be so special  
To evoke others to move cross-country in a rush

Or to be humble in their glow  
Simply in need of the right sunlight to catch their gleam.

# Two

## Olivia Chambers

Since I was little,  
I was well acquainted with  
Two.

Too loud  
Too dumb  
Too fat

Me and two were friends at war  
of sorts.

Wherever my dreams and I went,  
Two followed.

I dreamed  
to go

to infinity and beyond  
to the stars and the moon  
to places far from where I was.

I had a companion with Two,  
Finally, a consistent mate.

But when my dreams were vocalized,  
I was told  
To be more practical  
To think logistically  
To quiet down

But with you  
I finally found a Two  
That coupled joy to reality

Two bodies  
Two hearts  
Two breathes

*continued, stanza break*

And out of all my Twos  
I knew that they were all  
Leading up  
To you.

# Totem Pole

## Ashley Parks

Beauty: A construct.  
Reserved for those with  
The fairest skin and the lightest eyes.  
Beauty,  
Which alludes me and many other of my darker skinned sisters  
Constant cries  
Self-esteem genocides  
Of an entire complexion.  
Light, medium, or otherwise

We are all black.

Belittled  
And  
disparaged.  
First, and continuously at the hands of the white man.  
Perpetually undesirable,  
regarded as less than by our own  
Black man  
I don't understand.

We are all black.

Chasing  
showcasing white woman after light woman on your arm  
Until she calls you a  
Nigger  
Reminding you of your place.  
Remember,  
You too are black.

*continued, stanza break*

Chasing  
showcasing white woman after light woman on your arm  
Until she calls you a  
Nigger  
Reminding you of your place.  
Remember,  
You too are black.

Always on the front lines  
Burdened with upholding an acceptable face.  
Ousted, put down by our own kin.  
By those who share-h  
the countless  
hues of our skin

Women.  
Dark women.  
Black women.

highly educated, queens of B.A degrees  
undercompensated, earning mere cents on the dollar

The bottom.



# Black Girl Magic

Leilyn Miles

"You're really pretty for a black girl," they say.

"Why is your hair so curly all the time? Why don't you just straighten it," they ask.

"You're not really black," they tell her.

"I've never been with a black girl before," they gush.

"You must play a sport," they assume.

"You're just another raging liberal," they mutter.

"Cotton picker," they scowl.

"My parents would never let me bring you home, but we don't have to tell anyone," they whisper.

\* \* \*

Nigger. Ugly. Dirty. Coon. I've heard them all. I have had them used to describe me personally, but what can I do at this point other than laugh?

Black girls and women have been dragged, thrown, groped, raped, kidnapped, and choked in classrooms, swimming pools, colleges, and malls across the country while the world watches expressing their opinions, yet nothing seems to change. I wake up every day wondering if today will be the day, the day I can walk through campus without someone taking something from me. Black girls are comparable to the sculptures of the ancient Greeks: beautiful, unique, mysterious and fragile. They may look strong and powerful, but hit them with enough stones, and they'll crack, and those little cracks will lead to bigger cracks, which will then lead to them breaking.

This is why they kneel.

\* \* \*

When I was little, a girl whom my parents babysat would always look at me weirdly, and I never knew why. One day she was staring at me and blurted out, "Were you born like that or did you just get really tan?" I was so embarrassed I just told her I was born like that because I really didn't know the answer. I never understood why she was so confused by me, so I let it go. I've now come to the realization that she saw me as different because I

didn't look like her. My skin was brown and hers was not.

Fast forward to elementary school. I had my natural hair in braids. Granted my hair was extremely curly and was probably very frizzy at the time; I loved it like that. That day a boy in my class pulled on my pigtails and loudly said, "Your hair kinda looks like a bunch of turds." I have pretty thick skin and can put on a good front, so I just laughed it off because that's just how I am. Though, when I got home that night, I remember looking in the mirror and staring at my unbraided hair and feeling small, almost less than. I felt as if my hair made me undeniably ugly. But I couldn't help it.

I cried and cried and begged God to make it straight like all the other girls so I wouldn't be ugly anymore. I was six years old, and that was the first time I remember crying myself to sleep.

This is why they kneel.

\* \* \*

Middle school: my best friend's stepdad, who I had never met, saw me walking into basketball practice one morning and said out loud, "Wow, I've never actually seen a black child in a school like this one. Would you look at that?" By this time, I was old enough to somewhat comprehend the idea that because I had brown skin, I was going to be seen differently. Though the concept still didn't make sense to me. In my head, I wasn't truly black nor did I want to be.

I was mixed. My mom was white, and my dad was black. This one man's comment, though I didn't understand why at the time, truly upset me. His words made me believe I didn't belong there. They made me feel like my black friends didn't belong there. When my dad came to pick me up that day, all I felt was embarrassment and sadness. We didn't belong there. I didn't belong there. When my mom picked me up, however, the embarrassment subsided. I felt as though people accepted me more because my mom looked like theirs.

The constant feeling of inadequacy affected me in ways I couldn't have comprehended at the time. This continuous feeling affected not only myself but also my relationship with my dad. I didn't want to be seen with him because in my head he was the cause of all this. It was his fault I couldn't stop this feeling from drowning me. Consequently, I developed an unconscious bias towards my mom. How sad is that? At nine-years-old I had already let the opinions of others affect the relationship with someone who should've been one of the most important people in my life.

This feeling, however, never waned. Throughout my middle school years, I played sports. I heard all the stereotypes. "Oh, you must be able to jump really high, and run really fast, right?" At my school, if you looked black people expected you to have natural WNBA and NFL talent, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. To my misfortune, in seventh grade, I made C-team basketball (the worst team). It was mortifying, not because I made C-team, but because I thought I had let people down. I was so upset at myself for not being good enough, and I was so angry at my coach. How could she do this to me? I thought about just quitting. I genuinely believed I let down every single person in the black community. I wasn't good enough.

This is why they kneel.

\* \* \*

Now we're in high school, oh joy. This was a time when people really started to get bold. My sophomore year of high school, a boy started showing interest in me, and I was really flattered until one day he texted me something along the lines of, "Ya, you're really pretty for a black girl." Some of my friends did not understand why I was so insulted, but I mean can I really blame them? Eventually, I had moved onto a different boy thinking he would be different. Little did I know every boy I thought would be different was the exact same. (Go high school!)

He was incredibly sweet and very good looking. Yet, one night when we were talking, he told me his parents would never approve of him seeing a black girl. He told me I could be his "little secret," as if it were some great honor. This hurt and confused me because to me I was just Leilyn, but because my skin was brown his parents were able to strip me of my own identity. I was no longer Leilyn to him. I was just the "black girl" his parents would never approve of. I think I could feel my heart shattering as he spoke.

Why? Why would his parents never approve? I asked him, and he said that his parents were very against him dating outside of his race. He said that he didn't know why; it's just "how he was raised." In that moment, I wished I was invisible.

High school was the first time in my life I had ever been called a nigger. It was after school, and a boy in my grade, who was known for being explicitly vocal about his feelings, was walking next to me as I walked out to track practice. With music blaring through my headphones, I looked over and saw him give me a look. I was walking alone, and there weren't very many people around, and he sort of looked at me and very calmly asked, "Do you have to be such a nigger? I thought you were kind of cool until I knew you liked that coon music." He didn't say it very loudly, but he also wasn't trying to be discrete about it either. While nobody else except

me had heard him, I still felt my cheeks flush. I stared at him in disbelief, but said nothing as I was scared of what he might say next. What gave him the right? I can't put into words what I felt, but it was like a flash of embarrassment, anger, resentment towards my dad, and just overall confusion. I could not have prevented his criticism or avoided it. I just happened to be black at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Now it's important to note that I went to a predominantly white high school in a wealthy area. I'm not white nor am I wealthy. Understand that. So, I already looked out of place there, but now. . . now I felt out of place.

My best friends and their parents had always told me how beautiful they thought I was, but I always knew I wasn't the right kind of beautiful. In my head, I am and I was, but I knew I didn't look like the other girls with long blonde hair and rosy freckled cheeks. I didn't have fair skin and blue eyes. My eyes were brown, and my kinky curly hair, jet black. I wasn't dating a football player, and I was not model thin. I knew I was beautiful, but when I walked into that school, my kind of beauty just felt out of place, unwelcomed, and unwanted. All I could do was ask myself why. Why can't I ever be enough? Why do I keep letting these people break me?

By my junior year, I had gotten my license and was about to start driving. Coincidentally, this was also the unfortunate time in America when Trayvon Martin 17, Michael Brown, 18, Laquan McDonald, 17, Walter Scott, 50, Freddie Gray, 25, John Crawford, 22, Tamir Rice, 12, Renisha McBride, 19, and so many more were murdered at the hands of the police. Say their names; I know it's hard. It was really tough for me to hear about their deaths. It was as if every day I woke up and another kid who looked just like me was getting buried. Will I be next? I was horrified. My mom still needed to see me go to my first prom and graduate. My dad still needed to see me win my first gold medal at the state track meet. I still hadn't had my first love. These thoughts consistently ran through my head every time I stepped outside or got in a car. Too many firsts had been stolen from these people, my people, and it made me fear for my own future. I didn't want to be next.

A couple days after I got my license, I was joking around with my parents. I told them that I didn't know what box to check on things that asked me to identify my ethnicity as Pacific Islander, black, and white all applied. I said, "I'm not 100 percent black, and I don't look white, but I kind of am," and my dad cut me off and said, "You're black." I looked at him

shocked by the harshness of his words, his face stone cold. He looked at me and said, "You're black. Get used to it. It doesn't matter that you don't think you are or that your mom looks white. If you get pulled over, you are black. Your skin is brown, and you will be treated accordingly, so you better get used to it real quick before you become a statistic." In that moment, I finally understood. My skin was brown; therefore, I would be looked at and treated differently because whether people knew it or not, they had unconscious biases that affected the way they consciously acted regardless of whether it was right or not.

This is why they kneel.

\* \* \*

I am terrified of getting pulled over. The two times it has happened my hands shook uncontrollably, and I felt as if I could not breathe. I know that sometimes good people do bad things, and I know that not all policemen have malicious intent. Moreover, I realize that not all policemen are bad, but some of them are. I am afraid that one day I am going to get stopped by the wrong cop at the wrong time, and they will turn me into a statistic. I am petrified by the fact that a hoodie and an innocent trip to the gas station could cost me my life. I am terrified that no man will ever find me genuinely beautiful, brown skin and all. I am overwrought that my mom refuses to understand that in today's America, she can do things I can't because she is white and I am not. I am grieved by the fact that in 2017 my mom will never be able comprehend that because I do not look like her, I will be unfairly treated. I am 2.5 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than she is. I am statistically less likely to graduate from college than she was. I am statistically less likely to be married and more likely to become divorced if I were to be. I am 2.5 times more likely to experience intimate partner violence than her but less likely to get help because of it. Why? In today's America being black is considered less than. To be black is to be naked before the cruelties of the world, before all the guns, knives, fists, drugs, abuse, and torment. It's like walking around with a sign on your back that says "kick me," and not realizing its there until you've been knocked so far down getting up seems impossible.

This is why they kneel.

\* \* \*

They kneel for people like me, who without them would be voiceless. They kneel for the broken, the battered, and the hopeless. They kneel for the moms and dads who have outlived their children and for the kids whose lives have been abducted. They kneel for the grandparents who will never get to hold their grandbabies again. They kneel for the children who were

orphaned because of the careless actions of others. They kneel for everyone who has been told they are not enough: not good enough, not pretty enough, not strong enough, not black enough. They kneel for the black girls and women who have been dragged, thrown, groped, raped, kidnapped, and choked. They kneel because if they don't say something...who will? You? They kneel for change. They kneel for me. They kneel for my eight-year-old sister who may never understand the negative stigma attached to her beauty, and I could not be more thankful.

Being black should not be painful. Being black is not a weakness. My skin is bronzed and beautiful. Being black is beautiful. Being black is powerful. Being black is brave, important, and authentic. Being black is being me. I am black, and I am proud.

\* \* \*

And this? This is why they kneel.

## A Note On The Sources

In text citations and footnotes alike would have drastically taken away from this paper as a whole. It would have been distracting. I wrote this with the hope that the reader would become lost in my words because of their impact. I didn't want them to have to pause and try to decipher a bunch of random names that wouldn't mean anything to them.

When I was writing, I used a compilation of different sources. However, I mainly tried to focus on sources that included personal testimonies. I wanted to know how people felt. I looked to see how certain situations happening in the world around us impacted them. I then tried to determine if the stories based off their situational impact affected me. Needless to say, they did. Some of my sources are informational as I needed to find statistics to add validation to my claims. However, some of my sources are more emotional as to add to the dramatics and aggression of my writing. If you read this and wanted to hear more stories or get more information, I am more than happy to discuss and help with that. This is a topic that needs to be discussed, and it excites me when others agree with that. However, if you don't agree and would like to discuss that, I would be more than happy to do so as well. Sources with information in them so powerful you should absolutely read them have been bolded.

### In regards to the statistics

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There are a variety of different sources I have just presented to you; however, it is important that you understand this story was based off real events that have happened in my life. These sources just helped me to understand how I wanted to express my own trial and tribulations in a way that would touch the hearts of my readers.

# Outside the Box

Colton Pittman



# T-E-A-C-H-E-R

## Abigail Jennings

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

- Helen Keller, The Story of My Life

The still and empty made me  
mad, crying for "wah-wah"  
that I liked cold on a hot day  
drawing the fragrance  
of sweet honeysuckle  
vining around us  
down the brick path to the well  
she held my hand  
the stream fresh  
over the other palm  
she moved her fingers  
spelled the letters  
as it flowed cold over my hand  
and the sunrays'  
warmth on my hair  
burst bright  
in my soul I shone  
like sparkling W-A-T-E-R

# Smoke Break

## Karenne Koessler

Recipient of the Helen Hamilton Award

My seasoned skin attempts to dilate  
beneath the dense humidity, but fails

to let me inhale: Drench the supplest  
of Pa's pullovers in cig-mist.

Jellied brain swamps the wind-  
pipes of my cranium. I am not porous enough

to drain the thick of exhaustion  
that gurgles against my temples,

a temporary calmness slithers  
its scorched claws down my throat.

Cacophonous roars pinball across  
the innards of my forehead,

wasps in a jar.  
Engulfing eve's crumbling rainstorm:

the perpetual tumult of my former  
household that inhabits my mind.

(Silence: something I will hear when my black  
distended lungs press through nicotine needles.)  
A privilege, not mine.

# Biohazard

Alejandra Lopez



# The Lord's Prayer

Austin Shaw

*Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come thy will be done...*



*Give us this day our daily bread and...*



For the rest of the series please visit our online edition: <http://1147.tcu.edu>



# Shopping List

Lauren Conte

Translucent spring roll skins. Jasmine tea,  
Tampax and tamales. Reusable grocery bags  
and rubberized conveyor belts. Checkout beeps—  
that universal language. The old married couples at Costco  
who smile at us when you hold my hand. Grabbing  
all the groceries in one trip. Hot showers  
and new shampoo, foggy outline in the mirror  
hiding my post-meal plump belly. My pillow  
in your bed. The rolling womb-warmth  
inside the car at night. Giving in to heavy  
eyelids. Finding his sock in my laundry,  
an artifact. The women who know  
how to pose and suck in their stomachs. My brother  
bringing home a wife that my parents think is  
good enough for him. Adonis reincarnated  
with a beta-male complex. Navy pilots. Maverick  
and Goose playing volleyball in jean shorts. Tom Cruise  
with his gap-toothed smile in *The Outsiders*. Cherry Valance.  
Mary Magdalene, whose story is wrapped  
in her hair. Men. Muddy water. I want  
blue eyes and an alien body. Willow limbs  
and a crown of leaves, gold and green in the sunlight.  
You say there's beauty in the brown barrens  
and I try to believe that. Days so cold,  
spit freezes before it hits the ground. Shoveling snow  
off our driveway at dusk when everything is  
amber and gray and stinging. Red cheeked  
drinking wine on the couch with you. Eric Clapton's  
guitar solo unspooling sound underneath the needle  
of my beat-up record player. In the open air with blankets  
wrapped around shoulders, reflections of Christmas  
lights gliding along the convertible's sides.  
Razor burnt, bumpy skin draws more attention  
than hair would. Gillette Venus Comfort Glide.  
Training bras until 8th grade. Locker room shame  
until asses became trendy. Texas lawns in February  
looking like 16 year-old-boys' chins. Patchy green peach fuzz.  
Parents that never let us have a dog

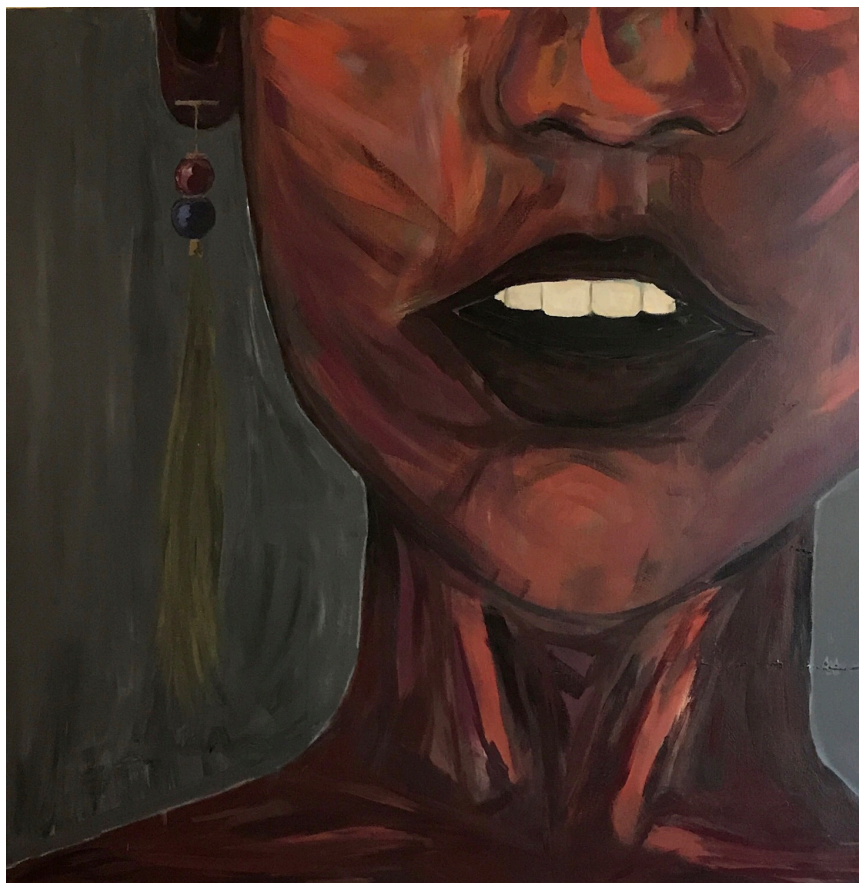
*continued, no stanza break*

so the dryer chews up my underwear to make me happy.  
Chia pets with shoots growing out Scooby-Doo's ears.  
Crocs. Peanut butter and peanut butter sandwiches  
because I hated jelly. Little League baseball games. Big League  
Chew

before dipping was a vice. Spit sticky sunflower and peanut casings  
underneath aluminum bleachers. I-Spy on roadtrips.  
Green signs for Nebraska. Colorado. Blue signs for McDonald's Arby's  
and Dairy Queen. Subway if we're lucky. Red-tailed Hawks  
dive-bombed  
by sparrows. Pokemon on Nintendo DS. Cheat codes that made  
little brothers cry  
when I never lost. Dad threatening to pull over. Two-lane highways.  
Conciliatory victories. Awkward  
goodbyes and dropped conversations. Face to FaceTime  
when you're 4,965 miles away. 10 cents for a text just to say  
I miss you. TJ Maxx clothes and hand creams, I don't need  
but buy nonetheless. A breath bubble caught between sleeping lips  
and your right arm hanging off the bed  
like Adam reaching for God in the carpet. Needs only now realized.  
Your hands reading my body in the dark, slowly understanding  
the goosebump braille. Candles whose intended scent gets lost in  
smoke  
when the wicks are blown out. Companionable silence.

# Sister Mystery

Skylar Tippetts



# Empowerment

Elizabeth Lally



# To Those She Took with Her

## Krystin Pickering

She, the next in a long line of greatness, had her fate written in the stars even before she had received her name. Of course, no one knew this, not even her Designer, her Creator. He knew the task that would be given her, and he knew the perils that went with it, that many like her went out and never returned. So, on the day of her christening, he entrusted her with the lives of hundreds of men and gave her the duty to be their defender and rampart as they set out to sea. This day, she received her name: Mary for the Holy Virgin and Rose for the House of Tudor. This day, she received her identity. Mary Rose stood out as the king's favourite, outfitted to reflect it. Her dressings bore her nation's colours: white, with a red cross stretching across the middle, edges trimmed in gold. Her Creator looked on with joy as she was assigned her men, and they lined up along her decks for his initial painting.

To him she made a promise: I will make you proud.

Mere months after her completion, her men scuttled about on each of her decks, preparing cannons and hauling up crates of ammunition and provisions. Sir Edward Howard chose her as his flagship, shouting orders at every idle man he came across. She hummed with excitement: this was what she had been built for. When the last checks had been made to the Lord Admiral's satisfaction, they set off from the harbor with the rest of the fleet, every man in place, ready to raise his sail. Her masts heaved under the pulling of the ropes, each sail rising inch by inch. As soon as the wind hit her topsails, she surged forward, feeling the cold water splashing up her sides. It carried her across the waves.

Sir Howard ran a hand along the railing of her upper deck. "The French won't know what hit them."

She had to agree. She and her sister, Peter Pomegranate, had enough firepower to put up a decent fight on their own, but with Regent and the other heavy-class ships, the French fleet would belong to England by week's end.

It didn't take long before she heard the orders ring out ship to ship, signal flags rising. The first cannonball flew past her starboard side. Her crew sprang into action, jamming the rods down each of the cannon bores before lighting the fuses. The force of the blasts rattled her sides, and she heaved as they swung her around, port side dipping deep toward the waters. Such a sharp turn made her unstable, and she feared she'd keep leaning until she landed flat in the water. She groaned as her momentum carried her back the other way, righting herself again as her men—who'd found themselves flung against the walls and overboard—scrambled upright and back to their posts.

"That's my girl!" Her commander shouted, the thrill of battle lighting up his face.

I do my best.

The French attack intensified now, cannonballs soaring through the air like gulls, screeching as they tore into the sides of the vessels around her. To her left Regent found herself tangled in a web of grappling hooks, Bretons pouring over the side onto her decks. Her countrymen engaged them, swords flashing in the sunlight, men filing up from the lower levels, attacking as soon as they had room to move. Mary Rose's men worked to bring her around, lining her up to fire on the French ship that has Regent trapped. Almost in position, they resumed preparation on the cannons, when an explosion rang out across the water. The sound of the blast rattled her to her core. She knew what happened; her men were afraid to look.

"Most Merciful God..." a cabin boy whispered, peeking out from the windows below deck. His hands shook against the glass.

Regent and her French attacker sat beside her, consumed in flame. More explosions rang out across the water as the spreading fires ignited the powder kegs on her cannon decks. Entire sections of her decking flew into the air, boards dotting the water's surface like splinters. Men poured off the sides of Regent, many burning until they hit the water. Mary Rose watched as the hands of the Channel reached up and dragged them away one by one, until at last they reached toward the two sweltering vessels. The Channel tightened its grip on Regent, and began to pull her

scorching husk down beside her men. Grand Regent, largest in the fleet and home to nearly two thousand men, reduced to ashes in a matter of minutes. She couldn't consider how many fathoms they sank, down into the blackness, taking their crews with them. To her men she gave a silent vow: That will not be your fate.

One of the spotters shouted across the deck. "The Peter Pomegranate! She's going down."

"Bring us around," Sir Howard ordered. "We've got to get over there!"

They raced through the debris, cutting through the waves, until they reached her sinking sister and her crew. Some of her men tossed ropes overboard, and the drowning men clambered up her sides, falling into soaking heaps once they reached her top deck, trembling, but alive. The sea reaches up again, pulling her sister down into the blue. More of Peter Pomegranate's men scramble up onto Mary Rose's refuge, trying to escape the invisible force that claimed their ship.

The rest of the battle passed by in a blur of attacking, moving, reloading, and firing again. They took twelve ships from their enemies, before turning and heading back to Southampton. Celebrations on board carried on half-heartedly, the gravity of their losses dampening their spirits. Eighteen ships went out and twenty-eight returned. But Regent and her sister would never be seen again.

She went in for repairs and her men went on leave and for a while, it seemed that this would be the pattern of her life. Out for battle, in for refitting, out to fight the French, in to patch a hole. Thirty-four years she passed like this, taking each new crew under protection. She grew attached to each one that came onboard, from the commander to the swabbie. Some of these men came on as boys, and she watched them grow from powder monkey to Able-Bodied Sailor. She watched some of her officers rise to the ranks, all the way to the top, transferring to other ships, but never leaving her mind. Her fame grew with theirs, and His Majesty's Navy sang her praises at every turn. The fastest, the nimblest. A coordinated crew. Mary Rose inspired quality and precision in her men, they said. Mary Rose was nigh unstoppable.



July of her thirty-fourth year, her watchman spotted French ships barreling across the Solent. Unable to maneuver, she and Henry Grace à Dieu pushed out a little further from the rest of the becalmed fleet, firing their cannons as the French approached. As if a gift from Heaven itself, the wind picked up when they began to move, allowing the other ships to catch the gusts and move into action. Below decks, those manning the guns moved to the rhythm of the lyrics of war.

“Sponge. Kindling. Ram. Aim. Fire!”

They gained the upper hand, but the French refused to back down, retuning every volley with equal intensity. She felt a ball dig into her side, tearing open a hole in her lowest deck, water rushing in. Her men evacuated the areas nearest the wound and move above in hopes that she'd stay afloat. Admiral Carew ordered her brought around, her boys above deck pulling on sails and her boys below loading another round of cannon shot. Her starboard side dipped down into the water as she turned, and the cannons on her port side fired all at once, throwing her back into the waves. But instead of righting as she had done so many times before, one more gust of wind slammed into her sails, knocking her completely onto her side. Water began to rush through lower decks, coming in through the gun ports. No! There are scores of men below!

Equipment, ammunition, supplies and containers crushed anyone in their paths as they slid to the opposite side. All those on the surface fell into the Channel, while those below clawed at her walls, trying to get up from the lower levels as more water poured in.

“Abandon ship! Abandon ship!”

Those words hurt her to hear, but she knew anyone trapped on board would go down with her. She prayed they would find a way out around the anti-boarding nets, but even as she hoped, she knew it was folly. They were trapped.

It wasn't supposed to end like this! Not for them! Not for me...



Guilt tore through her as she heard the final moments of her men on the lowest decks. The Master Gunner said his final prayers. An Able-Bodied Sailor whispered a goodbye to his lover in Dover. A powder boy wept that he just wanted to go home. Helpless, desperate, broken, she felt the hands of the sea reach up, and take them one by one. The waters continued to rise as she sank further and further, powerless to help her men. Nothing could make amends for this betrayal. The sea took them all.

She felt the sea's hands surround her as they had done to her sister and Regent all those years ago. Slowly it pulled her down, dragging her boys with her. They screamed as they got caught in the companionways. They screamed as they were swallowed up by the sea. She shrieked as she sank, weeping for those who went with her. She who had been their refuge had broken her vow to return them home safely. The least she could do was be a final, familiar resting place for her faithful crew. Twenty fathoms she sank, before landing pillowed on a bed of sand. Her starboard side completely covered, she settled into her grave, watching as the debris she brought with her landed beside her.

Here, in the bottom of the Solent Sea, she met her fate. Doomed to a watery hell for breaking the oath she'd made out of fear after witnessing her predecessor's demise. I'm sorry, boys. I'm so, so sorry.

\* \* \* \* \*

The first thing she feels is a gentle pulling upward as something settles underneath her remaining side, and begins to bring her up. Without her port side, she feels the sun's rays shine through her belly as they breach the surface, and lay her on vessels powered not by wind, but by a dark, viscous liquid. Gentle hands remove the bones of her boys from their resting place against her side. They take the pieces of cookware and weaponry that had imbedded into her side out and place them in crates. She recognizes the gentle rocking of the sea, and realizes she's sailing again.

A woman, who speaks into a stick with a ball on the end, says, "It has been just over four centuries, but the HMS Mary Rose, favourite vessel of Henry the Eighth, has been raised up again, just off the coast of the Isle of Wight. She'll be returning home to

Portsmouth for repairs and conservation efforts. The sailors found in her wreckage will be treated to the honours due them."

Did you hear that, lads? She whispers to the souls of her crew. We're going home.

# Chosen

Nate Lebsack

**chosen**





# Humdrum Cycle

Linh Tang

Contemplative Poetry Winner

i am never the same,  
i am always as other people,  
i am fluent, flowing,  
seething in faces and occupy masks,  
i follow them faithfully, their  
faces, my dear friends', loves', families'  
and hopes', of future and illusive facts,  
i lower myself to non-  
identify only by  
the deeply is of instants,  
when you see me in motion,  
in between, detached from  
swinging, left to right,  
outward and inward,  
you will see me, in my face,  
out of touch, out of the current,  
living in reside, by and by resilient,

being i as breaking out,  
and throwing wide a smile,  
i am now, as my face,  
morphing me to this very identity,  
to the instant,  
i am fragile,  
shattered by motions, then,  
return, to occupy and reside  
my own, self to the pure  
and lace the seed of poisonous flesh,  
corporeal reddish oozing from jade's corner,  
and so, time keeps pressuring in thin air,  
chairs and other furniture move  
from one to one,  
in pace with me,  
we, humdrum machines of master minutiae,  
move and move, and i,  
who is stuck,  
in this what this,  
in what again,  
silently tell the cycle of my very i.



# Mi Vaca Chaka

Skylar Tippetts



# Dream Factory

Sarah Calvo



# Lemon Cakes

## Ashley Parks

It was a mild summer afternoon.  
Bathed in a wash of yellow.  
We ate lemon cakes,  
Your absolute favorite.

As they carted you off into a medical abyss  
You never stopped smiling, never failed to be “ok”  
I remember the lemon cakes.  
The tang of our last tender moment shared together  
Not wrapped in wires or hooked up to breathing machines

The lemon cakes.

The bittersweet beginning, with a moist and decadent end  
Followed by an onslaught of rain that left the world around us  
Hazy. And without you.  
I'll never forget the lemon cakes, as you slowly faded away

Warm, your temperature undulating down as you left  
Cold. As you were enveloped by the Almighty grasp of death  
I'll never forget, oh, I'll never forget  
Those lemon cakes.



Analog  
Maria Barrientos



# Finger Painting

Eliese Donhardt



# Truths

## Aubrey Hutson

When I was eleven years old I stole my mother's razor and shaved off my right eyebrow.

Because when you're eleven years old, it's easy to believe what other people tell you. Especially when those people are a lot older and a lot bigger. Or if those people are boys: all blonde hair and blue eyes and bottles of charm dripping off of their lips like honey. It's easy to believe what boys say when they tell you that "you're beautiful. But-". You want to be beautiful, so you fix the But-. It's like writing prose or tangling words into metaphors: simple.

A perfect smile doesn't include a gap tooth, my dentist told me at age twelve. "Go get yourself some braces," he said.

What some adults don't realize is that children are like sponges: clean until they aren't and absorbent. They cling to words falling out of big mouths, swallowing phrases like sugar cubes. We grow up calling children by name, telling them who they are and what they look like and planting our own ideas inside of their nursery heads. We make their minds up for them and then tell them to ignore angry voices and harsh words. What's the difference between a hateful snub and a loving spanking? They both bite. They both sting.

In second grade, I chopped all of my hair off with safety scissors when the boy I liked started eating lunch with the girl who had a pixie cut.

Comparison is real. Jealousy is real. Resentment is real. Grudges are real. Adults tell you to not measure yourself against the ex, why, and zee of your peers. They tell you that you are unique and authentic and original, but then they assign you a rank, a grade, a number. They assign you a number and then tell you not to define yourself by it.

One Sunday, my brother told me that, when the lighting was just right, he could see my Moustache.

It's funny how you don't even notice certain parts of yourself until someone else points them out. It's also funny how easily others seem to



be able to point out the flaws in you. My mom once told me that “He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones.” I later read on Pinterest that you shouldn’t point out things about someone’s physical appearance if they can’t fix it in under ten seconds.

When I was nine, my best friend asked me why I hadn’t started shaving my legs. “They’re too hairy,” she said.

I started writing stories of beautiful blonde bombshells with smooth legs. I pretended that they were me: that I was the main character... the Leading Actress... the Star. But I had brown hair and hairy legs and a gap tooth and I didn’t fit into society’s narrow idea of what it looks like to be beautiful. So, it wasn’t about me. I wasn’t actually the Star of that story.

There is an article I read in grade school called Survival of the Prettiest: The Mysterious Power of Attractive People. Prettier people get better jobs, make more money, have more children, and have more success finding a spouse. It’s science.

Does that mean that ugly people have worse jobs? Less money? Fewer children? Are they stuck in a cycle of singleness? Or what about the mediocre people? The people who look like everyone else. The people who you watch crossing the street, but the people who don’t get a second look. Do they make a medium salary? Have two kids? Get married at 28 and live in the suburbs?

I broke my wedding ring finger and had to get surgery on it. The bone reformation bumped it up two ring sizes.

When the line is drawn so narrowly, it’s easy for there to be something wrong with just about everything. There are bikini models and fitness models and lip models and leg models and hand models. In Modeling Wisdom’s hand model requirements, the perfect hand has “really smooth skin... fingers are ideally slender and long, with nails that are evenly shaped.” Dr. Sang Kim led a study where he concluded that the ideal pair of lips consisted of “acute angles at the corner of the lip, appropriate ratio of lower to upper lips height, and a defined cupid bow.” There is an example of a perfect version of everything. And if you aren’t a bikini model or a fitness model or a lip model or a leg model or a hand model, it isn’t your everything that is perfect. So, when your wedding ring finger is a size 8 instead of a size 6, it’s no longer perfect, and now neither are you.

My ex-boyfriend told me that he broke up with his previous girlfriend because she was too chubby.

I think it's partly our fault. We let them decide who is pretty and who is skinny and what is "cool" and who is not. We listen to their idea of who to be and don't speak up. We don't tell them that it's wrong. We don't tell them that they're wrong. I've never heard anyone say: "I have acne and bags under my eyes and I think I'm beautiful because of it." I guess I understand because I have acne and I have bags under my eyes and I don't think I'm beautiful because of it.

I've always been insecure of how yellow my teeth look after drinking a mug of coffee.

When was it that you stopped hearing the voices of other people and realized that you were the only one who was screaming inside your head? I honestly can't remember. Twelve? Maybe fourteen? Before I just wasn't good enough for them. I wasn't pretty enough or skinny enough or blonde enough or tan enough or freckly enough. But it was around thirteen years old that I realized that the standards I was failing to measure up to were no longer theirs: they were the ones I was starting to set for myself. You aren't pretty enough or skinny enough or blonde enough or tan enough.

Whenever I look at pictures of myself, I always come to the same conclusion: my face is too round to be beautiful. It's also too square. How can something be too round and not round enough at once?

No one wants the ugly voice inside their head to belong to them. No one wants that weight. It's easier to blame it on that one boy you knew in the second grade or on your brother or the dentist. You can drop the blame and run away from all of them. How do you out-run yourself?

My best friend in the eleventh grade stopped eating lunch because she thought she needed to lose a few pounds. She was thinner than I was.

For a woman who is five feet four inches, a healthy body weight falls anywhere between 110 and 149 pounds. That is a

thirty-nine-pound difference between what is healthy and what is still healthy. Your perfect will look different from her perfect. Your body makes you, you, and there is only one of you. Stop trying to crawl into someone else's skin. Can you remember who you were before the world told you who you should be?

Last June, I looked into the mirror and, for the first time in my life, I was happy.

I no longer have a gap tooth or hairy legs, but I still have long, brown hair and an invisible moustache and two small scars on my wedding ring finger. I'm still the same girl that I was in the second grade, but the voices scream a little softer now. I realized that the words floating around my head weren't as sweet as I remember them to be. His words weren't honey. My words aren't sugar cubes. I know now that they're spice, and that they kick, and that you were already beautiful before he told you. You'll stop listening to the voices, eventually. One day you'll breathe and suddenly realize that you are worth so much more than the words anyone tries to spit out of their mouth.

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Emily Collins



# Sometimes, I Ponder the Nature of Sleep

## Taz Turner

Sometimes, I ponder the nature of sleep.  
When my heart grows faint, I know what it needs.  
Rest, and a moment to be still and reap  
The proceeds of my leisure time's idle deeds.  
Yet, fatigue does not feign monogamy  
With my frame, but seeds my mind's fertile soil  
With lethargy even more potently.  
And wits are no match for long hours of toil.  
But if sleep provides rest to the body  
It seems the brain gains only recreation  
For impulses that seem wild or bawdy.  
Thus, a mind's rest is more... liberation,  
And to doze is less a mental repose  
Than torrents of thought too deep to disclose



# Paper Quilled Mantra Poster

Michele Farren





# I Am

## Megan Bowers

Choose your space  
Cross your legs  
Close your eyes

Deep breaths

In  
Out  
In  
Out  
1  
2  
3  
4

Seconds, minutes, hours pass  
In only a few moments  
Time becomes nothing  
I am calm  
I am here  
I am now  
I am one  
With myself  
With everything

I am only calm  
I am only here  
I am only now  
I am only one

I am Mindful



# The Little Things

Sarah Calvo

The sweet smell of coffee  
brewing in the mornings. Bacon  
sizzling in brown sugar, a warm  
kiss to my lips. The highlight  
of my day. So simple.  
Ripples in puddles of rain,  
able to sign as a second language.  
Two sisters fighting over ice cream  
like Eliza and I used to. An easy childhood  
no one else seems to have had.  
The great egret dining on his buffet  
of insects every time the rain  
floods the park. The fresh ink  
on my skin, reminding me  
of who I should be. A grey bird  
perched on my shoulder.  
His head gently leaning against  
my cheek. Graceful creature.  
I speak Parsaltongue too.  
Birds and snakes can't get  
enough of me. I talk to the  
living and the dead. Vultures  
feasting on roadkill in the middle  
of the street. Five finger  
discount for a rich boy. An actor.  
Someone get his autograph for me.  
Fame a lustful fantasy. Let me  
be in a director's chair telling stars  
how bright they're supposed to shine.  
Move their bodies like perfect  
marionettes, next to my broken manikin.  
I'm not complaining, just stating.  
That my scars were able  
to forgive me and heal. Death  
such a mystery when I bleed.  
The letters Caleigh still writes  
to me, after all these years.  
Wine & fireplaces. Having someone

*continued, no stanza break*

to kiss inside or outside  
of the closet. Timberland boots  
and Prada heels. Smooth skin.  
The coffee shop that knows my usual.  
Typewriters singing a note after a line  
of a love letter. Stephen King—  
the man I look up to and admire, being  
a horror fanatic and writer. Time's  
up. #metoo #whydidittakesolong?  
The big Texas sky painted  
with strokes of oranges, purples, & pinks.  
Those bright blue eyes. The smell of rosewood  
around my neck. Mala beads.  
Ukes and flutes. A warm bath with bombs  
bubbling purple. Believing conspiracies.  
Elvis. Grey feathers. Polaroid photos.



# Paris At Night

Jenae Gerton







# Where Bugs Twinkled and Stars Flew

## Abigail Jennings

Susan Beckett's doctors at MD Anderson promoted living in the country where each breath of air in your lungs was fresh as the dewy sunrise, not "unhealthy for sensitive groups" as the Houston Chronicle rated the city air. What those doctors forgot to mention was something more immediately apparent upon arrival than the lack of smog. Past the sprawling suburbs, the rolling pastures were alive, not just with picturesque bluebonnets like the photos. The entire world seemed to pulse and crawl with overgrown vegetation, rampant insects, and four-legged beasts.

Ellen Beckett held tightly to the book she and her mother would start at the new house and eyed this new place as her father rumbled them down the gravel driveway in the minivan. The farmhouse was old, practically a historic monument except that the roofline was as disjointed as a child's construction from so many add-ons. On a book cover, Ellen might have called it charming, but the wild surroundings didn't allow that. Weeds grew in abundance, right up to the white siding, filling the shady areas between the trees with yet more habitat for whatever kind of creature was inclined to take up residence. And outside the sagging strings of wire fencing that attempted to create a boundary between the yard and the pastures, there were cows. Not the pretty white and black kind on milk jugs. These were all black, and they loitered under a clump of juniper trees opening and closing their jaws, chewing on nothing it seemed, and flicking their long tails in vain at flies that flocked to their backs. Then one of them lifted its tail and peed like a garden hose, all the while chewing away.

The flinging and pinging of gravel on the underside of the car ceased as Mr. Beckett pulled to a stop on a patch of broken-up concrete in front of the sheet metal garage.

"Well, here we are!" he said in a jolly voice. He gave his wife's hand a warm squeeze to wake her.

Ellen rested her hand on the door handle. Until she opened it, she was safe in a travel capsule out of her old world where their neighbors had impromptu block parties with hopscotch, rainbow popsicles, and tag in the sprinklers set up on the sidewalk, and where the library was only two blocks away, so close she was allowed to walk there by herself. Ellen could still smell the books – the sharp, musty perfume of yellowed library pages, comforting like an old teddy bear.

Ellen slowly slid open the door, and the lingering book scent was replaced by the scent of a fresh dewy sunrise - the hot, mid-summer breath of dry grass and cow manure. She crawled out of the car, and a burr pricked her sandaled foot while a multitude of grasshoppers sprang at her like popcorn from the scraggly grasses. She froze. Another grasshopper flew under her ruffle skirt and whacked the back of her thigh, and a shriek threatened to sound the alarm to all of Austin county, but it stuck in her throat as her mother's eyes twinkled in a smile. "They won't hurt you." Her mother held out her hand, and they headed up the porch steps to explore their new house.

That evening, Ellen curled up next to her mom on the couch, careful not to lean on her too hard, and followed along as her mom read from *The Secret Garden*. The living room was brightly lit against the rural night and, her mom's voice modulated distinctly for each character. It was almost like being back home in the townhouse.

"Please just one more chapter," Ellen pleaded.

Mrs. Beckett coughed lightly, placed an index card between the pages, and kissed her daughter on the cheek. "Not tonight. We have a big day unpacking tomorrow. Go get ready for bed. I'll come up in a minute."

Ellen came down for breakfast in the morning to find a farm girl outfit lying on the kitchen table. It wasn't the pretty kind the American Girl dolls wore with a calico dress and a bonnet, but the modern, practical kind, with black rubber boots, jeans, and a belt. The belt had a pink stripe at least. Her dad stood with his hands on the back of the chair, dressed in his office clothes, though he now worked from home. He smelled freshly of shaving cream and emanated sheepish pride.

"If you tuck the jeans into the boots, the grasshoppers and burrs won't be able to get you when you go out in the pasture. My friend back at the office in Houston said every farm kid needs boots and jeans."

"Thanks, Dad," Ellen said.

Ellen gave him a hug, leaning her head on his strong, solid chest so he wouldn't see the intense doubt that wanted to show itself on her face. Go out in the pasture with those giant cows and all their cow pies in various states of freshness? Was he kidding? she thought.

And so, the boots were pushed to the darkest corner under her bed and the jeans and belt stayed stuffed away at the back of the dresser all summer long. It was really too hot to go play outside, anyway. For Ellen, summer was for reading, going to the pool in town, and trying to beat her parents in Scrabble. This summer, the trips to MD Anderson got in the way of these activities. The drive into Houston was fun since they all listened to music, drowning out the cd as they sang along. In the hospital waiting room, Ellen tried to read, but it wasn't the same as being curled up on her rug or in the corner of the library. The hospital smell overpowered the book page perfume, and she was surrounded by sick people and their families hoping for a cure, and distracted thinking about her mother getting medicine that made her feel worse instead of better. When Mrs. Beckett felt sick in the car back to the country, so did Ellen. Ellen blamed it on reading in the car, but even when she just looked out the window and counted the oil pumps in the fields, worry made her stomach feel a little funny.

Mr. and Mrs. Beckett were happy when she started 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Travis Elementary at the end of August and no longer accompanied them on the visits to the hospital. Even though Mrs. Beckett treasured the time in the car singing together, she didn't like Ellen to be cooped up for half the day in a car and a hospital waiting room, and Mr. Beckett didn't like Ellen to see her mother sick after the medicine.

But when Ellen stayed home, the treatment afternoons were lonely. After school, the school bus dropped her off at the end of the long driveway to spend the rest of the afternoon alone until her parents came home just in time to make dinner. The peaceful hours for reading were nice, but reading for so many hours at a time tended to leave her in daze, and she was soon taking home books she had already read from the small collection at the school library. Besides, the book she really wanted to finish was Heidi, the one she and her mother were now reading together. It would have been cheating, though, to read ahead without her mom. Some days, she would stand at the living room window that faced the water trough under the big Hackberry tree and contemplate the cows. They often stood at the fence making uncivilized, drawn-out grunts while calves butted their mothers' udders with their little heads and then sucked fervently. Sometimes it seemed as if the cows could see her through the window and were trying to read her with their deep, dark eyes. This relationship had little likelihood of developing further because she and the cows were not, and had no intention of being, on speaking terms.

Ellen did quickly discover one nice thing about the country. Her mother was happy there. She carried on about the benefits of fresh air and looked forward to the day when she would be strong enough to take Ellen to explore the farthest corners of the property, taking the cow paths across the acres of pasture to where the creek cut through and the trees were rich and tall. When the bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush bloomed, they would go out in the hayfield and pick enough little bouquets to fill the house with spring. One day when she wasn't so tired at night, they would lie on a blanket out on the grass and look for constellations and shooting stars.

On treatment days, Mrs. Beckett liked to spend the evening on the porch to "get some outside time," and Ellen and her father had found a rocking chair at the antique store in town as a surprise for her. One warm fall evening on the porch, her mother tipped herself calmly back and forth with a slight movement of her foot, Ellen's father replied to emails, and Ellen sat on the ledge and held the book discreetly beside her leg and studied her mother's face to determine if she was up to reading. Mrs. Beckett looked worn out more than usual, pale and shadowy. It might just have been the poor lighting from the yellow porch lamp with moths attacking it or the gray cast from approaching storm clouds, but a tightness in Ellen's chest and shoulders kept her from pleading for just one chapter.

Something in between the trees caught her attention. "What was that?" Ellen said, pointing out into the dusky yard.

Mr. Beckett looked up from his laptop with a jolt. "Where? I don't see anything."

Ellen lowered her hand. It had been a little light, but it had disappeared. Then a few feet to the left, there it was again, blinking in the air like magic, then two more on the other side of the tree.

Mrs. Beckett sat up in the rocking chair, halting the back and forth motion. She lit up like one of the magical lights. "They're lightning bugs. They blink to find each other in the dark. If you catch one and cup it in your hand, you can watch it light up."

Ah. Bug in the hand, Ellen thought. You could just as easily watch them light up in the yard. But her mother was looking at her with a sort of expectancy. "I used to catch one and make a wish, and if it blinked three times in my hand, my wish might come true." She laid her head back

and started the rocking again with the tiny foot motion. Ellen's forehead wrinkled as her dislike of the abundant bugs and her love for her mom collided like the fronts of the approaching thunderstorm. She swung her legs, kicking against the siding with her hand on Heidi until Mr. Beckett closed his computer and said that it was time for his lovely wife and daughter to get some sleep.

That night the rained pounded on the roof and the windows. It soaked deep into the dry soil and revived the shriveled seeds and roots waiting for spring showers.

In the morning, it was over, and the sun washed over the dewy fields and flooded Ellen's room with vaporized gold. Ellen rolled over to look out the window at the light waking up the wild grasses that prospered in the hayfield. Pink and blue cotton candy clouds blossomed above it. Ellen wondered if this was like Heidi's magical sunset in the Alps. She rubbed her eyes and hurried to get ready for school.

That afternoon, Ellen climbed out of the school bus, waved to the driver, and headed down the driveway to her empty house. As was her habit, she studied the ground beneath her feet as she walked to make sure to step on the patches of the driveway that had the densest concentration of gravel. A pair of butterflies fluttered right past her downcast face, startling her. It was the beginning of October, not the season for butterflies. She looked up and followed their bright, flapping wings as they flew from a newly sprouted little bunch of wildflowers beside the driveway to the hayfield across the road where the entire field had blossomed in color, confused by the fall showers. Ellen grinned in spite of herself. Mom will be so excited, she thought. When her mother got home, they could go pick the bouquets she had been talking about.

When Mrs. Beckett got home, she went straight to bed. Ellen crept into her mother's room and sat beside her on the bed to tell her about school and the strange butterflies and flowers.

"Some of the butterflies were blue and purple. They were about this big. Then there were some really tiny white ones, and I saw some big orange and black ones."

Mrs. Beckett smiled contentedly and nodded to show her daughter that she was listening, though her eyes were closed. "I saw the flowers. We can go pick bouquets this evening before it gets dry and brown

again. Just let me rest for a couple minutes.” Then Ellen’s father came to get Ellen to help him make dinner.

Mrs. Beckett’s nap lasted longer than a couple of minutes. After dinner and dishes, Ellen kept tiptoeing up to her mother’s door to see if she had woken up yet. The sun was setting, and time was running out.

“Ellen, do you need something?” Mr. Beckett asked from behind the Wall Street Journal, after observing several of the stealthy trips to bedroom door.

Ellen shook her head and went up to her room. She sat on her bed and looked out the window. The wildflower field was a fiery orange now, with long shadows stretching across it from the house, trees, and fence posts.

Ellen’s door opened with the soft touch reserved for mothers, and Mrs. Beckett came in. She was out of breath from the stairs, but her eyes were sparkling. “Are you ready to go pick some flowers?” she said.

Ellen whipped around in ecstasy and hopped off her bed. She crouched down and wiggled underneath it. From behind a cardboard model of the solar system she had made for a school project, she pulled out the rubber boots. She slipped them on and tried in vain not to clomp down the stairs like an elephant as she followed her mother outside. The grass and dirt cushioned their steps, and out in the hayfield where the prospering grasses and flowers were protected from the ever-munching cattle, the red-orange heads of Indian paintbrush, pink primrose and thistle parted around her boots. When Mrs. Beckett and Ellen each held as big a bouquet as they could carry, they waded back through the rustling sea of colors and arranged the assortment of stalky and delicate flowers in half a dozen narrow juice glasses around the house. They only lasted a day or so, but in Ellen’s memory, they lasted a long time.

At breakfast one morning, Ellen studied the back of the newspaper as her dad read across from her. Total lunar eclipse will coincide with a meteor shower for the first time in nearly half a century.

Mrs. Beckett set her mug of tea on the table, caught Ellen’s eye, and gestured to the black and white picture of an eclipsed moon. “Honey,” she said to her husband. “Can I see the back of that?”

"Yeah, there, on your paper," Ellen directed him.

Mrs. Beckett said, "There's going to be a special eclipse."

He flipped it over. "Especially good visibility in rural areas. Watch the moon turn orange, and expect to see dozens of shooting stars. It's on November 2, in three weeks exactly."

Mrs. Beckett sipped her tea with a hovering smile of anticipation. "This is our perfect opportunity for stargazing."

In three weeks exactly, Ellen called up the stairs to her parents for the second time not to forget to come out, put on the boots, jeans, belt, and a jacket, and slipped out into the night. She trekked across the yard toward the haybale structure by the fence until she could see the full moon rising behind the silhouette of the barn. A rusty tint had begun to creep across its face. Ellen sat on the lowest rectangular haybale, sweet smelling like Heidi's mattress of hay. What was a meteor shower exactly? she wondered. Would it be like a firework? She hugged her knees to her chest, and tilted her head back to see the stars pop out of the deep, indigo-black dome until light flooding the porch temporarily ruined her night vision. Her father closed the door behind him, restoring the night, and glided across the dark turf to join her.

"Look, Dad. The eclipse is starting." She kept her eyes fixed on the sky to detect shooting stars as the moon's light disappeared to let them burst in the darkness. In the last few minutes, the Earth's shadow had visibly progressed in its path across the moon, and only a pearly sliver remained. "There's one! I saw a shooting star!" She was practically glowing from within, as if the trail of star dust had illuminated something inside her. Another meteor arced across the sky. "That's two! Right in a row! Did you see? Where's Mom? She needs to come see!"

Mr. Beckett had not seen. His eyes were not fixed on the stars, but rather, on his daughter's face. "She's tired... in bed. It seems like... we think..." he trailed off.

Ellen turned sharply. "Is she okay?"

Mr. Beckett clasped his hands together. This time when he spoke his voice was clear and deep. "Ellen, it's hard for the doctors to tell if the air here has had a positive effect, and the long drive is hard on Mom."



Ellen studied the hay shining silver in the moon light, but she was listening. For the topic of the cancers in her mother's lungs, her ears had a special sensitivity. "At this point, well, all three of us are learning to be flexible, right? And we've decided it will probably be best if we don't have a long commute for her treatment. So, we are going back home. . . to the city."

Ellen turned her gaze back to the heavens even though she was no longer seeing the spectacle. Otherwise, her face might follow its tendency to reveal too much. Why hadn't it worked, living here? she thought. The flowers and the lightning bugs and the big skies and everything, they seemed perfect for making her mother better. If all that couldn't heal her mother, what would?

"I'm sorry about all this, Ellen," her father said and gave her a hug. "You're a great sport and a great kid, and I love you." He stood on stiff legs to go back inside. The moon was fully eclipsed, but Ellen was pretty sure he hadn't noticed.

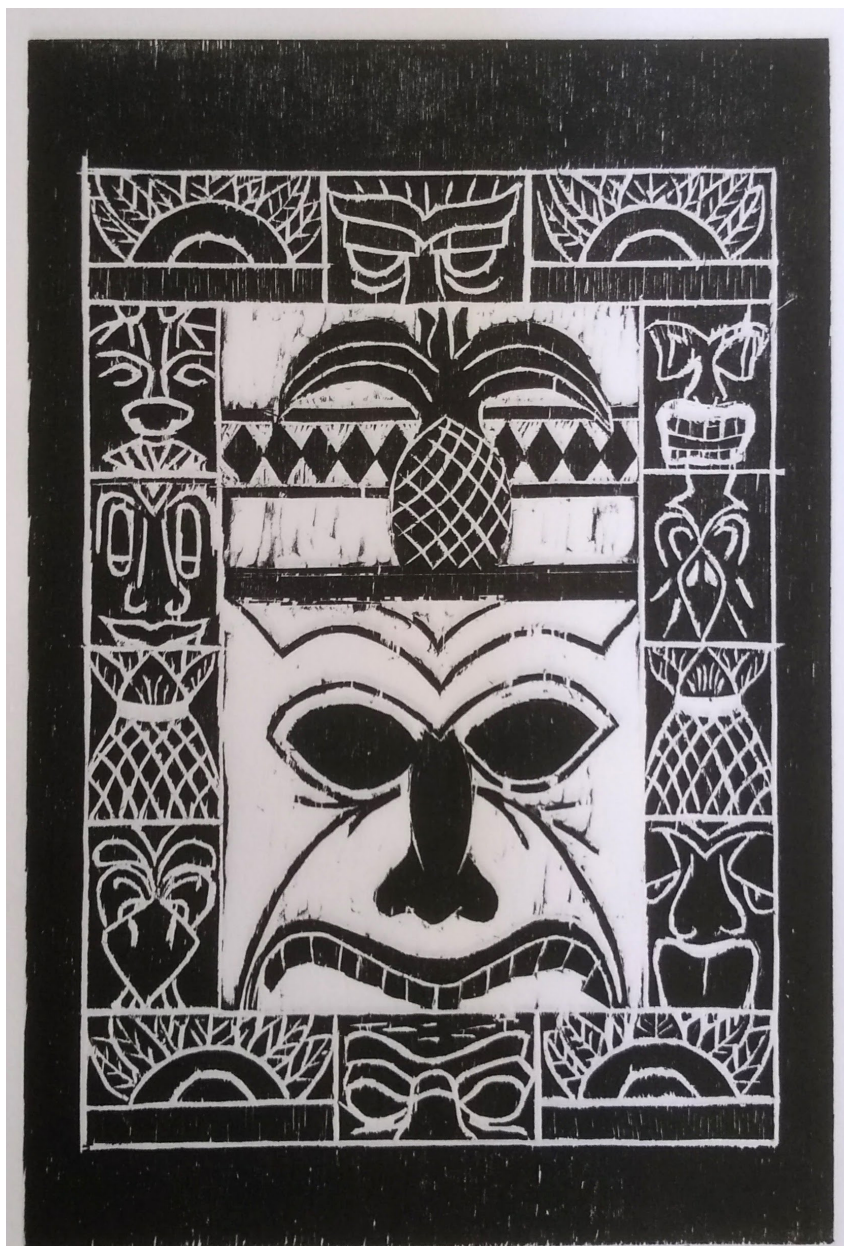
A cow mooed by the fence, a fitting response, she thought. Her thoughts wandered. They swirled in vortexes of worry like blackout curtains, and she huddled tight, head on her knees to quiet the feeling of small, repeated punches in her stomach. Then slowly, these curtains fell away around a moonlit clearing in the Hill Country, where the cows mooed, the insects chirped, the grasses whispered, and fluttering fingers of the fall breeze tried to calm her fears, laying their tips on her arms, bringing comfort from the expanse of the world they had touched and witnessed. Her mind journeyed to her mother inside, sleeping as if she could never sleep enough.

For a long time, though, Ellen stayed there watching for a third shooting star. It didn't come, or if it did, it was blurred into the other swimming streaks of stars. Wobbly all over, she finally rose, and the breeze and the crickets swelled in response. With each footstep, the grass and earth responded with firmness, as if with their support she could not fall. With her hand on the old doorknob, she paused to look back out over the wild, shadowy pastures. She started as a tiny light blinked beside her on the porch. Ellen reached her hand out toward where it had melted into the darkness. The lightning bug flickered again, and with a swift gentle motion, Ellen cupped it in her hand and watched it blink before it snuck out through the cracks in her fingers. It flew away to its home among the hackberry trees, and Ellen finally pulled herself away from what she would soon be leaving and slipped inside, softly closing the door on the rural night. Over

the past months, though, the rolling pastures and the cows, the windblown hay, and the sunsets, it had all already imprinted itself on her, and would not be staying behind at all.

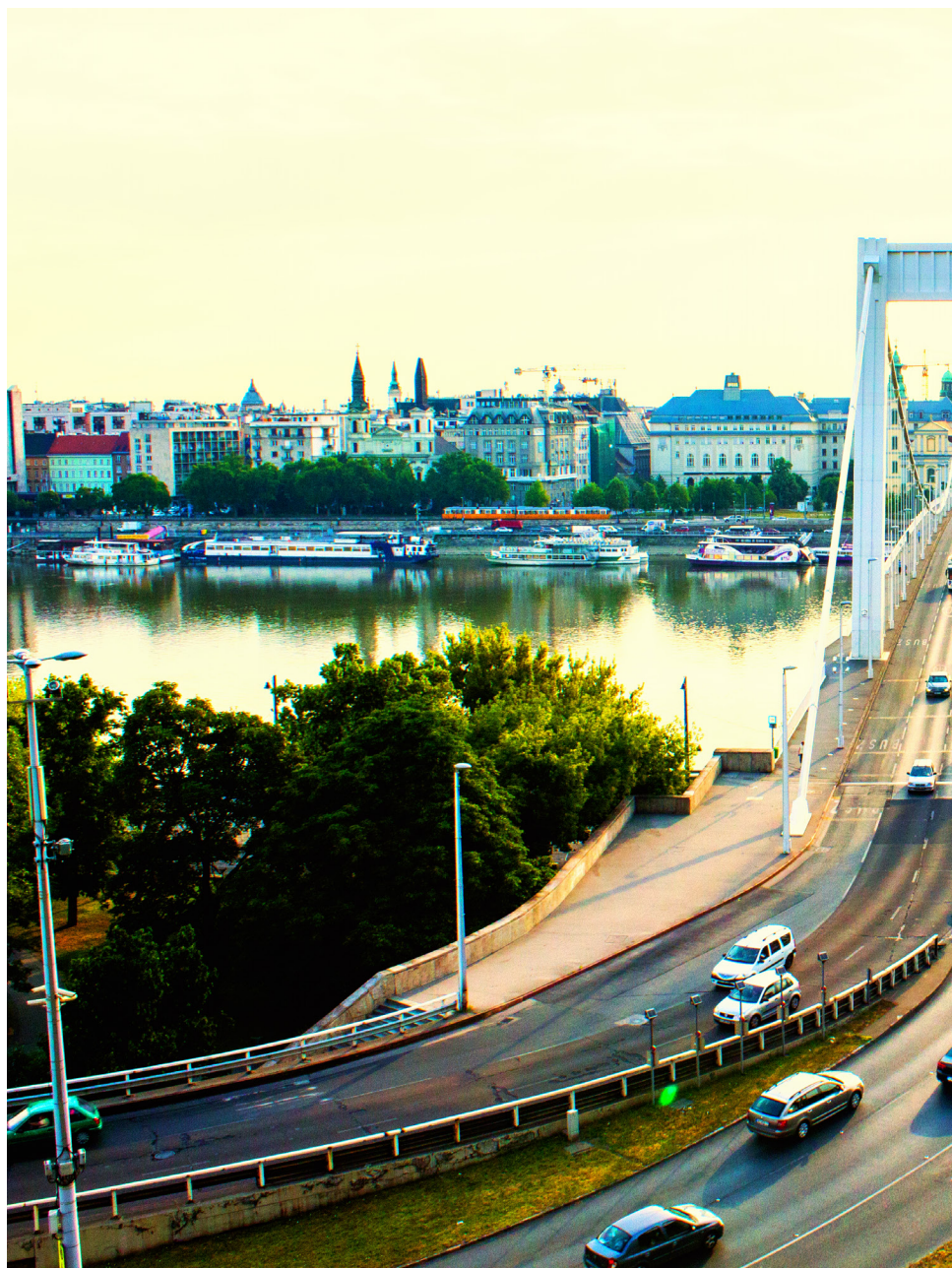
# Good Vibes

Nathania Davis



# Sunrise in Budapest, Hungary

Jasmine Shoureh







# Alone

Jenae Gerton









# Third Times the Charm

## Sadie Scott Martinson

First, Second, third time's the charm.  
Try and try again, where's the harm?  
You stated your proposition over and over as we walked home, arm in arm

My legs were covered, my chest unexposed,  
Not that it matters, because I said No

Testing the waters by touching me once, I pardoned your hand  
You were feeling out the situation,  
That, I can understand  
But I let you know where not to go  
By saying No

And maybe the second time was because of the wine  
And the beer you drank throughout the night  
I again push you off, this time with all of my might.  
Reminding you of my plight  
But to make it clear, I gave word to your ear  
Once more, just like before, I said No

Yet still, your hands I pardoned

But the third time wasn't the same  
This time, you spared no shame  
Below my garments you plunged your fingers  
Despite my objections, you let them linger  
You knew where not to go  
I begged you again, I was saying No

I'm not sure if you thought I'd cave  
Or my passionate desires could I not stave  
Nonetheless, the third time wasn't the charm  
And I'm the one left with the harm

# Cinderella

## Nathan Ching

the waves come after midnight

— Lorde

The dress I wore was death-black.

Absolutely bubonic.

Your maraschino lips,

red like Vodka Cranberry.

Red like my face.

When you looked at me  
my head carouseled.

Like spinning teacups.

Like spirits flushed down the drain.

Drunk. Gay drunk. Don't  
worry baby, it's only natural.

Natural or chemical?

You tell me, I can't

tell the difference...

Like ethanol. Will you be

my New Year's kiss?

2:47am. It's freezing

in the backyard. Missed

the fireworks, the sky

cloaked in haze. Who are you

and what did you do

with the fire? You don't

remember my name?

There's something missing,

and I can't put my finger

on it. There's something missing

I can't get back.

In real life, everybody is fake  
as eyelashes.

We keep saying,

"New Year, new me."

*continued, stanza break*

If I repeat it  
enough times,  
is it a promise?

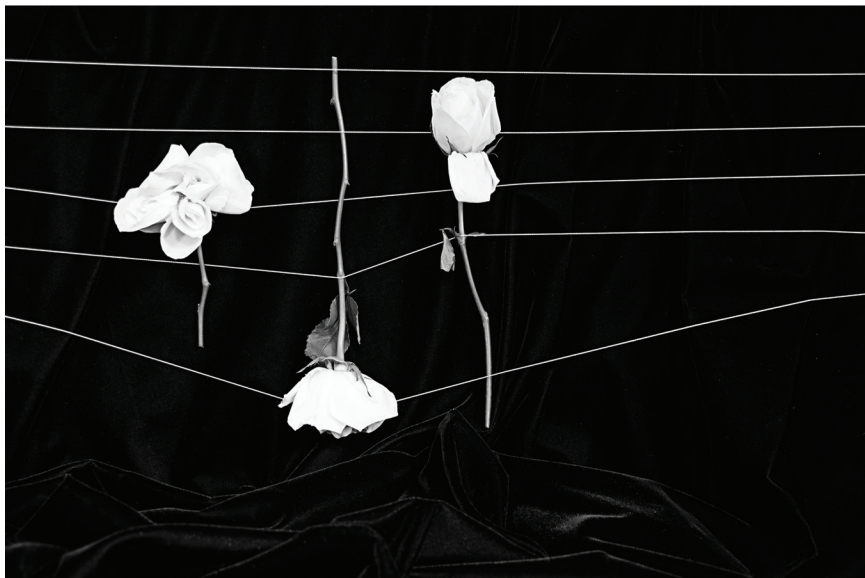
# Not Luxury, Just Fashion

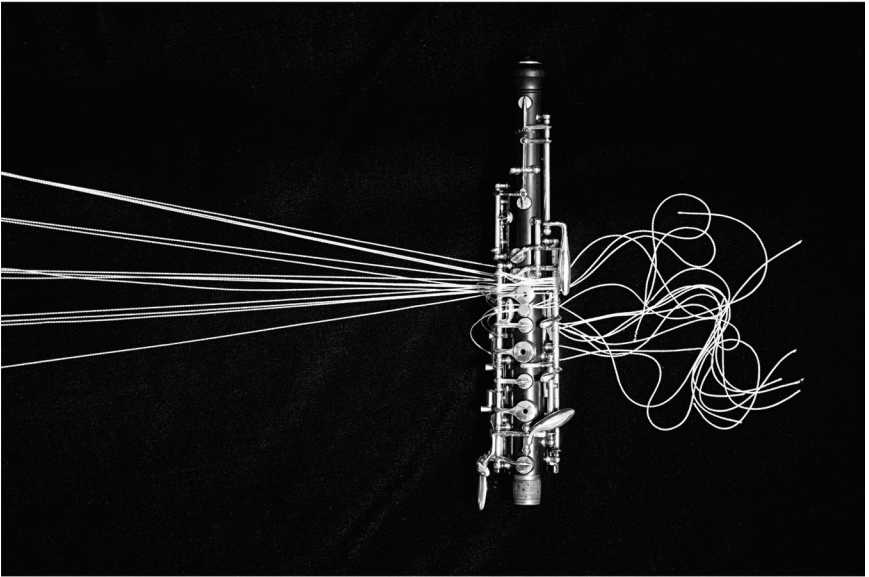
Stephen Flores



# Complex Inversion

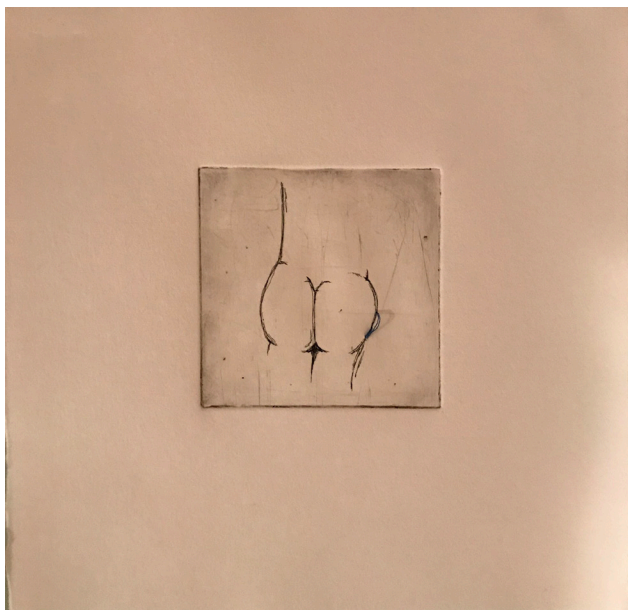
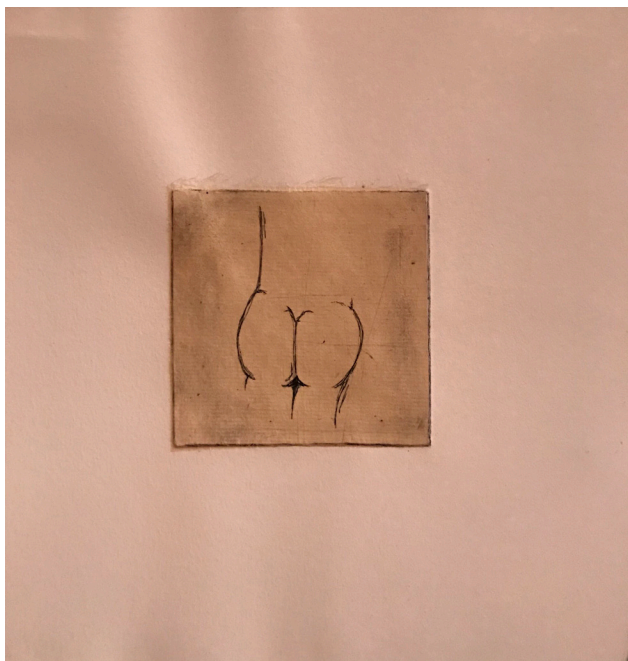
Michele Farren





# Cheeky

Reagan Sheffield





# Chapters of Us

## Olivia Chambers

Open book,  
Flip page,  
Read.

You are captivated by the simple prose in chapter one,  
Fascinated by the mysteries just waiting to be unraveled.  
You neglected the prologue all together.  
Thought you knew enough to jump right in.

You are transfixed by the character development in chapter two,  
Engrossed in every trait and attribute of the fair protagonist.  
You overlooked the raw truth entirely.  
Thought she was a simple fairy tale, prim and proper.

You are immersed in the love connections of chapter three,  
Spellbound by every phrase and clause that jumps off the page.  
You declared you would never set the book down.  
Thought you finally found your favorite novel.

You are confused by the calamity in chapter four,  
Displeased by the perfect protagonist having flaws.  
You continued to read on though,  
Thought something special still lied on these pages.

You are frustrated by the confusion in chapter five,  
Unsatisfied with the once treasured tale.  
You set the book down.  
Thought there were better things to waste your time on.

You were too lazy to read on to chapters untouched,  
Filled with all the answers and adventures one could dream of.  
You never finished the book.  
Decided that novels weren't really your thing.

Unopened mystery  
Turned favorite story  
Turned abandoned narrative.  
And even though you say you aren't a reader,  
I'll always be the book you wish you finished.

# In the Wee Hours

## Wellington Owen

Should you have waded out  
into the lake at 3:00 in the morning?  
No. Definitely not. But you walked in  
anyway, descending through  
Muddy, murky water.

In the speckled starlight  
and the round moonlight  
Your wake shimmered,  
a liquid crescent breaking  
the algae-strewn surface.

Under the veil of water  
and plant life, you glided  
Lithe and secure as a seal  
at sea, startling awake  
Sleeping minnows and shiners.

Emerging like the Lady  
of the Lake, pond water glistening  
down your back, you laughed aloud,  
Duckweed caught in your hair,  
in your beard, in  
Your teeth.

# Simple Measures for Desperate Times

Paige Poe

When the world sullies your soul,  
Gather the grass stained knees, sweaty half-moons  
Down to the river Lethe and scrub  
Until the swirling waters erase your pain.

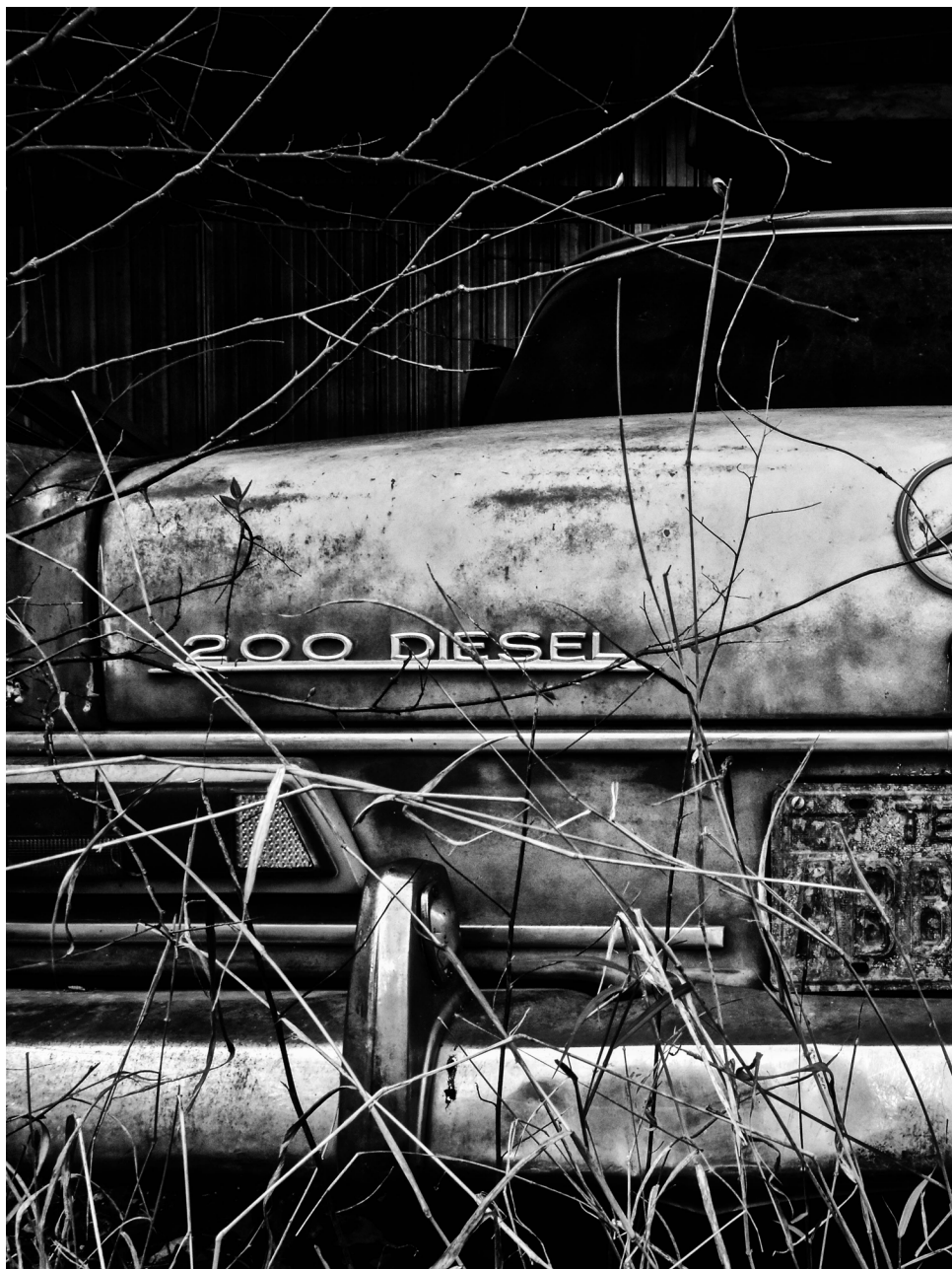
Find an open field. Stretch out your heart strings.  
Pin up the soaking, ragged edges and watch them  
Billow with each heavy breath, drying  
In the morning glow,  
under a cornflower sky.

Your worries will rise with the butterflies  
And recycle someday as rain, falling into  
Your curiously outstretched palms.  
As you fold, tucking arms under body, sleeve to sleeve,  
Try not to think about the horror beyond  
The chore's horizon, the circle of pain  
That brought you, kneeling, to the river's lip.

Repeat as often as needed.

# Papa's Ride

Colton Pittman





# The Truth about Wolfine

Raul Faraj

Science Meets Fiction Winner

Here I am. Alone in the woods. Well, in what's left of them. Five days have passed since I've had a single bite in my mouth; imagine how much time without going to the bathroom. My stomach is emptier than my wallet and I have come to believe it has begun to learn how to talk. My muscles are debilitating and my fur is starting to fall off. Ever since humans started cutting the trees near my crib all the food that I would typically eat, the rabbits, squirrels, deer's, moose, bison's, and goats, are either dying or fleeing away. I can no longer hear the cuckoo roller family that served as my alarm to start the day, nor the woodpecker who would all day peck in trees and have larvae as dessert. I can no longer inhale the same pure oxygen that the cedar trees provided me with. Now, I no longer have the shady rainforest that protected my sleep from the beaming 7am rays of sun that tend to come uninvited into my home. Everything has negatively changed in the last few weeks. The only thing that has been consistent is my hunger that increases every day, like a dug up hole that only gets deeper. I hope this will finally end today.

Somewhere in the woods the birds carried the message, dejectedly chirping through the newly naked tree branches about how food will be taken to an old lady who lives nearby. My plan is to arrive at her house and beg her for some bread. I'll talk to her, tell her my story and kindly ask for some food. She will feel guilty for all that the humans have done to my community and I will finally have something to digest and hopefully later eject. If she is not there, I will sneak in without doing any mess and grab a little of food. I don't think that it could affect her.

I am almost there. My mouth is watering. I can almost taste the food and feel the bread crumbs dissemble in my mouth as I take a bite from a hearty brown loaf, toasted on the outside, mushy on the inside, just how I like it. From afar I see the old lady's red brick house, with a worn out façade. The garden surrounding it is untidy and the stale white wood fence protecting the property has begun to deteriorate from the edges. I sneak in by the back of the property where there are no windows to keep someone from spotting me or possibly shoot me. As I get close to the house I realize that the door is half way open. This probably means that no one is home. I steadily enter one paw at a time, as hungry as a wolf but as quiet as a mouse.

Silence overpowers the place. I believe no one is home. I can see old brown pictures frames with pictures of a young couple covering the beige, crumbly walls. Some not so nice sofas with fruit covers that seem to be from the 1800's are standing in the living room next to a fireplace that



was probably turned off a while ago. I can feel my heart trying to make its way out of my chest. Every step I take my legs tremble. It requires a lot of effort for me to take a single breath. This is my first time in a human's house. Where the hell do they keep their food? I already have searched under the tables, chairs, and beside the fire place.

Oh! How I did not realize it before! They store their food under the sofas! That is why they have the covers with images of fruits. Here I go! Food, long time no see!

I walk towards the multicolor sofa and I lift the cushion. The next thing I see is a cloud of dust coming directly at my face but no food under the cushion. My nose starts itching and. . . Achooooo!

My heart has stopped, completely frozen. I can't even move a finger or even blink. If my imagination is not tricking me I think I hear something moving behind that door. It slowly starts to open and I see the tiniest bit of what seems to be my greatest enemy. An old lady holding a 35M rifle standing in the middle of the doorway aiming directly at me. My time has come, Wolfine out. I close my eyes and lift up my paws. Chk chk. She charges the rifle. Click. No boom. As soon as I realized that life had given me a second opportunity I jump towards her and knock her down. My plan is to tie her up and take some of her food and then untie her. I start searching throughout the house for something to eat. I see her little Chihuahua but that cannot even be considered an appetizer.

Then I finally find heaven. A little room filled with all kinds of food. I have been already five minutes trying to choose what to start of devouring. Should I eat the chocolate chips? Or should I eat the canned food she has?

I will start by eating some healthy vegetables. I am putting a carrot in my mouth when suddenly someone knocks on the door. I drop everything I had in my hands I run as fast as I can to hide the old lady in the closet. I will hide her in the closet and undress her to use her cloth. Maybe I will be able to hide my identity and impersonated as the old lady. I put the dress on and with a loud but feminine voice I tell the person to come in. Then a little girl wearing red hood entered the bedroom.

I think you already know what happens next.



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DUST OF EVERYDAY  
LIFE.”

– Pablo Picasso