BRING ON THE BUZZARDS

2011/2012 ISSUE
Outraged at his disobedience,
the gods banished Prometheus
to a life of agony.

But Prometheus knew he'd done right
and cried out from his chains,
"Bring on the Buzzards!"

Spark!

Jeriann Watkins and Bethany Quesnell

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INVITATION TO BRING ON THE BUZZARDS:

Every year, the staff of The Promethean has the same goals. We want to create a bold journal full of quality literature and artwork. We want to push the limits of both our contributors and our readers. We want to create a memorable journal that Concordia University-Portland can be proud of.

This year, we decided to accomplish these goals by going back to our roots. We decided that we would use the story of Prometheus, our journal's namesake, as our inspiration. Prometheus was a god who saw that humans needed fire to survive. Against the will of the other gods, he shared fire with humanity. As punishment, he was chained to a rock and had to endure having his liver eaten by buzzards. Each day his liver grew back; each night the buzzards returned. We, like Prometheus, would have the courage to give the people what they needed - powerful, honest literature - and utter a shout of "Bring on the Buzzards!" to any naysayers who tried to stop us.

It has become tradition for The Promethean to have an annual writing contest. For our theme this year, we again stuck with the Prometheus legend. We chose "Spark" and told students that they could do with that what they would. We also continued the trend of the last few years by adding a challenge: writers could use only 500 words to craft their contest entry. This limit required writers to choose their words carefully, and work hard to craft a complete scene in a short amount of space. We were not disappointed. We received many submissions to our contest, all of which were well crafted.

We chose as our judge Concordia and Promethean alumnus Vanessa Wendland. All of the submissions Vanessa received were written with serious thought and intention behind them. The top three submissions received cash prizes as well as publication in this year's journal. Three honorable mentions are also published in the journal. The contest winning stories are labeled as such, and the top three have a short paragraph from our judge, explaining the merit she found in the work.

As managing editor and a senior at Concordia, this edition of The Promethean holds a special place in my heart. I have been on the staff for four years and have seen many pieces come to our editors. This year we received more submissions from a larger variety of students than in previous years. Many of these pieces speak directly to either our journal or contest theme. The fact that we are reaching out to more students, inspiring them not only to write, but to have the courage to submit their writing gives the editor part of me great joy. For those who say that technology is killing literature, I invite them to read our journal, or any collection of writing from today's generation, and take hope that the fire of literature is still burning bright.

I want to thank my staff for being so amazing, especially with the onslaught of last minute submissions. The fact we were able to continue having in-depth discussions under such time constraints makes me proud to be a Concordia student. This year, a large portion of the writing center staff served as editors, which led to a focus on making each piece the best it could be. This journal also wouldn't be what it is without our wonderful advisor, Dr. Kim Knutsen or the support of the other faculty and staff at Concordia.

With that, I present to you the 2011/2012 edition of The Promethean: Bring on the Buzzards.

Jeriann Watkins,
Managing Editor
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The Man With the Pen

Zeke Fetrow

He sits in his chair, the ink from his pen dripping down across the page.
Truly dripping, a river of black running from the page to the desk.
From the desk to the floor.
The ink should be a river where all the words blossom into bright yellows and blues.
Tall trees, lush fields, and wild daisies all breach the ground where the river runs,
A majestic life bringing stream of water.
The water makes the artist’s garden grow, but the man has only ink.
The man with the pen sits in his chair.
Praying for water.
No one can force the pen to flood his page.
So the man must wait for his thoughts, his ink, to turn to water.
Until then, he is like all the other men sitting in their chairs, dripping black ink on everyone else’s garden.
Destroying the soil and polluting life for those whose pens have turned to fountains.
The man sits in his chair, waiting, while he drowns in his own ink.

Flies

Jacquelyn Anderson

There is something about raw meat that has always appealed to Linda. She has stood for ten minutes chilling internally in the deli department at the grocery store. The buzzing of florescent light bulbs acts as soundtrack for her deliberation. Surveying the chunks of dead animals displayed for the hungry shopper, she is like Goldilocks. This one is too fat, this one is too lean, but this one is just right. Frank has gained 50 pounds in the last five years and felt heavy as of late, so Linda adds lean cut steaks, crisp heads of broccoli, slightly soggy carrots, and a red box of brown rice to her cart.

As she scans her purchases, oily blood drips onto the conveyor belt from her grade-A Oregon beef which she realizes is improperly packaged. Linda knows how hard it is to get out a bloodstain. Mesmerized by the cyclical motion of the rubber conveyor in the checkout line, she watches the oily spot pass by her over and over again. Lost in the dark stain, Linda snaps back into reality as a fly buzzes too close to her ear. She swats it away, shocked by the cashier’s too loud voice and whooshing sound of her credit card swiping in the machine. Her thoughts retreat from the din of the real world as the wary cashier stares at something just below Linda’s left eye.

Packing the trunk of her tan librarian-dependable Accord, Linda retreats into its safe cocoon in a hurry. The heavy Oregon drops beat down on her metal roof and Linda is hypnotized by the calming effects of a steady rain. She spends the drive home immersing herself in the smells of her purchases, envisioning the dinner she will make for her husband. As she looks into her rearview mirror at the shiny Hummer following too close, Linda sees her face for the first time in what feels like forever. The swelling has diminished and she can open her left eye once again; the colors of her bruising have been brilliant this time. Usually her black eyes fade from eggplant to a soft baby pink, but this time they remain a rotten green. Linda’s face is the same color as a hamburger patty she once found in the back of her crisper drawer. Frank had gone out of town for the weekend, so Linda decided to clean out the refrigerator. She had gotten rid of all the
expired food, but she left the moldy hamburger patty sitting right on top of Frank's box of Coors Banquets. It was beautiful. The flies had laid their eggs in the rotten meat, and small white wiggling worms had begun to make the mashed up dead cow their home. Frank hadn't thought it was beautiful like Linda had.

In grade school, Linda had learned that flies only live for 24 hours. She had thought a lot about flies in her ten years married to Frank. Their buzzing was comforting, knowing that something inside her house was alive. There were perfect days when Linda wished she only lived for 24 hours too. Days when Frank was kind, with gentle hands. Linda loved Frank, but everyone told Linda that Frank didn't love her. She didn't believe them, so she stayed. Better sad with Frank than sad and alone. As Linda pulls into her driveway, she tries to remember the word her mother had called her once. She thinks it might have been co-dependable? Or co-independent? Co-dependant. That was it. She wasn't sure what that even really meant.

Frank stays in his recliner in the living room, eyes suctioned to today's Jeopardy. Alex Trebec shouts out today's topics. "Famous Couples. Insects of America. Weapons of War. Femme Fatales and Political Assassinations." Linda had turned the TV up before she left; Frank's hearing was getting worse. She passes the thermostat beside her garage door to ensure the heat is kept at 72 degrees; Linda was always cold. Frank would turn it down, she would turn it up, and then they would fight. He didn't even get up to help her with the groceries, but then again he never has. As she unpacks her groceries, flies settle on the lean beef she plans to cook for dinner tonight. Although the days have been cool, there are more flies than usual in her house. Linda enjoys their company. As she stabs the vegetables, she remembers the days when Frank would shout all the wrong answers at their TV. Their house is silent now. Linda takes out her sharpest knife and punctures the taut plastic skin covering her raw steaks. The oily juice drips out of the gaping wounds in the meat packaging. Linda removes each steak from inside the plastic casing, setting it gently down on the green cutting board. Once, Linda had attended a party and tested knives. There was a demonstration on how to cut filet steaks like a Cutco-expert and Linda could not tear her eyes away from the rough hands of the man who so carefully handled the raw meat. She had left that day with 400 dollars' worth of razor-sharp cutlery.

Like the Cutco-man, Linda cradles each steak in the palm of her hands and the trembling blade gently splits the fat from the juicy red meat. Linda gathers a small pile of beef fat at the corner of the cutting board, an offering to her fly friends. By now, the balding chubby man has won Jeopardy answering the final question correct. "This condition, often experienced under duress, is named after the Norrmalmstorg robbery of Kreditbanken." The balding man answers "What is Stockholm Syndrome?" to win the day with 18,500 dollars. Frank's silence throughout the episode remains a pleasant surprise to Linda.

The smell of grilling steak mingles with other scents wafting around her main floor. From the kitchen, Linda hears that Wheel of Fortune has come on. Frank doesn't like Wheel of Fortune, so Linda wipes her bloody hands on her Kiss-The-Cook apron and goes to change the channel for him. Frank loves to watch COPS, so Linda turns down the volume two clicks so as not to be disturbed during her cooking. One anniversary 8 years ago, Frank had given Linda her last present. He had bought her a crisp white apron and a new pair of crimson baking gloves that she could not bring herself to throw away. Linda had always had a problem getting rid of things, like the green hamburger patty from her crisper drawer. Everything had value, everything had somewhere to be, and everything should be in its place.

Taking her thinnest blade from the wooden block on the counter, Linda makes an incision into the thickest steak. Rare and bloody is how she likes hers, but she cooks one well-done for Frank; he likes a bit of gristle. "Dinner is ready," Linda calls into the living room to her husband Frank, who remains immobile in front of the shining television. Wiping her hands on her bloodstained apron, Linda walks to the recliner and shoves Frank into the upright position. She hitches her arms under his armpits and forces him to stand. Assuming her position, Linda hoists his bulk and starts toward the dining room. He drags his feet, but Linda manages to
maneuver his limp weight into a rubber covered dining room chair. As she reaches for the belts she keeps on the dining room table, she swats a fly away from her ear. With great care, she straps his lifeless body into a sitting position. Linda hates when he falls forward and dips his face into his dinner. At the beautifully set table, she looks lovingly through the candle centerpiece into Frank’s rotting sockets. She tells him about her day, her trip to the grocery store, her hair appointment, and Linda feels like he is really listening.

Getting Frank up the stairs to bed is always the hardest part of Linda’s day. When his body had been cold and stiff, she could pull him along like a giant suitcase. Now that he has become squishy with decomposition, she wraps him in a clear drop cloth and climbs the 14 stairs to the bedroom. Tonight his extremities are too limp to maneuver into pajamas, so she dresses Frank in his favorite night shirt and tucks him into his side of the bed with a kiss on the forehead. As she falls asleep, Linda can hear a fly bumping uselessly against the glass of her bedroom window until it is silent. She will clean up its tiny corpse in the morning.
Waterlilies

Trevor Church
First Place in “Spark” Contest

Months had passed before I decided to clean up my shit, before I finally decided to stop seeing the world with a gray undertone. I was at the Met when it happened. I sat in front of Monet’s Waterlilies and looked at it for hours. The water in the pond started to move. The lilies drifted across the pond, moving back and forth, pushed by a wind that did not exist. I wondered if I could drown in that pond. If I could get up, walk into the painting, allow the deep blue to fill my lungs, and drift into unconsciousness. I wanted it all back. I raced to the Chelsea Hotel in the lower west side, possessing nothing but enough money to rent a small room for a week.

Peeling off my clothes I observed the pale-yellow figure that stood before the bathroom mirror. The stomach was sucked in enough to allow every protruding rib to be counted from a distance. The once white teeth were turning to a now dark-yellow. Dark bags circled the emotionless, bloodshot eyes. Nothing was there anymore.

I cried through the stomach cramps on the floor. I moved to the tub when the vomit started spewing through my nose and out of my mouth, covering my entire body. The bile that had risen from my gut left an acidic odor that caused my stomach to tighten and release with every breath. I began to regurgitate more chunks of the unknown onto my cold, shivering skeleton. I lay there, shaking uncontrollably, trying to turn the handles on the tub. That’s when the bugs came. Each centipede began to furiously make their way through my body, moving beneath the skin’s crumbling surface — feeling every bite as they ripped through my flesh. I frantically tried to scratch, tear, and pull them out. They had the upper hand, forcing me to claim defeat. My tear ducts hurt, my stomach hurt, my head hurt. I’d never felt a pain like this but at least I was feeling. I gave up on the bugs; I let them crawl to the surface and make small holes, before going back under. When you’re stoned a month feels like a minute, but when it’s leaving your system a minute can last several years, maybe even the rest of your life.

Notes from our judge:
This short story is filled with incredibly vivid word choices and descriptions. Each word causes the reader to cringe in pain and sickness as they witness the same horrible sensations and hallucinations that the main character feels — the acidic smells, vile tastes, and the sensation of centipedes crawling beneath the skin’s “crumbling surface.” The writer is not afraid to evoke discomfort in readers by the raw descriptions and strong language. This piece is a reminder of the power of words and the impact that they have on readers — it’s impossible to not feel squeamish or disgusted while reading the striking descriptions of drug-induced hallucinations, and that is what the writer intended us to feel.
When You Die

Casey Fuller

to description, reduction will not be required, and objects will again re-gain
the glowing, inner essence
of their being—you'll never be away, you'll be present at each moment
you're about to forget, all your
mediated, self-imposed distancing will stop, and love will ratchet-out
like stairs
gaining back what was taken
from the trees.

things that come after will be better. The fragments of tension you feel
for no one in particular
will resolve into perfect expression and you will be reminded of how your limbs felt when you first went
swimming when you were young. No longer will the songs of the reckless
dissolve into empty alleys

or urinals appear in galleries reserved for art. Heroes that are heroic will again ascend each tier
of the three-tiered podium and everyone who goes into a Target will come out
with something individual
and miraculous. Correct action without proper knowledge will become natural
and in most ways your life will
not seem like multiple arguments at elaborate trials. Nothing will feel arbitrary, you'll focus on
being innocent rather than lost, and a third-person impersonal speaker will
never loosen out of you
during a time that's important. No one will say That's the problem with a sense of
history, worry will succumb
A Perfect Score

April Powers

Third Place in “Spark” Contest

Clarence cut his thumb off with a chop saw last summer, and it hasn’t grown back yet. His mother Nancy says it never will if it hasn’t already. Mona still has faith. She has to because she and Clarence are to be married in the spring, and she can’t marry a four-fingered man. It would ruin Clarence’s perfect score on the checklist that she made at bible camp the July after fifth grade. It was written in her best cursive on a piece of red construction paper and folded into a thick square. She kept it in the back corner of her underwear drawer, re-reading it with each new love. No one ever got a perfect score, except Clarence. He was everything, but now they didn’t match, and that was number six on the list—right between “has really white teeth” and “knows how to draw a dog that really looks like a dog.”

She had to call off the wedding, or at least postpone it, until research about bone growth or a prosthetic could be conducted. They had to match, or they had to separate. Mona hated the idea, but could not trust her delusional, lovesick self to override the list.

By mid-winter, Clarence knew that Mona doubted they would ever get married, but they got an apartment on the north side of town anyway. Mona hung pictures of the two of them. She rearranged the furniture six times before deciding none of it was worth saving. She bought an entire new set. Clarence hated the new floral couches, but he loved Mona, and Mona loved the couches.

In the evenings, the couple would lie on one of the floral couches, limbs tangled together, and watch families trying desperately to connect with spirits on the other side. Clarence thought that the dead should stay dead, but Mona desperately wanted to be a mediator between the real and the spiritual world. She tried to remember tips from the show’s host, a self-proclaimed spiritual mediation specialist. At the end of the show he would stare straight at the crowd and remind them, just before the credits rolled, to “always remember the other side is listening, so be careful what you wish for.”

And the crowd would spring to their feet and explode in applause. Mona always clapped too.
It's Better That Way

Casey Kerns

My brother somersaults around the house rolling to where he wants to go, he says it's better that way.

He dips raisins in ketchup dunks hot-dogs in milk, he says it tastes better that way.

On the couch, he nests under cushions barricading himself in, protecting himself from the sun, he says it's more comfortable.

When we play twenty questions he creates mythical creatures, he says it's more fun.

He tumbles around in shorts and mismatched cowboy boots carrying a toy gun with his hands hidden in bulky winter gloves, he says it makes him cool.

He reads with his arms wrapped around knobby knees gently rocking, like Smeagol in Lord of the Rings, he says it helps him focus.

My brother lives in his own unique world to him nothing is normal, he says it's better that way.

The Perfection of Ten

Jacquelyn Anderson

Pluck, grab, pull, pluck, tear, pull, tear up. The glowing orb reveals every craterous imperfection in her illuminated face. These magnifying mirrors are every girl's worst enemy; the tiniest flaw is amplified to horrifying proportions. Still dripping on the linoleum in her towel, she has spent the last half hour plucking in sets of 10. Caught up in the two caterpillars above her eyes, she stares into the mirror-of-terror and pulls out every stray hair until her eyebrows are a masterpiece worthy of a frame in the Guggenheim.

After the eyebrow maintenance comes the moisturizing. First, she applies five even dots of skin cream and massages it into her face in small circles. Next, her body, which she lathers with the care of a nurse in the burn unit. If there was one thing besides messes that terrifies her, it is dry skin. In her nightmares old men with saggy hides threaten her with their dandruff flies and red, irritated elbows. Just in case, she applies an extra coat of lotion.

She locks eyes with herself, admiring the circles of tiny lights reflected in her emerald green irises. Getting ready to go anywhere is a feat of epic proportions, so she listens to her therapist's advice and takes ten slow deep breaths. An obsession with perfection and order cripples her, despite the effort of four therapists over the last ten years. When she was twelve, her parents decided that they had had enough of her compulsions. Despite being a brilliant student, her teachers had complained that she wasn't turning in any assignments on time. She stayed up late into the night, writing and erasing her tidy handwriting until it was perfect. It took her three hours to get ready every day, and the water bill was getting enormous. Her parents had tried grounding her, but it only taught her how to keep a secret. In a last ditch effort to "normalize" her, she had been sent to see a psychiatrist.

"So, tell me a little bit about why you are here today."
"I don't know. My parents sent me."
"But it's you that is here right?"
"Well yeah but I can't drive, so obviously you know that my
parents dropped me off.”

“But it was you that got into the car, and it is you that is sitting on the couch right now... Right?”

“Right.”

“So why do you think you are here?”

“I don’t know, because my parents don’t know what to do with me.”

“Well, I guess that’s right, but I talked to them and they aren’t mad at you. They just want you to help you. Help you get better.”

“There is something wrong with me?”

“That’s what we are here to find out.”

Ten years later, she was not far from where she started. As her secret skills got better, her parents got happier. So she saved her behaviors for private times. The obsessions had not gone away; she had simply gotten better at hiding them. She could still see germs on every surface; have to touch her bathroom doorknob twice. Everything was counted in groups of ten, the perfect number. Ten steps from the bed to the bathroom, ten from the couch to the table. She even chewed her gum perfectly, in sets of ten, evenly on each side. Order reigned, perfection was king.

The battle wages between the voices in her head. “Jesus girl! He will be here in an hour and we haven’t even put on any underwear,” the voice of reason says. “If our eyebrows aren’t flawless, there is no way he will want to fuck, or much less date us,” the crazy voice replies. She stands in front of her open closet doors, staring at her color-coded wardrobe in search of inspiration. Endless combinations of coordinated tops, shoes, pants, and jewelry end up on the floor. This is the only mess she will allow, the pile of casualties from choosing the perfect outfit. One hour and forty-seven wardrobe changes later, the death toll of the doorbell clangs through the house. Panic makes the little men start a mosh pit inside her stomach as she hears her roommate usher the gentleman caller into the living room.

With a sigh of disgust, she settles on the 48th outfit and enters the bathroom for her obligatory ten coats of liner, lipstick, and gloss. Feeling somewhat comforted by the perfection of ten, she takes to the stairs readjusting the shirt she knows will never really lay “just right.” The latest Ph.D has informed her that she needs to “relax.” At 168 dollars an hour, that is the best he can come up with? Standing at the top of the stairs, she takes another ten deep breaths. “Just breathe baby,” the normal voice tells her. The crazy retorts, “Your shirt makes you look homeless.” Taking her last deep breath, she attempts to control the crazy: I can do this, I am fine, I am normal. “Relax you nutjob, you don’t want him to find out you are batshit crazy the first date.” Setting in place her best Pretty Woman smile, she bounds down the stairs and into the living room.

Next to her sparkling dining room table stands a tall man in a plaid shirt and jeans. She leans in for a hug, pressing her breasts against his chest, but keeping her bottom half away from his. An A-frame hug was intriguing, but noncommittal. The kind of hug you reserve for distant relatives and relatively unfamiliar acquaintances. “He’s going to think you’re a goddamn virgin hugging him like that!” The crazy voice was back, despite her efforts to subdue it. “Take it slow sweetie, everything will be fine.” She holds her smile, listening to the voice of reason as she notices just how many crumbs are on her kitchen counter. She takes his outstretched, if most likely unwashed hand, and counts her sets of 10 steps down the hall and out to the car.

To the novice eye, the Date’s car appears fairly clean. Under Jacquelyn’s obsessive gaze, bugs and crawlies breed and feed in the crevices of the seats. Little crumbs she can feel worming their way into the legs of her perfectly ironed pants. Floaty dust particles cling to her virgin-bride-white shirt. An abandoned McDonalds cup rolls with the motion of his turns, tapping the side of her camel-colored flats over and over again. She can hear the sound of debris shifting in the trunk as well, most likely a cesspool of unwashed gym socks and the carcasses of fast food meals. She can already feel her face getting sticky with stress-induced perspiration. Despite her best efforts at breathing in sets of perfect ten, she begins to lose her cool.

“GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!” the crazy voice says. “Just throw yourself out of the car door and then you will be free from this germ death trap.”

“Babygirl, you are fine. This boy likes you; the least you can...”
do is take some more deep breaths and let him take you out to
dinner.”

Once again, the voice of reason wins and Jacquelyn counts
slowly to ten, ten times. She can tell that the Date strains to fill the
silence, but she needs this time to get her shit together. Only years of
dealing with the opposing voices in her head allow her to carry on a
conversation. She nods and smiles and giggles in all the appropriate
places, but inside she squirms.

Frantically searching for something clean to fixate on, another
tactic she has learned in therapy, Jacquelyn glances down at the center
console. HIS HAND. Never had she seen such a specimen of
perfection. His hand seemed almost sensual, caressing the tough skin
of his car while his eyes fixate on the road ahead of him. Taking
advantage of his distraction, she nods smiles responds laughs and
stares openly. Supple skin, orgasmically manicured nails, and a firm
comfortable grip. The lower belly feeling starts to rise and all she can
think of is how those hands would feel perfect on her
well-moisturized skin. “How could you not have noticed the
appendages before, you crazy bitch!” the crazy voice says. For the first
time in accord, the voice of reason chimes in, “Those are the most
marvelous things I have ever seen.” In a life of order and
planning and 10s, Jacquelyn goes on impulse. She steals his hand
from the console and cradles it between her own. Shocked by the sud-
en intimacy, Ryan looks over and smiles.

This Little Piggy

Emma Sleeman

This little piggy went to market,
bought three bottles of cheap wine
and a 24 of Coors Lite-
“For a party,” he says. Right.

This little piggy stayed home,
where he’s been, safe and sound,
for the past 8 years
thanks to online bill pay
and grocery shopping.

This little piggy had roast beef
sliced into one-inch cubes,
chewed five times on each side,
and swallowed with a small sip
of raspberry Kool-Aid.

This little piggy had none;
hasn’t been “hungry”
since he turned seventeen
and his now-ex boyfriend called him
a fat hog for having so much cake-
“You know that stuff goes straight to your ass.”

And this little piggy cried
whee whee whee
all the way home
as he ran to escape
the government conspiracy
to take over his mind.
Every Saturday night our household had a particular custom. At 7:00 o'clock our Grandmother commandeered our only television in order to watch Saturday Night Wrestling. My parents and my sisters couldn't figure out why this particular program held her interest. This program was the local version, sort of like the minor leagues of wrestling. Most of the combatants were overweight and lacked the rudimentary skills, but they had flashy names and would prance about the ring and beat their chest like a perverted version of an Orwell novel. She had her favorites; Tony Bourne, Lonnie Mayne and Dutch Savage could do no wrong.

My grandmother had moved in with us to provide babysitting and the majority of the meals since mom worked and dad couldn't turn on the stove without burning down the house.

"KIDS, WE NEED TO GET SUPPER!" our father's baritone voice boomed off the walls of our house.

"WE HAVE 5 MINUTES!" he continued as he picked up the keys off the kitchen counter. To my sisters and me, this was our signal to head towards the "red torpedo."

My older sister Karen named our father's pride and joy, his 1965 Pontiac Bonneville the "red torpedo," a deep red on the exterior and jet black top and interior. Like a torpedo that zeros in on its target, dad's torpedo always found its destination in the shortest time possible, especially with dad behind the wheel.

We reached the curb just as dad started the engine and was lowering the top. Jumping in, I noticed our dog, a long-haired Pekinese named Dolly, wanted to go. By the time we started up the hill, all of us had taken our assigned seats: Karen up front with dad, my younger sister Donna and me in the back.

Our destination was the Speck drive-in, 6 blocks away at the top of the hill. As we screamed up the hill, my dad had this content look on his face and I always thought he imagined himself at Daytona, piloting the red torpedo into turn 3 with the checkered flag in mind.
At the top of the hill sitting at the drive-in, we took inventory to see if anything flew out of the car. Dolly was the lightest and still in the back; we deemed this a successful trip. The red torpedo was still smoking and groaning as we started back down the hill. My little sister Donna had the responsibility of holding the two buckets of chicken that epitomized our dinner. As the red torpedo gained speed we were in sight of the house when Karen looked towards the trunk and saw Dolly standing in the center.

I have always marveled at that little dog's ability to balance on a trunk of a moving car racing down a hill. She might have stayed there had Karen not tugged at my dad's sleeve. What happened next has been the stuff of legend in the Canham household. Many versions exist, but I believe mine is most accurate: as dad saw Dolly on the trunk, he did not hesitate and slammed on the brakes. The red torpedo was a very fast car but it could also stop on a dime with two cents change. As my body bounced against the back of the front seat, I saw Dolly flying through the air. Just before she slapped against the windshield, she had the most content look on her face; I thought I saw her smile. Since my father thought seat belts were an unnecessary government intrusion, everything not nailed down defied gravity and hit whatever was in front of them.

Realizing what he had done, my father screamed: "SAVE THE CHICKEN!" I was still seeing stars, picking chicken pieces off my shirt when I sat up and realized we lost one bucket. I told my sister to be quiet because if we told our father he would want to take the red torpedo back up to the drive-in. I don't remember the rest of the trip home because my stars turned into short bouts of blackout. As we were coming through the front door, Dolly was the only member of our party who displayed no ill effects. It looked like she still had a smile on her face.

Our grandmother, still transfixed to the television commented: "You missed Tony Bourne absolutely demolishing Shag Thomas."
Idignant Ignition

Dylan Evantson

The heat lamps never worked. The kitchen had managed to avoid its last few health inspections through an oversight or divine intervention. There was no doubt in his mind that it would have failed, but they didn't pay him enough to fix that. He worked alone most nights, cooking things to order, and sending them out as soon as they were done. He timed all the orders for each table to come up simultaneously. This strategy worked about half the time.

Three years of grease clung to the hood vent over the grill. Occasionally, he would knock down chunks of grease to keep the vent working. He had cleaned the grease catches, weekly at first. He had run out of degreaser, and no one ordered more. A permanent taint baked onto the side walls from the heat of the grill. The rear left burner of the Wolf range spit fireballs when it was switched to ignite. To combat this, one had to place an upturned pan over it to kettle the gas. They always ran out of ingredients and never had enough waiters. He had been trained for better than this, but he didn't care enough to look for work elsewhere. Most of the menu was pasta dishes; fairly easy to time and keep hot, nothing that a few whiskies could prevent him from handling.

The first orders of the night trickled in. Reading down a poorly formatted ticket, the chef realized that several of the items were attempts at unique constructs that were not on the menu.

"HEY!" He snapped from across the dark warmer line, "What the fuck is this?"

The waiter looked down at his tie and muttered something.

"What?"

"They wanted some really specific stuff."

"That's great. We don't even stock half this shit!" He glared, nearly thrusting the ticket up the waiter's nose. "Do you seriously think I'm going to make a well done steak at the beginning of a dinner rush?"

"I don't see why not..."
Ashes

Leslie Hancock

His eyes were the color of crystal clear water in a pond, un-tainted by moss or mud. The brightest of blues, similar to the June sky hovering above us. Birds twittered excitedly in oak trees. The blades of grass surrounding our tranquil bodies sighed with satisfaction, basking in the summer rays. Liquid yellow poured over our bodies, skin still damp from our dip in the sparkling creek.

“Do you think it'll be different when summer's over?”

His gaze was fixed on the few clouds that hung precariously in the sky, about to be dissolved by the blazing sun. Of course everything would change when summer was over. In a sense, these were our last few days as kids.

“No: We'll still see each other,” I replied somberly, brushing fingertips along whispering grass.

“Yeah, but it'll be different.”

He turned onto his side, focusing those orbs that were now more like midnight on me, absorbing my attention like a thirsty desert.

“You'll be at college, and I'll be stuck here in this little town.” His fingers reached for my hand, skin soft and tempting. I watched, mesmerized, as he toyed with my palm. “I'll call you every night. I promise.”

“It won't be the same.”

He was right; he was oh so right. But I didn't want him to be.

His tone changed as he caught the look in my eye. “Let's not worry about it now.” He stood, pulling me up with him. The grass lapped at my bare calves like kittens at milk. “We're eighteen, its summer. We need to go out and live.”

“I'm pretty sure I'm breathing. And my heart's beating.”

His grin was lopsided. Without warning, he scooped me into his arms. He kissed me, lips soft and inviting. Drowsy from the sultry afternoon, I laid my head against his shoulder, eyelids drooping for what seemed like only a moment. But when I heard his voice again,

speaking my name, my eyes cracked open to peer in the harsh sunlight.

The deserted house looked back at us, windows staring like lifeless eyes, white exterior faded like the complexion of a corpse.

The porch, wrapped tightly around the lower level, no longer looked inviting. The front door was like a mouth, waiting for some unfortunate soul to grace its threshold so they could be swallowed by the dark, musty innards. The grass, unattended to for a month or so, was unkempt and wild. It swayed toward us, as if attempting to draw us in.

“I don't like it here anymore.”

Gently, he set me down on my own feet, my legs like jelly.

Without explanation, he took a few daunting steps toward the abandoned building. “What are you doing?” I hissed. He continued up the path, not even sparing me a glance. I clawed at his arm, snatching air, and bounced on the balls of my feet quickly.

“Ryan, come back!” He paid no mind, disappearing into the mouth as the house swallowed him whole.

I stood, fidgeting and shaking through the tedious moment, until I could bear it no longer. Ignoring the screaming protests echoing in my mind, I forced my legs to move, feet as heavy as anchors. Somehow, I avoided the weeds sprouting up from cracks in the cobblestone, and made it to the stairs. The tongue of the monstrous house. My hand trembled as I reached for the doorknob. The coolness of the metal seeped into my skin as I turned it with a quick jerk and pushed it open.

The floorboards groaned under my weight as I stepped into the gloom. Shadows penetrated the room, stretching across the timber surface. White sheets were draped over the ruined furniture left behind. It was all too quiet; where had he gone? Dust particles colored the air, caught in a ray of sunlight from the sooty window. There was a distinctive musk in the air that made it thick, and I felt as if I was suffocating in the memories of this place.

“Babe, come here!”

The sudden voice startled me, my adrenaline spiking, and I turned around to face the direction of his panicked voice. Something
within me – common sense, perhaps – prevented me from moving my feet. But he must be hurt, in trouble, something...

I forced one foot in front of the other until I stood in the doorway of the dusty room he had called from. Shadows were strewn over the unsound floorboards, littering the ground with pale sunlight. My breath stuck in my throat.

The room was empty.

I retreated from the house, standing amongst the weeds, alone. The house loomed overhead, windows gazing like giant eyes down at me, watching my despair. With an angry cry, I grasped for a rock and hurled it at the building. It bounced off the charred wall. The second thrown rock hit its mark, shattering the window on the upper floor.

That night had been a cold one. We stayed up late, talking on the phone, huddled under my blankets with a good book, and he, sprawled across his sheets, playing Grand Theft Auto with the sound turned down low. I was in the middle of complaining about cross country practice when he interrupted me quietly.

"I gotta go, I think my mom's up. I don't wanna get caught. I smell something burning."

We both laughed; his mother was terrible at cooking, and always burnt everything from cookies to steak. Neither of us questioned why she would have been up at midnight cooking something. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. We said our "I love you's" and "goodnight's. I slept fretfully that night, tossing and turning.

I'd woken up to my little sister shaking me, babbling on about smoke and the news. Groggily, I sat up, rubbed my eyes and looked out the window – something I never do.

I would never forget that black smoke, billowing over the trees beside his house, tainting the air with an ominous onyx haze that choked me as if I was in the midst of it.

I'd run out the door. Sprinted there in bare feet and my pajamas. Why hadn't my parents woken me up? A policeman caught me before I could blow past the fire truck toward the flaming house.

"Jessica?"

Whipping my head around, I caught sight of my dad and his friend Joe. They were both tall men; my dad sporting a thicker beard and thinning hair. "What are you doing here? Your mother is worried sick." He stepped forward and took my arm, pulling me up from the mud silently. We walked home.

After gently nudging me up the three stairs into our off-white chalet, my father turned to Joe. I heard Joe's words just before I shut the front door. "Wasn't that the Gibson's house? The one with the fire a few months ago?"

My father nodded grimly as I stumbled up the stairs, out of earshot now. "How come it didn't burn down?"

"The firemen got there before it spread," my father murmured, leaning on the porch railing.

"Did everyone get out okay?"

I sat on my bed, glancing out the window at the two men conversing, and then raised my eyes to the trees. No smoke. It was all just a bad dream. I smiled. I couldn't wait to see him tomorrow.

"Didn't their son die in his sleep of smoke inhalation?" Joe persisted.

"Yeah." My father's answer was quick and short; a hint Joe should have picked up on, but either the man was too interested or oblivious. I picked up my phone and dialed, holding it to my ear.

"What was his name?" Joe stared intently at my father.

"The number you are trying to reach has been disconnected," the dull female voice droned.

"... Ryan."
Childhood
Casey Kerns

I sit on the table
my dad fashioned-my old bedroom door
soaking in still silence of the back pasture.
Remembering youthful days.

Red and blue paint
covers green house siding
hammered to tree trunks
A makeshift paintball course.

Empty cans hang from branches
by bright orange twine
secretly cut from hay bales.

Childhood laughter haunts the clearing
where we built our saloon.
Old milk jugs filled with water,
nails driven through lids
form water-taps.

We trade monopoly money
for Safeway bags of pinecones:
ammunition for the coming war.
We crawl through mud, Camo-clad, armed with BB guns
Preparing for battle.

The crackling of burning needles awakens me.
I hear my dad call out.
The last of my memories is thrown
onto the trailer and driven
to the burn pile.
The childhood that I once knew,
slowly turns to ash.

My Body
Anonymous

Ross and Nordstrom have two attributes that are very different, their shoppers. Walking into Nordstrom I was immediately aware of my faded, baggy ten-dollar jeans, gray high school sweatshirt, mud stained Payless shoes, and high messy bun. Maybe it was that sexy Vince Camuto dress or those Gucci pumps that drew me into the world of high fashion. The employees didn’t even bother with talking to me, one look at the pull string backpack I converted into my purse and they knew I wouldn’t be buying anything. I would never spend over two hundred dollars on an article of clothing, much less two thousand on a pair of shoes. At any rate I have some weight to lose before I buy any overpriced sexy dresses!

My legs are too fat. There in Nordstrom I decided to stop being a waste of space among my glamorous dreams and start working on my body. I am in no way fat; I want to be fit and not have huge hips! I did think I was fat in middle school. But that is where a lot of my idiosyncrasies come from. As I push myself to be able to do a pull-up my mind wonders if I will ever completely rid myself of my fear of popular girls or at least fit in with them. They are that small group of the prettiest girls that wouldn’t be caught wearing anything but a brand name, never have bad hair days, and daintily carry their Coach purses. I of course have never been in this tight group. Most of my life I wore hand-me-downs or anything that was on a “50% off” rack. Even if I managed to find something slightly trendy, my hair was a disaster. Normal people can brush their hair and it will turn out at least presentable. If I do, my small head could be three times as wide and my hair would still cover it.

Sometimes I wonder why I work so hard to fit in. Then I remember I have one main goal, to be the best! I am not sure if that is a good goal or not. I simply have to be good at something or why would anyone like me or want to be my friend? Though I can’t afford expensive clothes, I am always on the lookout for a good deal. There are two other girls on the ellipticals. One wearing lime green Under Armor workout shorts, a matching top, and custom made Nike Frees. Her friend shows off her toned legs with yoga pants, a pink Juicy
Couture hoody, and bright pink and black Nike Shox Turbo+ running shoes. They are out of my league, so I don't talk to anyone. I only check to make sure I have a higher resistance or run faster and longer than them. I usually can't; I just cover the numbers with my towel.

If I start a conversation, someone might get annoyed and notice how slow I run. How do people run and have conversations? It is hard enough just to run! I get scared I might say something to bore or bother them. That night in their dorms they would laugh about that crazy girl in the workout room, “That lazy girl was so annoying, didn't she get the hint to shut up?”

“Yeah! Did you see her shoes?!” The other girl would say as her group of plastics let out high shrieking sounds that resemble laughter.

I don't talk. They might actually be nice girls, but I start lifting and try to go unnoticed. Just one more set! You can do it! You will be mad at yourself if you give up now! I work my hardest when I am in a group. I don't want the others to beat me. I have to stand out as being better, or at least not being the slacker. My body is in no way large or flabby, but I am never content with the work I put in. I must make it better! I will be able to run five miles without getting tired. My legs will be normal sized.

Five years from now I plan on being two sizes smaller. I will be looked at as a potential buyer when I shop at Nordstrom wearing their latest Prada Heels and beautiful Coach purse. But today I wish and work to reach my goals.

Beauty Queen

Monica Logan

Her smooth, shiny skin is perfect.
No blemishes
no stretch marks
no wrinkles
no scars.

Beautiful.

Her hands are open and slightly curved, waiting for something to fill them.
The tall silhouette stands upright, creating a shadow of flawless poise.
Without any shoes, her feet point expectantly for the frame of a high heel.

Beautiful.

Her face is fair and pristine, always wearing a smile.
Even if her clothes mis-match or hang open, she still smiles.
Even if her arms break or head falls off, she stills smiles.

Beautiful.

Her lips never part to object.
Her eyes never seek the sun.
Her body never twists or twirls on her own.
Still beautiful?
Love Has No Height, Love Has No Distance, Love Is Pure

Matthew Lai

The End of an Era

Jeriann Watkins

She feels its approach deep within her abdomen. The horsemen descend upon her, bursting into her life uninvited. Unwanted. Unstoppable.

Each carries his own unique weapon. The first inflicts blinding pain inside her head, inhibiting her ability to think clearly, or even at all.

The second causes her to curl into a ball, hugging her middle, begging for the pain to stop.

The third is the most gruesome. With his arrival comes uncontrollable bleeding—enough to cause pain and fatigue—but not enough to finish her off. The blood serves mostly as a distraction; it keeps her from being able to fight back.

As ghastly as the bloody horseman is, there is one more: the cruelest of them all. He rides in before the others and stays after they have gone. He forgoes physical affliction and delves straight into her mind, shuffling her emotions like a poker deck, occasionally even removing cards.
hiding them up his sleeve.
He leaves her a jumbled mess,
unsure of her own opinions,
feelings.

There is only one thing she knows for sure;
when these horsemen arrived
with their monthly apocalypses,
they ended her world as she knew it.
But R.E.M. lied.
She feels anything but fine.

Josie works as a babysitter on Saturday afternoons. The
Johnsons hired her to care for Felix almost three years ago. She has
never missed a Saturday. She has also never seen Felix. Every Satur­
day at one thirty, Tina and Greg leave in their blue Volvo dressed
in their finest coats. Josie never has any idea what they are wearing
underneath. She passes them in the doorway as she enters the stone
foyer. She kicks her shoes off; the white wool carpet couldn't take the
abuse of her leaving them on. When the almost inaudible hum of the
dealership maintained sedan fades down Third Avenue, Josie walks to
the kitchen and starts boiling water for tea. The sound of the burner
heating up is almost embarrassing as it breaks the silence. The rest of
the enormous log house is motionless and mute.

Josie has explored every room and drawer of the house,
every medicine cabinet. She knows that Greg has indigestion. Tina
is depressed. She knows every corner of the house except for what
is behind the pristine white door at the top of the stairs that holds a
tiny sign that reads Felix. That door is never left ajar. It is locked she
assumes. Greg had made it crystal clear that she should never disturb
that room, never even touch the handle. He told her that he would
know.

When the teapot whistled, she rushed to remove it from the
heat. She always forgets that there is no one there to hear it, except
for Felix that is, and he has never fussed about it before. While the
tea bag is brewing, Josie always examines the fridge. There is an entire
frosted glass shelf stacked with miniature jars of mashed up peaches
and squash. The jars never move and are never replaced. Josie did a
test one time. She dripped one small dot of blue nail polish on the
bottom of a jar of pureed peas. That jar still sits in the front row on
the far left.
The School Lunch

Casey Kerns

The lunch box contains
The same items it always does.

The sandwich lies in the white container
Made with creamy peanut butter and blackberry jelly
Meticulously cut exactly in half down the middle

The white and black thermos is filled halfway with grape juice
And a Tupperware container holds two strawberries,
Cut in half and lightly sprinkled with sugar.

The lunch box is placed in the red backpack
Which is placed on the boy with the sandy blonde hair
And he lumbers down the driveway in his red raincoat to catch the bus.

Poor Ariel

Laury\n
It was just an average summer afternoon and I was playing
with all my Barbies in my room. I had just recently gotten a new
one: the Ariel version. My brothers would never understand what she
meant to me, since they were always preoccupied with their action
figures and Legos. Boys just weren't made to play with Barbies. But
Ariel, she was my new favorite. Her long luscious fire toned hair com-
plimented her soft green eyes that smiled on their own. She was the
perfect little mermaid. I never wanted her to leave my sight because
I was worried my brothers would find a way to ruin her. They have a
history of breaking off the legs first, then the arms of my Barbies so
they were no longer feminine. The last thing I wanted was for them
to break Ariel: my beloved friend.

I turned my back to find a new sequin dress for her to wear
when I heard Andrew yell, "Hey, Brennan watch this." After a pause,
Brennan said, "It's a bird. It's a plane. No wait, it's a mermaid."
Mermaid: did he really just say mermaid? I jerked myself around and
saw my brothers staring at the window, but there wasn't a Barbie in
either of their hands. Where is she? Their eyes were fixed on the win-
dow. As I fearfully pivoted my gaze on the window I saw the white
blinds that used to be nice and neat, now in a tangled mess. The
blinds now bended into a knot with a bright red target in the center
of the mess. It only took a second for me to realize... THAT'S MY
BARBIE'S HEAD! Ariel's luscious mane was no longer attached to
her body. Instead, her head went face first into the blinds, leaving the
rest of her body flat on the ground, decapitated. There went the rest
of life for Ariel the mermaid.

I can honestly say I was speechless. All I wanted to do was to
yell and scream at my brothers who were laughing hysterically as they
rolled around on the ground unable to control their emotions. What
was I to do?

To this day, there is a part of me that still gets bitter think-
ing about the image of my favorite doll being decapitated through
the window. At least my mom was on my side; she must have known somehow that something like this was going to happen. The day before this event, she brought home a brand new gymnastics edition Barbie. This one was made specifically so that it could not be broken apart. Perfect.

I gently grasped the cold knob and rotated it softly left. Any sound would give away my position. The moon crept through the north window, dimly lighting the small kitchen. I scanned the area quickly for danger. The red dot gave away my aim. The kitchen was clear. Pots and pans were in disarray, scattered like corpses on a battlefield. A half eaten pizza sat mournfully on the oven top, watching, waiting. Empty wrappers of chicken flavored Top Ramen littered the counter, while cups and shot glasses scattered the outskirts of the sink in which used bowls and plates were piled high, witnesses to the raging battle.

My body was on full alert. As my heart rate increased, my hands turned clammy and the handle of my gun felt like it had been dipped in olive oil. In training they told me this would happen. However, all the training in the world couldn't prepare anyone for the real thing; you don't re-spawn in this life.

As I shut the door gently behind me, I fixed my aim on the open door leading from the kitchen. I listened intently; the house was silent. Only my pulsating heart and my soft, carefully placed breaths could be heard. I hesitated before sticking my head around the corner of the open door leading into the hallway. I anticipated a figure lurking in the deadly shadows and pictured myself squeezing the trigger hard enough to let the potential energy of the gun release. The hallway was clear.

Clinching my gun I moved rapidly but silently toward the top of the ‘T’ shaped hallway, which split off into two rooms. Both doors were shut.

As I prepared to enter the first room a quick sound caught my attention from the kitchen. I turned and began to move slowly back toward the kitchen to investigate. I firmly aimed my gun directly down the hallway toward the opening I had just passed through, hoping for movement.

Without warning he unexpectedly walked out of the kitchen,
attempting to be quiet and headed down the hallway in the opposite
direction. He never heard or saw me in the darkness of the hallway. I
froze in the pitch-black and slowly fixed my gun until the red dot lay
rest on the back of my enemy's head. I carefully maneuvered the dot
down the back of his head until it met the middle of his back: a larger
target.

The timing was perfect. I had to pull the trigger.

"Come on!!!" exclaimed my roommate Jeff, turning on the
hallway lights.

His bright orange V-neck now glowed as he moved toward
me. His baggy grey sweat pants hung slightly below his waistline and
scrunched up toward the bottom as they met his tainted dirty white
socks.

"How did I not see you?"

He bent down and picked up the Nerf dart I had shot at him
and threw it back at me. I caught the dart and placed it perfectly into
the barrel of my orange and yellow Nerf gun.

"Let's do that again!" said Jeff. "And why didn't I get one with
a freaking laser?!"
Getting the Most Out of College: The Step by Step Guide

Cole Dahle

It is the mantra that every adult has pushed in our heads since the first year of high school: “Your college years will be the best of your life.” It is where you make lifelong friends, where you begin to find your own way in the world, and where you expand your horizons to encompass all of your dreams in life. College is a world of opportunity, and you will get out of it all that you put in. And there is nothing more rewarding than finding the strength of your inner self by becoming a classic college hermit. After all, there is a whole wealth of excitement and adventure inside your very own dorm room. Breaking out of your shell is overrated. This is how you develop your hermit lifestyle, and really get the most out of your college experience.

As soon as you set foot on campus, make sure you apply the first step of this guide, isolation. Friends are the most difficult obstacle that a hermit must overcome, so you have to nip this problem in the bud. Be proactive and establish your seclusion, from the start of orientation all the way through the first semester. Be sure to keep your dormitory door shut and locked so you can’t be bothered by all those nasty “pop in” visitors. Friends create social time and social time is extremely unbecoming to a quality dorm hermit so keep the social networks clear and your focus on the computer.

The next step to sinking deeper into your own shell is to spend at least 140 hours a week inside your place of refuge, the dorm. This sets the platform for possible adventures to come, as the majority of life-altering college experiences will certainly come to pass inside your dorm room. Using this principle of time management will not only establish quality experience opportunities between you and your electronic systems, but also permits approximately 4 hours a day for you to catch up on your sleep (during class, of course) and make a Hot Pocket run down to the local Fred Meyer.

The next important step to securing a grand life of isolation is to constantly work at altering your sleep calendar. The night life is what college is all about, and you don’t want to be the only one sleep-

In order to help your adaptation to the night hours, you should follow the fourth step of this guide, invest in energy drinks; nothing gets you going for the next 3 hours like a Rockstar or a Monster. Whenever you feel the onset of mental fatigue or drowsiness, get yourself up for a blast of sugar and caffeine to notch a few more hours of computer time before bed. Not only do these drinks up your energy amount, but several gamers have claimed that it will heighten your reflexes as well. After a couple of weeks, your internal clock should have fine-tuned itself, allowing you to cut back on the supplements and enjoy night gaming the natural way.

Now that you have successfully cut off your living space from others, the fifth and final step is to accomplish something with your time. In order to really fit the mold of a college hermit, you must master the art of video games; invest in an online gaming system to attain respect without the risk of social encounters. Your name will be famous all over campus as the mysterious gamer who can defeat any challenger with one hand tied behind his back. Ultimately, it is by your gaming ability that you will be judged on your success in college, so this final step is vital.

College is truly the place where a boy becomes a man, where responsibility is accepted with the open palm of maturity, where a person’s path in life begins to take shape and direction. Although the distractions in college may be many, it is imperative that you forgo the shallow pleasures of life on campus (friends, athletic events, education, etc.) and focus on the things that can really give your life a strong push in the right direction. Excellence can only be attained through hard work and perseverance, and that is what college is here to teach us. Accomplish greatness in your dorm first, and then you can apply it out in the world.
To Amy

Gabriella Fora

She surfs the web, finding trivial ways of distracting herself. Checking her inbox for emails that aren’t there and comments that haven’t been left. The only hits on her blog post are from her aunt: her most loyal fan. The Facebook profile she created is plastered with pictures she’s posted of her cats.

Wearing the sexy red dress she just bought, she waits in vain for the date that won’t come: a dare accepted but never fulfilled. Instead, Amy reaches into the drawer and removes a small, heart shaped box of chocolates, addressed to herself.

As I walk in the slightly ajar door I am greeted by the sound of Swayze’s “Corona and Lime.” The easygoing sounds drift through the room immediately making me feel at ease. The sour smell of beer engulfs my senses. It is everywhere. Cans lay smashed in the sink and across the floor. Packages of unopened Bud light and Pabst Blue Ribbon lay ready and waiting on the counters. The spilt beer sticks to the bottom of my sandals as I trudge further on into the madness. Too much is going on. A couple is making out to my right and a little blonde chick is screaming at her friends and falling over on my left. They unknowingly are blocking the main hallway. I barely squeeze by and take a good look around. It is 11 o’clock but the night has only just begun.

For some reason I think college parties are hilarious. They seem to be an alternate reality. In this reality, all bets are off. The shyest guy you know suddenly becomes the life of the party and the studious angels turn into table dancing divas. In this alternate reality the normal rules of everyday life can be left at the wayside. No school, no homework, no problems. These parties never seem to change. The dramas, the drinking, the damage. Everything is always the same. They are about nothing more than having as much fun as humanly possible. The trail of thought for a typical college student on a Saturday night is simple enough. It goes something like this: we are young, we have beer, let’s get wasted. At every college party you will be sure to find alcohol, dancing, and 10 certain people.

1. The Baby

As you make your way through the party you will come across someone who sticks out like a sore thumb. This person looks like they should be at a daycare more so than a college party. They will try and hide their general lack of aging with two separate tactics. The females try to disguise themselves by piling on the makeup. The males attempt to disguise their adolescence by wearing a large hooded sweatshirt and making their voice as low as possible. If you see someone...
you think fits the description, all you have to do is ask them how old they are. If the reply is something like, “Eigh-sev-seventeen. Ya I’m seventeen.” Congratulations. You have found The Baby.

2. Mr. Forgetful

Mr. Forgetful is easy to spot because he is a fixture at every party. He is a laid back guy with a strong smell of Axe. You will most likely smell him before you see him. Mr. Forgetful lives up to his name. He can’t remember anything. At every party he makes his rounds looking for unsuspecting females. Every female is hookup potential for this guy and in his drunken stupor he can’t distinguish one girl from the next. Because of this, he has a hard time telling the difference between the Ashleys, the Beckys, and the Marys. If you are a female you will have the same conversation with this guy at every party. Nonchalantly, Mr. Forgetful will make his way to the first girl he makes eye contact with and slur, “Hey I don’t think we have met before.”

“We have.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yep, definitely have met you ten times.”

With a look of disbelief Mr. Forgetful will make his way to the next target leaving nothing but the smell of Axe permanently fixed into your clothing. At the next party you will have the same conversation verbatim with the same exact guy. This time you will have to remind him that, yes, it is now the 11th time you are meeting him. Hence, Mr. Forgetful will continue to live up to his reputation.

3. The Wanderer

This person is as easy to spot as Mr. Forgetful. He or she looks like a sad lost puppy. Their most identifiable feature is the look of complete confusion plastered across their face. The Wanderer does just that, weaving from one room to another looking like they are trying to find something but they can’t figure out just what that something is. You may feel the urge to help this person find what they are looking for. Do not do so. It is useless. They do not know what they are looking for, let alone what their name is or where they are. For hours you will see this person walking around like a zombie. They will

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6. The Happy Drunk

Nothing can faze number 6. The Happy Drunk can be seen standing in the middle of the dance floor laughing like a giddy schoolgirl. Everything is funny to the Happy Drunk and everybody they talk to is a potential new best friend. They will bob from one group to another saying hi and giving out “free hugs.” The Happy Drunk oftentimes can also be the person most likely to get hurt. In their inherent giddiness they may suddenly get the urge to jump off the roof into the pool or ride on the roof of a car. The Happy Drunk must be looked after. This is where The Mom steps in.

7. The Mom

The Mom looks like a college student yet does not act like one in the least. This girl likes going to parties but does not usually want to partake in the alcoholic festivities. She christens herself D.D. at the very beginning of the night. She dresses modestly and feels the need to take care of others whenever it is needed. At a party it is always needed. This girl can be found helping the violently swaying girl in the mini skirt to a nearby couch. Making her way to the other side of the party she will be seen taking the car keys away from a wasted jock who is declaring that he is the “best driver who has ever lived.”

8. Mr. and Mrs. PDA

Ok we know you love each other but COME ON! This couple is attached at the hip. They waltz around the party smiling and showing one another off as if they were one of those gigantic spelling bee trophies. Mr. and Mrs. PDA then make their way to a corner so that they can more easily gaze into one another’s eyes and tell each other how great they are. Next comes the kissing. Well, actually not really kissing, more like just slobbering all over each other’s face. When you see Mr. and Mrs. PDA start their suck fest it is a great time to exit the room. ‘Cause that’s just nasty.

9. Emotional Crybaby

This girl cannot control herself. When Burnett’s Vodka is added to her highly unstable state, prepare for the waterworks. Everyone at the party knows to walk on eggshells around this girl. The slightest touch, word, or sound and she will freak out. The Emotional Crybaby is most easily set off by a male, possibly Mr. Forgetful. When Mr. Forgetful does not remember the Emotional Crybaby she takes it as a personal insult. Tears well up in the black rimmed eyes of the sad girl sending black cascades of salt down her freckled cheeks. She rushes out the back door closely followed by a consoling friend, oftentimes The Mom. The Emotional Crybaby declares that she will never be caught dead at “one of these stupid things” ever again. But, sure enough there she is the next weekend, makeup in its proper place, and no tears to be seen....yet.

10. The Lightweight

This person is usually a youngster at their first party. They have not really ever been drunk and decide that what better time than now to try out being an alcoholic for the night? Usually the lightweight is the focus of many people at the party. People think that it is almost precious that this person is taking their first sips of alcohol. They stand on the sidelines like proud parents watching their child take its first steps. They cheer and applaud each beer that is downed as if it were some kind of great and noble accomplishment. Two beers and the Lightweight can be seen making their way to the bathroom where they will remain until morning.

By the time you have come across these 10 people, the party is in full swing. The music has changed to rap and has been turned up to its full capacity. People scream at one another over the music and the beer dwindles. At this point the sound is getting out of hand. This is a perfect time to exit said college party. If not, you may run into the 11th most likely person you will see at a college party, a cop. If for some reason you are still present when the cop arrives make a quick and stealthy exit out of the nearest window or backdoor. Army crawling may come in handy in order to get safely off the premises. Once you are out of the danger zone act like you are out for an evening stroll. Yes, it may be 2 o’clock in the morning, but still, just go with it. Now it is time to get a bite at either Taco Bell or Jack In The Box. Heading home, you are exhausted. The party went by in a quick blur. Never to fear. There will always be another weekend, another party, and another opportunity to escape into this alternate reality.
The day was coming to a close as the sun began to hide quietly behind the distant mountains. We had spent countless hours playing basketball at the park—I suppose I could actually count the hours if I wanted to, but I never saw the need to expend the extra thought. None of us were as good as we thought we were, except James who knew exactly how good he was and proudly admitted he had no right playing the sport. Now returning from the park, our six-man group of all-stars continued to brag about all the shots we made, yet none of us seemed to remember the plethora of shots that never actually made it all the way to the hoop.

James, along with his brothers Jon and Jeremy, lived only a few blocks from the park, making their house a good rendezvous point for A.J., Kelly, and myself to meet up with them. Now that we had exhausted all of our energy running after missed shots all day, we came to the conclusion that it was time to head home. Kelly hopped into the passenger seat while I eased into the driver’s seat, trying not to show how sore I was from the long day of exercise. Kelly and I live very close to one another, so we decided to carpool and save some gas. It was a special day for me. I had officially received my driver’s license six months before and I now was “legally” allowed to drive my friends around without my parents. And because Kelly was too lazy to even try to get his permit I had no other choice than to show off my amazing driving abilities. And what better way to show off than in a brand new, shiny red Ford Focus? This car was a 2009 version and we lived in the year 2008, so my gullible mind was convinced that it was the equivalent of a future hover car—or whatever cool vehicles they would design within the course of next year.

For a mid-size family sedan, this car had all the bells and whistles. I got a thrill out of showing Kelly every one of the gadgets that filled the dashboard, even the ones that I had no clue what they meant. I would tell him, “It has heated seats, and blind-spot detection
systems, and a voice-recognition system, and heated seats (I felt that he didn't recognize the impressiveness of the heated seats the first time I mentioned them). This car was the Lexus of middle-class life, "Look!" I exclaimed. "The cup holders even have changeable lights in them, so that if you have a bottle of water it can glow blue or red or anything else!"

"What if you don't have a bottle of water?" he asked. "Then aren't the lights kind of poi..."

"I will always have a bottle of water, Kelly."

"Well, you don't right now."

"Do you want to walk home?" I let out an exasperated sigh. Frustrated by the fact that he didn't comprehend how awesome the cup holders were, and that I, in fact, had no bottle of water, I threw the car into reverse and began to back down the slanted driveway. Right about the time I was putting the cup holder incident behind me, my rear bumper was imbedding itself into the taillights of James's car. As the crunching of broken plastic and metal filled the air, I slammed on the brakes. Against my will I forced my eyes to peer into the rearview mirror—which would have been so helpful five seconds earlier—to see a Kia Rio that had definitely seen better days. My heart sank. Thoughts flooded my head: I'm never going to be allowed to drive again. James is going to kill me. Why didn't I bring a stupid water bottle?

Kelly, who has an uncanny ability to not take anything in life seriously, began to giggle. "Oh shoot," he said with a big old smile on his face. I've never wanted to hurt him so bad in all my life. I pulled the car forward in an effort to detach my bumper from the mangled rear of its counterpart; the sound of metal scraping metal was deafening to my woe-struck ears. I stepped out of the car to view the aftermath of what I had done, afraid to direct my eyesight to the back of the vehicle. Fortunately Kelly was not as shy, as he ran around to the back and repeated, "Oh shoot." Never mind what I said before. Now I've never wanted to hurt him so bad in all my life. As I wandered down the driveway, horrified at the pieces of car that lay broken on the ground, Kelly ran, or rather bounced, up to the front door of the house. He was apparently doing his impression of a zero-gravity walk on the moon, which led to him bursting through the front door and making a static sound with his mouth, followed by the phrase, "Houston, we have a problem."

James, Jon, and Jeremy all came outside, accompanied by the astronaut now known as my former best friend. James, having had his license for several years by now and having been involved in many past accidents, seemed fairly unconcerned about the damage done to the back of his car. He preferred to offer his thoughts on how my parents were going to kill me. After assuring me that the damages were really quite minimal and "nothing some duct tape can't fix" we wrapped up the incident for the evening. James pulled his car out of the driveway, allowing me to back out without the opportunity to finish what I had started. Kelly did get a ride home, but was not allowed to use the oh-so important heated seats. James duct taped his taillight back together; now you cannot see that the plastic is even broken, nor can you see if the brake lights come on when the car stops. And as for my parents... well, they allowed me to live to see another day. That may have been a mistake.

Two years into the future of 2010, Jon and I were driving home from baseball practice. Not only was I not commandeering the hover car that was supposed to have been presented by 2009, but I was in the very same, cherry red Ford Focus—and still without a water bottle. Jon and I decided to accompany one another to Concordia University where we would be allowed to continue our baseball professions. Because Concordia's baseball field had been temporarily turned into a library, the team was forced to cross the Columbia River into Washington, where we would practice every day. Our coach was clever enough to schedule practice to begin and end during rush hour traffic; this way he could punish the team on a daily basis when we were inevitably late.

Jon and I alternated turns driving to practice every day; on this particular day it was my turn. Practice had come to a close and the team dispersed from the field in a multitude of vehicles. Driving this route to and from the baseball field in Vancouver had become second nature—routine as it were—to where I often could not remember ever crossing the river and exiting the freeway. The task
became so mundane that I could perform the excursion with my eyes closed, though I never saw fit to actually test this theory. This Thursday evening was unique in that it was James' birthday. Jon and I were on a voyage to their home where there would hopefully be extravagant decorations, mountains of presents, and a cake the size of Gary Coleman... though not necessarily in the same shape. I prefer to imagine that this is the party that awaited us after a long day of running; I imagine it because we never managed to make it to the party.

“You weren’t that good today,” I commented on Jon’s pitching performance in the day’s practice.

“What are you talking about?” he challenged, as he adjusted his seat, leaning it back slightly. “I was striking everyone out today.”

“Yeah, everyone but me...” I smiled.

“Oh, don’t even start! You got lucky I left a slider hanging over the middle.”

“Lucky?” I interjected. I glanced toward him to argue the difference between luck and pure, undeniable skill. In the brief moment I turned away, traffic came to a sudden halt ahead of us. When my focus turned back to the road ahead I saw a sea of red brake lights sitting completely still before me. I instinctively shuffled my foot from the accelerator to the brake pedal and pressed down firmly in an effort to avoid a collision with the fast approaching vehicle on the horizon. My car may not have been a futuristic hover car but it had the finest brake system I could have ever hoped for. We came to a jolting stop several feet from the white Toyota that had just unknowingly dodged a bullet, or rather a car. “That was close,” I began to apologize. “Sorry about that.” In the act of coming to a sudden stop a few of my textbooks in the backseat spilled over the edge and onto the floor of the car. Jon leaned back to retrieve one or two of them and then sat back up, replying, “No problem. Let’s just get home in one piece.” Irony is cruel that way. Before I could even utter one of my sarcastic responses the sound of screeching tires filled the air, but only for a split second, before the world, as I saw it, exploded.

While I was fortunate enough to look ahead to see the halted traffic in front of me, the Jeep Grand Cherokee following behind me was not as lucky. Distracted by his GPS mounted atop his dashboard, he only saw the stopped Ford Focus about twenty feet away. Despite his efforts to stop time and space to avoid the collision, the Jeep plowed into our undersized vehicle at over 60 miles per hour.

Inside our vehicle time seemed to have jumped ahead three seconds with no prior warning to Jon or myself. One moment we were sitting discussing our fortune of cheating fate, and the next moment fate cheated even better. All I remember is coming to consciousness gripping the steering wheel as though I were trying to save it from falling off the face of the earth. My body was seized and I could not force myself to move. A shower of obliterated glass rained down over my head, as well as on top of Jon. He had returned from grabbing the textbooks without a second to spare; had he still been contorted around the seat he surely would have been paralyzed from the incident. But instead he remained frozen in the same position as I, only without a death grip on the steering wheel. Had we not been standing in the face of death the moment would have been beautiful—almost poetic: the shards of glass glistening against the purple and orange hued clouds of dusk, airbags appearing to seemingly burst from nowhere to contribute to the scenic view of Portland’s downtown skyline above the Willamette River. I should have savored the moment...

My heart was still beating but I was frozen in place, unable to move or speak. My mind was perplexed by what had just taken place, as if I could not manage to put the pieces together. Jon snapped my hypnosis as his faint voice murmured words that I could not make out.

“What?” I replied.

“Are you dead?” This time the words were clear and I realized that I was talking again.

“Yeah, I think so,” I answered, my mind still in a haze.

Simultaneously we turned to peer through what used to be the back windshield. There was movement in the Jeep, meaning no fatalities this evening for the news channels to harp about. A car pulled up alongside us to verify that we had not been turned into applesauce (that is how I imagine a human body might look after being
splattered against another object). We confirmed that, all things considered, we were perfectly fine. We gathered the nice couple's information as witnesses and parted ways with them; they continued to their destination and we eased the mangled metal cage with wheels onto the shoulder of the freeway.

The exchange of information with the other driver went without trouble, and when we finished he was able to go on about his evening, his Jeep with hardly a scratch on it. The Ford, on the other hand, was totaled and would need to be towed. Jon and I stood on the side of the road, still in our baseball clothing, until we were picked up and transported away. I called James and wished him happy birthday, informing him that his present from me was his brother still being alive. After trying to trade Jon's life for an iPod or twenty dollars, he finally accepted his gift and thanked me.

Now that the heated seats and color-changing cup holders were no longer in commission, I could relive my hope of one day owning the first hover car in Oregon. However, the insurance company would only offer to pay for another Ford Focus, so I took the heated seats and am living like the king of the middle-class once again.

**Homework**

*Justin Robertson*

I have just finished reading “This Boy’s Life.” I can put the rest off until tomorrow. If I try to do too much now I won’t be able to pick anything up the rest of the weekend. That was a good story. This is the closest memoir to my life yet. I could use some donuts and ice cream. It’s late but I know that Tonalli’s is open until one. I get wrapped up in some warmth, and then out to Alberta. When I get there, there is a line that I wait in patiently looking at all the ice cream I could possibly stuff between a donut. When it was my turn the young lady behind the counter asks, “What are you having?”

“I’ll have a donut sandwich,” I say.

“With what kind of donut?”

“The Apple fritter.”

“What kind of ice cream?”

“Vanilla.”

She got to work crafting a delicious treat for me. When she is finished she hands it to me and says, “This is a good one. I have always wanted to eat one with a fritter. Everyone else just uses regular donuts.”

“It’s good,” I say. “Do you want a bite?”

She says “no” politely.

I dig in. It’s so delicious.

When I’m done I head back home and watch Bored to Death. The way I feel. It’s about an undercover detective who solves mysteries. The show is funny. Not demanding. I don’t feel like I have to laugh. It’s kind of comedy that just keeps you from being bored. The people in this series give up important things, just to not be bored. I can’t remember the last time I gave up my boredom to mystery. It’s not always predictable. I can’t remember the last thing that wasn’t predictable. I could have many mysteries in my life. I want the kind of mystery that can’t be solved with logic or school; it can’t be solved by a beautiful lady or a wad of cash. I can’t remember the last time I had Donuts and watched T.V. I’m living vicariously through sugar and electricity.
Inseparable

Benjamin Fitzgerald

I am sixteen, and he is fifteen. Our older brother Matt recently returned from Florida with his newly-christened fiancée in tow. Everything they do is obnoxious — they’re so damn ‘lovey-dovey’ make-out-in-the-living-room-cause-we’re-so-attractive-together, and Sam and I are sick of it. However, there is not a thing he or I can do about the situation, so we sit on the back porch and drink Diet Coke out of our twelve-ounce yellow plastic glasses and complain. “What the hell is with their stupid bird pecks?” “Why doesn’t he just shove his tongue down her throat? It would be less annoying!”

I am twenty-one, and Iron and Wine plays over the stereo. I’m sitting on the front porch; the door is open. It is after one a.m., and a big furry dog sits on the porch at my feet. A yellow twelve-ounce plastic cup sits next to me, filled with requisite diet pop. I wish that Sam were with me right now, because I’ve got a lot on my mind, and he’s always been a good person to unburden myself to. I can see him, as Hamlet says, in my mind’s eye, sitting in the blue lawn chair across from me. It’s comforting to know that I can still see him here with me, if only I make believe.

We are nine now — that is, I am nine, he eight — and the living room is strewn with all manner of stuffed animals: mostly bears, but there are also rabbits, dogs, raccoons, a tiger, my ninja frog, and a stubby walrus named Taylor. There are at least fifty animals littering the floor. A terrible war is raging, and all the animals (stuffedies, we call them) have chosen sides. The faction leaders are Big Teddy and Muscle Bear, the largest and fiercest of all the animals. (As we know, might makes right in kingdom animalia.) Once friends, years of strife have turned them against one another, and despite their mutual respect, they grudgingly lead their two armies into battle.

I am twenty, sitting in my cozy living room in Northeast Portland. I’m feeling discouraged, so I’ve brought Winnie the Pooh along for moral support — I am lonely, and he keeps me company. I’ve a blanket wrapped over me as I browse through Netflix on the Wii, and thought I will most likely settle upon That ’70s Show or 3rd Rock from the Sun, because comedies cheer me up, the choice barely matters to me. I am searching only for a distraction, and television makes a good one.

We’re ten and eleven, and our older brother, sixteen, has kicked us out of the bedroom we once shared and usurped it as his own domain. Now we sleep on two pathetic gray mats, about two inches thick, laid out on the living room floor. It’s late summer in Sacramento, and though it is evening, our ineffectual air conditioner means the air in the house is still at least 85°. Despite this, the injustice of the move burns deeper than the stuffy night. It’s Tuesday, we’re watching Smallville, and BAM! the room is all Matt’s now. Although we no longer share a bed, Sam and I are so accustomed to sleeping side by side that we’ve pushed the mats together on the floor. We lie in bed and whisper battle plans to one another when Dad pounds on the wall: “Be quiet out there!” We’ve woken the sleeping giant.

Twenty-one again. I lie on the mattress sitting on the floor of my basement bedroom. Scattered on the bed are mostly bears, but also a dog, a raccoon, a gorilla, an armadillo, my ninja frog, and a massive dragon named Neoterikos. Big Teddy is temporarily functioning as my pillow, and Muscle Bear hugs me as I try to sleep. The night is surprisingly muggy for Portland, Oregon, especially for this basement, which is usually frigid. I toss and turn and throw my blankets about, but can’t get to sleep. My roommate has already passed out, not plagued by the insomnia which is harassing me, so I can’t even share in his conversation as dreams continue to evade my weary mind.

It is summer. I am twelve or thirteen, I really don’t remember. So much of my childhood runs together in my mind, and I can’t separate sometimes things that happened at nine from things that happened at thirteen. Sam and I are the essence of boys, and we’ve been digging around in our backyard. We’ve dug a big cut in the ground that we mislabel a trench. We have little plastic cowboys and Indians that we bought at Raley’s down the street for a couple of bucks. The ditch has been filled with water, and it func-
tions as a river for our game. Pebbles have been gathered, the cowboys and Indians assembled as opposing teams. Now, we throw the rocks at the enemy pieces, hoping to knock them all down. The first team to kill all their opponents wins!

This time I'm twenty. I am visiting a friend of mine who lives on the college campus. It is the three-year anniversary of her brother's death, so I bought her a pie to comfort her. It is marionberry, the same sort of pie that Sam and I ate at Thanksgiving last year. Brianna and I sit together at the island in her kitchen, and we share stories of our brothers. She tells me how her brother Ryan always lived on the edge, how he made everyone around him laugh. "He was always so full of life, and everyone who knew him loved him." She shows me videos of him goofing around at the office where they used to work; he had cut holes in a box, and a friend inside was playing the office robot. I tell her about the trench warfare that Sam and I used to do, and how, on Google Earth, you can see the scars we left in our backyard. So we punch in the address, look up my old house on Decathlon Circle, and sadly discover that whoever lives there now has fixed the backyard up. The battleground is gone.

I don't remember how old I was. Sam and I are sitting on the back porch, a favorite hangout spot of ours on those hot August nights. I'm rocking back and forth on a gross tan-colored plastic chair. I don't know why, but Sam decides it's a good idea to shove me while I'm leaning back. I fall; my head cracks against the pavement. While I don't think I'm crying, because I'm old enough to know better, I am definitely yelling, because I'm freaking pissed. "Sam, you jackass! What did you do that for?" I later discover that I cracked my tooth on impact, and I bring this up often to make him feel guilty - because I am a jackass.

I am twenty-one, and Paul McCartney has replaced Iron and Wine on the stereo. I have filled up nearly six pages of my journal writing this account, stopping only to pour myself another glass of diet generic cola into the old plastic cup and send a couple of emails. It is now almost three a.m., and Denali the dog has gone inside. My tears have dried, and the torrent of emotions has subsided. I am once again a man in control of my feelings (which, I believe, is the only way a man ever wishes to be). I can still see Sam sitting across from me. I picture him vividly in my mind: his dirty bare feet, tight jeans, a gray wife beater, the necklace he wore when we walked to Jack in the Box after Christmas in 2009. ("Dude, you look like a douche. That necklace makes you look like a complete tool." "You're a jerk. And you look like a redneck, like a Luke Danes wannabe.") I can see his brown goatee, the moustache that grows so much like mine, his wry, friendly smile, the brown hair that mops thickly across his forehead. (I have always been jealous of how much body his hair has.)

How I wish he was here with me now - not just in the memories of the past, but here in late August 2011, sitting and sharing a two liter bottle of diet soda, talking about life and God and border collies, Star Trek and Hercules - here in the flesh: mortal; alive. But his flesh is gone, transformed into cinder and smoke, burned up in the flame of a crematorium, his ashes spread somewhere I'll never know. I couldn't even stay in Sacramento for the memorial service, because I had to fly home and return to work. I declined to visit his body at the morgue, because I wished to remember him as he was the last time I saw him, with his smile, his full brown hair, his big giant heart - before he boarded Southwest Airlines on November 26th, 2010 for home. I still see him, sitting inside of me. He is a part of me, and a parcel of my self was burned up with him, consumed in the ash and dust to which all return. We have always been inseparable.
I watched *Duane Hopwood* tonight. Ever heard of it? It’s a low-key indie film starring David Schwimmer. You know, Ross from *Friends*? Schwimmer plays the titular character; he drinks too much and loses his wife because of it. He has two daughters, and he’s a wonderful father, but he makes some bad decisions over the course of the movie that drive the plot forward. The character is wonderful. The acting is wonderful. Schwimmer nails the performance and, physical appearance aside, in no way resembles his legendary character from the popular sitcom.

Aside from *Friends*, I had only seen Schwimmer in two other roles, only one of which I will discuss here: a secondary character in a Harrison Ford film my brother Sam and I rented... well, because Harrison Ford was in it. Schwimmer’s character there was a lot like Ross in his mannerisms, if not his likeability; he was obviously cast so as to be the less appealing romantic candidate for the lead heroine than the eminently more dashing (and older) Mr. Ford.

After watching *Six Days, Seven Nights* (I looked the title up on IMDB), Sam expressed his dislike for the Ross actor: “He always plays the same role. He was cast in this movie to be un-likeable!” Both avid *Friends* fans, he told me once, contemplatively, “I guess my two least favorite characters are Ross and Monica, the Geller siblings.”

I, however, have always been deeply attached to Ross. Maybe it’s because Rachel (Jennifer Aniston) was the first woman I ever saw that made me think, “Wow!” I thought she was superbly beautiful even before I liked girls. Hell, I disliked Princess Leia simply because she was a girl (I was ten), but I still thought Rachel was hot. I didn’t even know what sex was, but I sure liked Rachel Green!

I think I like Ross because he loves Rachel. And Rachel loves him. And gosh darn it, the whole damn world knows that they’re meant to be together. They’re the leads! Sure, Monica and Chandler are great together, and Phoebe scored a winner when she married Mike, and I love Eric’s hot red-headed neighbor as much as anyone (different sitcom, I know), but Ross and Rachel are the definitive romance. They are Antony and Cleopatra without empires to lose and asps to bite their breasts. They are John Crichton and Aeryn Sun without the spaceship and the pulse pistols. They were born to be with one another.

Sam knew that I love Ross. I recorded a song once with the lyric, “I am watching another comedy/And I wish that they were you and me/The romantic leads;” he knew immediately which romantic leads I was thinking of. While I was home for Christmas 2010, Sam and I watched “The One with the Lesbian Wedding,” and there’s this scene where Carol’s father isn’t there to give her away to Susan, so Ross, her ex-husband, walks her down the aisle in his place. Sam told me, “That is so something you would do. You would walk your lesbian ex-wife to marry another man.”

“Thanks Sam. I’m sure that will happen to me at some point in my life.” I wasn’t even being sarcastic when I said that.

Ever since then, I have thought of myself as Ross. I’m awkward, moderately attractive, I’ll never make as much money as he does, but I’ve got the biggest heart this side of a Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup on Valentine’s day, and that seals the deal. I am Ross. I just haven’t met my Rachel.

I have spent 500 words detouring from my point—my first thought after watching *Duane Hopwood* was that I should tell Sam he needs to watch it, because it proves that David Schwimmer can act, that he can act well, and that he has been unfairly typecast since *Friends* went off the air.

That thought only lasted a millisecond before I realized that Sam was dead. It changed to, ‘I wish Sam was still alive, so I could watch this movie with him. Then I could show him I was right all along.’ Sometimes, I have those moments. I forget that he’s dead. They’re rare, and they die sooner that a fruitfly, but they happen.

It’s been over a year now since Sam died. I’ve never dealt with it properly. I tried to go back to school, but I was too emotional to give a damn. I spent an entire summer lying around on the couch watching Netflix, doing everything in my power not to think about...
him. I went to counseling for a while, and it helped, but after a while I roadblocked and didn't process anything. Six months ago, I wrote a mini-memoir about him in a much more compelling format than the present one, and I thought a curtain had fallen; I'd finished my mourning and I was ready to get back to living.

But two weeks ago, I realized that I'm still pretty badly fucked. I close my eyes and I see his body swaying over the river, his neck snapped, the rope wrapped tight around his throat, his body dangling like a motherfucking noodle, limp and cold and white. I never saw his body after the incident; but my imagination, usually stagnant, is pretty fucking vivid in this respect.

Jesus tells us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But I can't give my pain to God. I point blank refused in the middle of a prayer. "I'm not ready to give this to you Lord. I need to hang on to it. This is my pain! It's tearing me to hell, driving me to sin, and frelling with my mind, but I can't let it go."

The truth is, deep in my heart, I wish that I had died instead of Sam. I wish to God that I had. God had a different will, but there it is. Thinking about Sam brings me so much damn pain. I don't know how to process it, I can't figure out what to make of it, so I just don't think about it. I lock it away like an old-fashioned fool, and I do my damn best not to bring it up.

But a shadow and a threat has been growing in my mind, and it came to light two weeks ago. By ignoring Sam's memory, my brain has started to delete it. When I try to think about him, memories don't float to the surface. They stay trapped under the ice. It's hard for me to remember the adventures we went on together, and we spent eighteen years embarking upon them!

That is unacceptable.

I must not forget Sam's life. I must not cease living because I'm too damn frightened to face my horror.

The only thing more horrifying than the image of Sam's body blowing in the wind is the thought of forgetting that image.

So I watch Friends.

FDR Memorial

Casey Fuller

Before they were statues;
before they were shadows;
before there was a wall
and a sidewalk and a door;

before promises were made
and they looked to a future;
before they were four men from
small towns and one from Chicago;

before there was a Chicago
and the trains that brought them;
before they thought of being brought
and before they thought of anywhere;

before they were men instead of
statues and before they were bronzed;
before they were photos a sculptor
used to work from and before they

seemed similar and could simply be
called poor; before they could be
summed up and described on this paper;
before they had boots, before they

had hats, before they had their hands
in their pockets and arms—they were just
men, without a history, lost, waiting forever
to fall into line.
Lorien Pelletier

From Tiananmen to Taipei

Micaela Tucker

Second Place in “Spark” Contest

She found a freckle on her cheek. It was motionless like the shovel-smashed rat decaying in the ditch near the house. For two days, the stale air held the stench of pale intestine flattened against gravel and skin. The boy poked its hardened body with the stubby finger of a fallen tree branch. Squatting on the lawn, his mint green shorts caressed his mud and grass soaked heels that barely touched the ground as he peered over the ditch, with stick in hand, towards the furry lump and lifted its cordate paw.

She found the freckle while scouring her glass face. Interestingly, She did not care much about appearance. Her blue walnut eyes perused her standing reflection. Handrail arms with doorknob wrists and crooked fingers latched to palm around the overhead moon-shaped handle. Excess flesh clung to her waist below bulky, skyline ribs. The subway car shook on the track as it turned. Startled, She returned to her gaze. Her eyes were Windex blue, but large pupils and fat black caterpillar eyelashes brought darkness to her fair complexion. Perhaps She was pretty.

She felt empty. She watched her chest expand with air and remembered inhaling double-apple molasses dredged tobacco while sinking into the typical free college couch with the engulfing off-beige floral cloud cushions and the sugary brownish spot covered with a thrift store purchased pied serape blanket. Voices and laughter commingled with smoke but her mind fixed on faces of women ravaged by men. The process, she learned, was similar to stuff your own teddy bear, except men plunge women with any object handy to make mothers and sisters meat on a stick, or pipe, or blade. But like the teddy bear, he gets to take her home when finished. Controlled women uncontrollably drip bodily waste as morning coffee filter droplets get swallowed by the black puddle filling the glass pot below repainted kitchen cabinets.

The brakes squealed as the automated voice announced the metro stop in three languages. Feet shuffled in from the platform. The
slumped Chinese woman dragged her burden through the sardined subway. The frail greying woman forced her free hand against strangers’ chests. With fingers outstretched and face pressed towards her bosom, she cried, “mama, meimei” (mother, little sister). With dim eyes still fixed on her own reflection, she pushed the sun-stained hand aside and noticed its tender warmth, cracked like oatmeal raisin cookies, and covered in peasant filth. When the vagrant dawdled past her, she inhaled with relief, then choked on the trail of powdered sweat, urine, and mud.

She wiped the dirtied hand on her pants and tried to wipe the woman from her mind. She bunched the loose denim on her outer thigh as her excuses curdled. That needy hand was warm, pulsing with humanity. She had been nothing but cold, expecting compassion to ignite her hollowed, complacent heart. She looked at her cheek, impressed with Apollo’s kiss and waited for the spark.

Notes from our judge:
The poetic and vibrant language used in this piece really makes it come alive. Each paragraph is filled with sensory words and descriptions that form an interesting perspective of the author’s world. Though the darker aspects of this story are made clear with blunt and concise descriptions by the narrator, they are entwined with lines such as “its tender warmth, cracked like oatmeal raisin cookies, and covered in peasant filth” that add brightness and a strange sense of hopefulness to painfully sad and broken images. This combination of sorrow and beauty draws the reader in and creates a hauntingly beautiful piece.
Those little hooligans ate my house.
I never saw it coming.
I sat reading the paper in my chair
And first they attacked the plumbing.
Those little demons gnawed little holes
in all my licorice pipes
Next thing I know through the roof falls
a scrawny little boy in stripes.
When he hit the floor I knew there would be trouble
His face was covered in frosting.
His sister jumped in after him
eating so much apparently was exhausting.
I stood for a second to catch my breath
Then I reached for the phone.
I dialed the only three digit number I knew
And listened to the recording's drone.
I didn't know what number to pick
There was no children eating my house choice.
So I slammed down the receiver
and began to raise my voice.
"You hooligans stop this very second.
Leave the gingerbread where it sits.
get back to where you came from
or I will fetch my oven mitts.
I gave them warning,
I gave them time
But they were breaking and entering
they were committing a crime
When they continued to gorge themselves
On my chocolate kitchen table
I ran to preheat the oven
as fast as I was able.
The dinger buzzed
Chimney nearly gone
So I grabbed the criminals by the hair
And threw some seasonings on
I tossed them in the oven
for the crime they committed
once they were just barely crisp
in my mind they were acquitted.

Observation on an Affair

Bethany Quesnell

I watched him sit at the table with the largest cup of coffee
I had ever seen and look impatiently around the crowded café. He
looked tired, like he hadn’t slept in a day or two. The deep purple
smudges under his eyes looked like storm clouds and his t-shirt and
jeans were wrinkled. He checked his watch and his left heel started
bouncing beneath the table, impatient.

When she walked in I knew why he’d been so antsy. His leg
stilled when he saw her and his eyes followed as she walked past.
I knew she had come to meet him there, though she didn’t look
around. She strode purposefully through the door and up to the
counter to order a sophisticated espresso and classy-looking pastry.
Then, food and steaming beverage in hand, she pivoted on her heel
and strolled to his table. He nodded and she sat.

No words were spoken for ages. They simply sat, he with his
jumbo cup of Joe and she with her snack, sipping silently together.
His once-sleepy eyes seemed to brighten as the moments passed and
her lips curved into a small smile. When she finished her food she
asked, “Peanut butter chicken wings?”

He considered this, tilting his head to the right. His left heel
resumed its bounce. “Sounds good.”

“I was thinking of that night we went to that party with the
horrible food…”

“The one with the suspicious looking fish and the fat guy who
was telling those awful jokes?”

“Yeah.”

“And we went to that park afterword.”

“Mhmm. But we were both so hungry that we left before you
could really see the city lights.”

“I remember.”

“Well, I was thinking we could go to that park and have those
wings…like a picnic.”

The bouncing stopped. “Are you going to be able to get away
tonight?”
She shrugged, “Most likely.”

He nodded and stood, tossing a bill on the counter. “I’ll see you later, then.”

Facing the overbearing cult that is Starbucks Coffee Company is inevitable. The curious Google user will type “how to” and instantly be paired with “order at Starbucks.” The quest for success at any Starbucks location is a necessity. Treat this coffeehouse like a delicate infant. You must cherish Starbucks and love it. If you don’t pat a baby’s back with the right amount of intensity, the baby will never burp. Instead, you shall have a regurgitation of foul food on your favorite shirt. Learning the steps of Starbucks ordering is of utmost importance. This is not about getting the perfect beverage. Perfection is far from your unworthy hands. Ignore the “extras” of your coffee and order a (relatively) basic drink. Listen carefully and you shall receive your caffeinated beverage in due time.

A fulfilling Starbucks experience must have humility. Before you even enter this coffee establishment, you must face a bitter truth. Starbucks, aka the Evil Corporation, is purchasing goods produced under exploitative labor conditions and ceaselessly ripping off low-wage workers in third world countries. These workers do not earn enough money to feed themselves, much less their malnourished children. Face the reality — this won’t change anytime soon. The persona of Starbucks is a despot. The Evil Power will claim that the hodgepodge of cynical rumors are simply myths.

Accept that there is a deep evil embedded upon this corporation. Have you ever found it strange that the symbol of Starbucks is a siren? Let me use alliteration to emphasize my point. The sadistically sinister and sexy siren of Starbucks is satirically stopping our sense of security. Ever since Starbucks came to life, coffee shops around the world are envious of Starbucks’ success. The siren used to have her goodies showing until the logo changed in 1987. The lustful allure of Starbucks causes poor saps to splurge on seasonally flavored coffees instead of flowers for their beloveds, hence why the divorce rate is up. Just accept this conglomeration of malevolence and step into their doors.
The lady in front of you is decked in Chanel. The munchkin brat next to her is a Haitian child. You wouldn’t know that the poor son of a gun used to be malnourished if the adoptive mother hadn’t Americanized him. Now the child is a royal fat ass. The Chanel lady mutters an inaudible phrase. “Give me a tall half-skinny half-1 percent extra hot split quad shot (two shots decaf, two shots regular) latte with whip.” Now you’re wondering, “What the bloody fuck was just said?” Starbucks is a language. Ignore any rules of grammar you were once taught; capitalization and commas are too mundane for Starbucks. Modern day English will soon be as a quietus as Latin. To be honest, the barista has no idea what the lady wants. Her order has such a plethora of drinking elements. Even her gustatory taste buds cannot grasp the complexity of her order. Do you remember when I told you to humble yourself? Do it again. This siren bitch called Starbucks is a supreme deity.

Now the time has arisen. Step up to the barista and ignore her smile. She doesn’t think your well-formed face is cute. Truth be told, she’s secretly laughing at your confusion. Like her siren god, she is a charlatan. Open your mouth and express your inner essence. You cannot pronounce the drink you want but you understand what it is. My father hates coffee almost as much as Hitler hated Jews. Nonetheless, my father knows exactly what he wants as he orders a grande iced chai tea. Keep in mind that “grande” is Starbucks’ medium. Without comprehending this irony, my dad will still gulp down his inorganic tea. Your job is to confess your soul’s drinking desires and the barista shall forgive your bewilderment.

State your drinking size above all else. The correct pronunciation is imperative. The sizes in fluid ounces are as follows: demi (3), short (8), tall (12), grande (16), venti (20/26), trenta (31). Now I must clear up any confusion. Demi is not the demi-god of coffees sitting just below the most supreme size; demi is about espresso shots. Short is fun-sized. Tall is bigger than fun-sized but still considered small. Grande translates to large but is Starbucks’ medium. Venti is Starbucks’ large as well as Italian for twenty. Strangely, there are theoretical locations which treat the venti size to be 26 fluid ounces. Trenta is Italian for thirty yet the trenta cup is capable of holding 31 fluid ounces. (Note that trenta is not offered for hot drinks. One too many dumb asses have spilt their 170 degrees Fahrenheit beverage onto their laps and now cannot produce sperm.)

Do you have any temperature desires for your coffee? How about the amount of caffeine that you want? Place these after the drink size. Order it iced, 140 degrees (30 degrees less than average), or extra hot. Do you now want to add shots? No, Starbucks cannot legally sell you alcoholic beverages. (Unfortunately, some probably do.) Ignore the denotation of Starbucks lingo and acknowledge that the more shots you have, the more caffeine you shall consume. Emerge this temperature nuance into the rest of your Starbucks order.

Now you may go forth and add the beverage’s adjectives. Some of the more common descriptions are general and not too Starbucks savvy. Caramel equals caramel, white equals white mocha, mocha Valencia equals a mocha with orange syrup, cinnamon spice equals cinnamon syrup, vanilla equals vanilla, java chip equals chocolate chip, and so forth. If this descriptions list doesn’t offer what you want, get over it.

You are now stuttering. The breath you took wasn’t large enough to finish your order. Remember the barista’s smirk of amusement? It’s back. It would do you well to recall the supremeness I bequeathed on Starbucks. Unlike the vomiting baby you either have raised or will raise, the Siren of Starbucks will grant occasional mercy. Accept this mercy with humility and thank the coffee lords. Back to reality. You must state the beverage itself. Throw out any remaining descriptions you once thought of to avoid being a blundering idiot. Quickly blurt out coffee, latte, cappuccino, macchiato, Americana, or mocha. (Latte – espresso, steamed milk, and foam. Cappuccino – latte with more foam. Macchiato – vanilla latte with little vanilla and lots of foam. Americana – pretty damn close to a latte but diluted with hot water. Mocha – espresso with steamed milk mixed with chocolate.)

Congratulations! You have successfully completed your $5.27 order! Feel free to stretch your smile until your eye balls pop out. Coffee bean farmers in third world countries will continue to live in
poverty. The barista, who is also a college student, will now be able to afford a page out of her 826-page biology book. The people behind you are only mildly annoyed with your slowness. A tyrant CEO has reaped what he has not sowed. Lastly, you have spent your lunch money on 792 calories of unnatural coffee that won't fill up your stomach. Do you still have that successful grin on your face? I didn't think so. You have just been Starfucked.

**Untitled**

*Abigail Swanson*

God seeps from small holes
In the skin of oranges and pours
Jaggedly
Down the crags of the maple.
Man--Who dies dark
And cracked
In the hard and cold
Form-molded crannies of the world
Buds and blooms Out Here.
We can see the barbs
On each blade of grass
And the breath of all trees
Washes over us.
It stays warm for days
Crackling across the country
Through mountain canyons
Dipping
In frosted glacier streams
Carrying our breath with it.

The world cries out to us
Whispers from the curves
Of fiddle headed ferns.
I have finally finished my novel. It is my ultimate work, my masterpiece, Everest. The greatest sense of accomplishment I have ever experienced is surging through my body. I have sacrificed my marriage, my children, my home, everything for my novel. It is honestly a 900-page work of pure genius. I will soon begin to send copies of my manuscript to publishing houses, but first I am thrilled to hear my best friend Richard’s thoughts on my piece. I am meeting him for coffee in fifteen minutes and I can’t control my excitement.

Richard sits across from me, in silence, with the 900 pages in a neat stack on the table in front of him. I wait in anticipation.

He begins to pick up each page, one by one, slowly tearing them in half and discarding them in the Starbucks garbage bin. The grin leaves my face as I watch him do this, page by page. I feel hot tears form in my eyes by page 300. The very last page, in which my entire life’s work comes skillfully together, he packs with marijuana and rolls into a joint. He leans back, taking a hit of my heart and soul, grins, and watches me as I fall into uncontrollable sobbing.

John walked down the street next to Linda. When she stopped to look at something in a shop window, he stopped too. He usually hated this mundane activity – especially on dates when there were other things to do. More fun things. He sidestepped an old lady whose purse swung to and fro from her elbow and held in a sigh. He needed new gloves, his hands were freezing. Maybe tomorrow he and Linda could do something more worthwhile. He had always been a big fan of movie dates because you could sit in the back row and... on second thought, maybe he should get a haircut. He ran his hand through his hair and looked down at Linda.

Her brown hair blew away from her face in the icy breeze and she shivered, looking up at John. She thought that his hair was a bit long as he combed his fingers through the mess. She hoped he’d cut it soon. As the two walked they looked into the shop windows, allowing silence to replace words today. She liked silence. It meant she could ignore the things in the windows and just... think. John’s idea to go for a walk was sweet, but her nose could no longer handle the cold. She wished for coffee.

She drifted off into her own head, her thoughts straying from her to-do list to her freezing nose. She imagined John turning to her, “Do you want coffee? I’m freezing.”

“Yes, please,” she smiled at him. He told her that he knew a place and took her hand, leading her into a cute little coffee shop just near her apartment. “This is my favorite place!” Linda said.

“Mine too!” John replied, surprised. A sharp breeze woke her from her daydream.

The next window was a café. Linda took John’s hand and led him into the warm glow of incandescent light bulbs. The barista glanced up at the sound of the bell and offered a barely audible “welcome.” Milk, espresso, syrups, he measured each into a Styrofoam to-go cup. Maybe they’ll order something interesting, he thought. They seemed to be an interesting couple – him with his
shaggy hair and her with her type-A outfit. He glanced at the clock. His shift would end soon.

The couple rushed up to the counter, shivering. “Tall skim vanilla latte, please,” they said in unison and glanced at each other in surprise.

The Best Man

Austin Dunn

Honorable Mention in “Spark” Contest

He stood there in the blistering sunlight with the microphone in his hand. The precipitation on his forehead could be nervous bullets or the first signs of a heat stroke. Both were deadly. As he stared blankly over the heads and the eyes directed at him, a movement caught his attention. Across the field where the groom and his bride just said their vows was a vineyard; a small potbelly pig had found its way through the maze of grapes. He suddenly craved a large plate of sizzling bacon.

He snapped back to reality and once again realized he had to say something. The arbor surrounding him felt like it was going to collapse. It had to be heavy. He hoped if it did, it would kill him.

A case of Schlitz Malt Liquor was set on the ground near his feet, full. He should have had a couple of those. His mind was practically blank; he didn't know where to start.

It was all so much easier when there was only a mirror in front of him. Maybe the case of Schlitz would have made his speech flow with the essence of a ballroom dancer: flawless, smooth.

He began his speech. “I would like to begin by telling you all how much I appreciate the hockey stick...”

A woman in the audience wearing a single blue velvet glove looked at him as if he were crazy. Had he really just said Hockey Stick? His chin dreadfully met the top of his pink tie while he thought about making a run for the vineyard about a hundred yards in the distance. The rows went on forever and he imagined running for days and never seeing anything but rows and rows of grapes. The escape would be nice. But he knew he couldn't really survive in the wilderness. Not during bear season.

He lifted his head again to face the group of poachers.

“Life is a single color,” he said, not knowing what was going to come next. “Each one of us is a certain color, a solid color. And that’s all we are. Nothing more. Nothing less.” He still had no idea where this was going. His mouth was open and words were spilling out. “When two people meet and fall in love their colors mix.
Simply, you become a candy cane. Our colors are intertwined and eventually you ask yourself how you ever lived without that other color making you complete. Nobody wants a one color candy cane.”

There it was. The words that spilled out of his mouth came together in a perfect flow of creativity and love. Couples gently pulled each other close and fingers interlocked. It was perfect.

“Let's raise our glasses.”
Pet Friendly Neighbors

Bethany Quesnell

"Have you seen Charles, my cat?" Jeremy asked, craning his neck to peer around the neighborhood as he spoke. George gulped and took a stabilizing breath. "Hi Jeremy. How are you?" He gave a weak smile. Jeremy glanced up in surprise before guiltily looking away and exclaimed, "Oh! Hi George. I didn't know it was you." He gave a sort of half-laugh, half-groan and repeated, "Have you seen Charles? I haven't seen him in a couple of days."

A brief flash of surprise registered on George's face before he answered, "The last time I saw your cat was a few days ago over by Mr. Johnson's fence." He waved vaguely toward the area in question.

"What would Charles be doing over by Mr. Johnson's fence?"
"I'm sure I, uh, haven't got a clue. Maybe...the, uh, old man has mice..."
"Hmm..."
"What?"
"Oh I was just thinking that the last time I saw Bud he was... you know...by the fence, too..." Jeremy's words trailed off and he felt his blood rush to his cheeks.

"You saw Bud?" George asked with sudden panic. "Over by Old Man Johnsons fence, you saw Bud? When?" His voice broke on the last word.

"Oh a few days ago..." Jeremy replied. He swallowed hard and looked toward the fence with a long face. "Such a beautiful dog," he said under his breath, then shot a flustered look toward George. If I'm not careful, he thought, George will find out.

"What was that?"
"I was just thinking about that time Bud chased Charles up the tree at the end of the block," Jeremy lied. "You remember? I thought Bud was going to eat Charles."

George paled.
My Barn
Abigail Swanson

As soon as the sun has brightened the sky enough to pick my way across the field, I find myself pausing at the unpainted side of my small barn. Three sides have been repainted in classic barn red, dull and utilitarian. The back is still painted the dusty straw yellow of my husband’s mistress’ hair. The wild grasses that butt against the barn are cut low and clean, the goats my daughter is raising for 4-H have been more useful that I could have imagined. The large front door slides open easily on the freshly sanded and greased track. The barn is brimming with life, the chickens cluck around my ankles as I feed them too much scratch, but who ever heard of spoiled chickens? One of the hinges on Daisy’s stall is loose; it wiggles as she brushes past it and lumbers out the door to the pasture. She’s walking slower these days, udder heavy and swinging, the calf will be here any day.

The barn cats, Smoke and Fire, call me over to admire their six kittens. Their eyes are just open, still milky and sticky, but they totter over to the edge of their straw nest to lick my fingertips. Five of the young ones are dark grey like their mother, but one female is orange like her father, and together they light up the dark corner of the barn. She’ll be a wild one too, but a great mouser. I tuck the escaping straw into the corner and fluff their nest a bit. While Smoke was giving birth Fire never left her side, licking her ears, nuzzling her head after each birth. He only left to kill a mouse which he presented to her after the sixth, the little wet bundle of orange fur who I think I’ll call Ember.

Climbing up the ladder to the hay loft I can hear the birds cooing in the rafters. The soft rustle is calming. The hay loft is nearly bare, only half a bale in the corner, but I sweep it again anyway in anticipation of my first harvest. The emptiness is no longer frightening, I know I will fill it, in a few days at the most, and we’ll make it through another winter.
There is always his sidekick above the elbow-deep vats of scalding water (also called “sinks” by people with a more colloquial lexicon). The high pressure hose blasts food from the plates. A great pair, but they always leave you with at least a few burns. There is always a waist high metal table near Hobart, with at least one soiled mug or plate from snacking staffers. It can pile up to about two feet of solid dishes during meals and prep times.

At camp there are two kinds of warm chocolatey drinks. There is hot cocoa and hot cocoa. Hot cocoa at camp is bland. Tending towards piss-water status, it does warm you up, but with a flavor that barely registers on the palate. This is the drink of choice for the campers, who somehow have been duped into believing that you only use one cocoa packet per cup. Bah! What folly! The staff always drinks Hot Cocoa. Deep, dark, and rich, this frothy brew warms the very marrow of your bones. After hours in the freezing rain, the Hershey god’s sweet nectar brings you back to the world of the warm. Just sitting in the warm kitchen around the island, drinking your cocoa is, perhaps, the best possible memory you can have at camp. The kitchen is the Ellis Island of the camp, accepting the cold, homeless, and soggy staff immigrants from times of work.

At my camp the pantry in the back is bear-scarred. With claw marks on our floor, and a beaten wall, we’re surprised that there hasn’t been a repeat incident. The bear climbed through the wall’s weak point, an old window frame that had been patched over, and began to gorge itself for the oncoming winter. Our chef walked in at 5:30 in the morning, wondering why her pantry was full of black fur. After getting over her flabbergastation, our chef fled to the head wrangler’s house. Wrangler Nick grabbed his gun, but by that point the bear had vamoosed, apparently more afraid of the Herold family than in love with food.

Finally…the smell! I absolutely adore the smell of camp kitchens. Part propane, after burn smell. Part baking bread, part pine, part garlic, part mysterious and rich musk, and part sweet. It smells like friendship, good conversations, late nights and early mornings. It smells downright warm and cozy…like a hug, it wraps you in its warm embrace. It smells like a thousand good memories. It smells like home.

If I Had to be Caught
Jeriann Watkins

It is a gorgeous day. I swim freely in my lovely, fast-paced stream, loving life. When I first left the cave-pond that had always been my home, I feared I would regret it, but my mind was made up; I needed change. So I left, and I absolutely love life in this action-packed river. And though I have been sheltered, I am not ignorant of the ways of this world. I know the dangers that lurk around every corner, waiting to catch me unawares.

So of course, your bait does not fool me. Yes, that plump worm is tempting, floating there, just begging to be snatched up, but I know that hiding beneath that fleshy mass is a wiry hook – a hook that has caught many fish already, and will catch many more. I refuse to be one of those fish.

Still, the concept is interesting. Can so many fish be that dumb, that unobservant, that reckless – to fall for such a blatant trap? Honestly, to be that oblivious, not to take two seconds to see the slight bit of metal, the line of wire extending from the worm – who is in an extremely odd pose if you stop to think about it – not to notice all these signs is inexcusable.

Could it be that these fish, your previous dinners, were driven by starvation? No, not in this stream. Perhaps they saw all the signs, but there was something else, some reason, another factor that made it worth the risk.

Could it be that these fish, your previous dinners, were driven by starvation? No, not in this stream. Perhaps they saw all the signs, but there was something else, some reason, another factor that made it worth the risk.

Now I am curious.

I swim about, observing the worm, the hook, the line. I know you see me; you are willing me to bite. I stare back at you. I am smarter than those other fish.

Suddenly, there is a change. Something is moving around me. The worm is being dragged out of the water. That poor annelid must have horrid vertigo by now. You pull in your line, set the pole against a rock, and kneel down right at the water’s edge. I see your fingers brush the water causing ripples to spread across the surface. How warm your fingers must be.
Woah. What am I thinking? You are a human being. You fish for sport. You catch way more than you need to eat. You are irreverent and not to be trusted.

And yet, I can see why the whole world goes a-flutter when your kind appears. There is something so… intriguing: dangerous, but also exciting. Now, as I watch you watch me, I swish about, teasing you. How close can I get? Close enough that your fingers will brush against my scales? I am too slick for you to be able to grab me. Plus, I am too careful to get caught.

“Here, fishie fish. Yeah, I see you. You’re beautiful, aren’t you?”

Oh, aren’t you just so charming, Mr. Fisherman? I know what you are. You can’t fool me, no matter how interesting you are. I turn my back, making as if I’m going to leave. What will you say? I move much slower than necessary, hoping to hear you call me back, when I feel another disturbance in the current. Something’s entering the water! I feel myself being lifted. A net! You had a net all along! I flop about, trying to jump out, but to no avail. The mesh sides are too high.

“Shhhh, calm down, it will be ok. Shhh.”

Your voice is soft, low. I want to believe your words. But I know better. I should never have swum so close.

“Let’s take a look at you.” You’ve lifted the net out of the water and swung it over the dry land. Even if I did jump out now, I wouldn’t be able to make it to the water. You reach inside as if to grab me. Fat chance. You betrayed me. I’m not going to make it easy for you. I flap my tail, moving my whole body as rapidly and erratically as possible.

“Shhhh…. I’ve got you.”

After only a few attempts, your rough, calloused hand grips me firmly and lifts me out of the net, which falls to the ground as you use both hands to keep me still, looking directly into your eyes. Maybe you’re not lying. Maybe it will be all right. You don’t seem like the humans I’ve heard stories about. You’re not loud. You’re obviously patient, having spent so much time watching me. I guess the best I can hope for is that you’ll kill me quickly, and treat my body respectfully. Please don’t waste me. As a fish, we know that someday we will end up as part of the food chain. The worst thing would be to have my death serve no purpose. But I don’t think you would let that happen. Would you?

“Yeah, you are a beauty. That’s right, calm down. See? That’s not so bad is it? Let’s measure you.”

If I had to be caught, I guess I’m glad it was by you. I can accept my fate now. I look back up at you from the rock you’ve placed me on. I hope you hurry up with this measuring; I’m starting to get parched. This rock is so dry and uncomfortable. I see you shake your head.

“Too big, what a shame.”

And without another thought, word, or glance you throw me back into the chilling water.
The Trolley Wood

Joshua Urie

I made my way down to Purgatory Creek, situated in the heart of the innocuously named city of Eden Prairie. Cars drove by swiftly overhead along the frontage road, but I didn't mind them. Down here, by the trickling, cool water I was alone.

I'd explored the creek bed many times growing up, but somehow always managed to discover something new. Today it was an old rail track, weather-stained from Minnesota's vastly shifting elements, but in remarkably serviceable condition for a track that ended in a pack of earth heaped up to support the road above, winding out from a shaded wood.

Another car zoomed along above, faddish pop music echoing down the creek bed from its open windows. I decided to follow the rails. I knew this small wooded area around the creek, I had played in it many times, how had I never noticed the railway before this? As I stepped beneath the green canopy, the world audibly hushed around me. I felt a deep and ancient peace make itself tangibly known in the quiet breeze of the place. Unaccountably, my heart sighed the equivalent of a satisfied "hallelujah" within me. The rail fronted the creek and led deeper into the woods.

The day had been hot outside the wood, but was cool within. The sun had made me thirsty and I stooped to drink from the creek, unusually clear at this point. My parents had long told me not to drink its water, but I had done so for years and never been ill from it, as far as I could tell. Standing up, I noticed the rail became lost in bramble and underbrush just ahead. It did not seem to continue out the thicket's other side. A blue bird darted by and landed on a branch. I was caught up in its sheer, simple beauty. It was wondrous to see a living creature so naturally blue.

I smiled. This wood was now unfamiliar to me. It had grown larger, and wilder, and more beautiful than a mere year away at college should allow, especially in the city, even if a suburb. This knowledge did not frighten, however. The wood's natural peace was too strong. It rather increased my wonder and fanned my curiosity.

I wandered on a space, quietly following the blue bird as it flew from tree to tree, chirping, eating insects, or fluffing its feathers. In time I heard a clanking sound, obviously mechanical, yet one that seemed entirely in harmony with the surrounding wood. I followed toward its source and soon found rails again. The clanking stopped and voices were sounded; they came from farther down the rail.

Rounding a corner composed of a tall moss-grown stone, I came upon an unexpected, yet, to me, perfectly sensible sight: a bright red trolley car parked along the rails with a makeshift veranda set alongside it. Chinese lanterns glowed along strings hung from stakes lit with large Christmas tree lights. Luminaries lit the ground marking a path from where I stood to the trolley and its party.

For a party it was. Music swelled with fiddle and accordion, ukulele, didgeridoo, and French horn. A bagpipe echoed from further down the train. Each car, painted a single, bright color, connected down the rails, ending in a shiny black engine. The folk eating, drinking, and making merry were varied and diverse as the people of the world in their look and dress, but every voice was raised gaily in laughter and conversation. It was a sight as familiar as a cool drink of water on a hot day.

As I stepped to the veranda a woman separated herself from a group composed of what looked like ancient near-eastern magi, a medieval European court jester, and a contemporary New Zealand sheepherder, though how I recognized the latter I have no idea. She was tall and fair with stars in her laughing green eyes. Her red hair hung in thick waves down her back and sides and her light blue dress whispered over her bare feet and the soft grass along the creek. She came straight to me, arms outstretched in greeting.

"Welcome," she said, taking my head and kissing me softly on my cheeks. "Most welcome." I blushed deep scarlet, I am sure, and managed to mumble some thanks. She smiled kindly in response.

"I am Brighid," she said to my questioning eyes. "This is my wood. Come," she smiled and her cheeks dimpled pleasantly, "come and eat. Be at peace and with joy."
“Shalom!” “Salutations!” “Bienvenidos!” “Well met!” were the greetings lavished upon me by the many guests. I sat at a silver table scattered over with rounded stones glowing pale as moonlight. I was given food and drink, the memory of which I cannot now comprehend. But throughout it all were the people, merry and gay, full of life and laughter, joy and peace, hope and faith and love. My hours among them were sweet and seemed more full and more lasting than many, many spent in other tasks.

Evening had long since dawned and stars peeped through the underlit canopy above, as if envying our company, when I tore myself from my new friends, knowing my parents would worry, adult as I now am, what had become of me. Brighid understood. She motioned to a small, slight man who picked up a haunting lullaby tune. Soon the whole crowd sang in harmony.

Brighid led me up the luminary path on which I had arrived. Just beyond the bend of rock, the wood became again the familiar trees of my youth and I saw the embankment holding up the frontage road and houses inner-lit with electric lights.

“Will you be back?” I asked, wishing English had a plural “you,” as I longed to see them all again. “Will I see you again?”

She smiled and galaxies floated now in her eyes as reflections of the heavenly stars mingled with her own. “You will,” she said. “Though it may be many years, and it won’t be here.”

I nodded and looked up at the stars, oddly bright and close for the city.

“In time,” said her voice, though I looked and she was gone, “you may even join. But for now and forever, Shalom.”

I didn’t turn. Somehow I knew the wood behind me was not the wood I had exited. The stars remained close and my house, visible from the creek bed, looked cheerier and snugger than ever, all lit as it was. I saw family and friends moving as silhouettes in the windows. With joy and a peaceful determination, I made my way home to them.

The King
Zeke Fetrow

The warm trickle from the shower head usually comforts me.
A light stream caressing my every shape.
Tonight is different.
The heavy drops, like stones from a catapult, besiege my fortress of deceit.
Lies sealed behind great wooden doors, unveiled by the incessant battering of the water.
But you cannot wash away guilt.
Guilt is the undying king in the castle of lies.
The shower head sprays furiously stripping away walls and barriers but the king is immortal.
The guilt will always remain.
I scrub angrily, shaving away my skin, and say to myself, “There! What is a castle without walls?”
In a rage I tear at my body ripping away the muscles, “Alas! What are walls if they defend no kingdom?”
Finally pulling the very bones from my frame I shout “What is a king without a castle to protect him?” (I pause for a moment, staring blankly into the mist.)
The king stands alone and naked; stripped of his fortress while the shower head spills its last few drops.
His gates vanquished and his walls crumbled. He is a king who weeps, overcome with guilt, and stands there showering in his tears.
I sit here, just as I sat yesterday and the day previous. They say they want to help me. I don't need help. They intend to fill my head with lies. How locking me up would get me to trust them is beyond me. I'm not crazy; I think I would know that better than anyone. Besides, even a nutcase could tell that they're not real doctors. Real doctors don't snatch people from their homes. This has to do with Rick; I know it does. He must be on the verge of solving his latest case and they're holding me for ransom. I just don't know how he's going to save me this time; their practice could look legitimate from the outside. Rick would never believe I'd gone mad, but it may be difficult to get police involved. But if they are holding me ransom, they will have to reveal that this is all a ruse. They have to tell him they're keeping me until he stops investigating.

I haven't been taking the pills they're trying to give me. The first day, I tried to hide them underneath my tongue, but they knew I hadn't swallowed them. So now, I hide them in my stomach and then wait a few hours. Then they leave my body along with my lunch, and no one is the wiser. They're so clueless. That's how I know this is a hoax. They should know to look for things like that.

I hear them talking about me- the "doctors." True professionals wouldn't discuss a patient within hearing distance. They say I'm an author. That shows what they know. I'm a journalist; there's a difference. I write hardcore news. They also say I'm single, that I have no family in the area. That's not true either, but they have to know that. They wouldn't be holding me if they didn't know that Rick and I are involved. It's been a great arrangement- Rick and I; he solves the cases and I get the scoop before all the other bloodthirsty reporters in this town. I should have known it was too good to come without some risk though. Once he gets me out of here, he owes me.

Oh, I hear them walking by; they're talking about me again. "She is completely uncooperative. She keeps accusing me of being a kidnapper. She keeps saying, "Rick will never stop the investigation!" and "He'll get me out of here, just you wait and see!" Who's Rick? I thought she was a complete hermit."

"She is. She moved into a cottage up in the hills a few years ago. She only comes into town to get groceries every week. She doesn't talk to anyone, except to complain about prices or berate children. Rick is a character in her novel series. He's some sort of private eye."

"So, she thinks that she's..."

"Another character from her books. She answers to her true name because that is the character's alias."

"This is why my dad didn't want me to become an author. They're all insane."

"Yeah, no kidding. Well, all the patients are fed and accounted for, time to clock out. Wanna grab a drink?"

Oh good, they were talking about someone else. That means there are other people here. Rick may have his hands full if he has to save a whole bunch of kidnapped people from a fake psych ward. If anyone can pull it off, he can. I wonder if there are actual crazies here though. A woman who thinks she's one of her characters, that's just insane.
Wanted: Goldilocks

Casey Kerns

It started with a girl,
young and blonde as I recall.
Goldilocks was her name,
and her actions will appall.

To truly understand this tale,
we must return to the beginning.
To tell events as they occurred,
and you'll see that there was sinning.

She came upon a house,
empty in the wood.
She entered uninvited,
which is never any good.

There was porridge on the table
that had been left to cool.
She ate not of one but three,
if not only to be cruel.

Then sat upon the chairs,
in the process breaking one.
You would think that she might leave,
but she simply wasn't done.

She moved into the bedrooms,
and slept in all the beds.
When this poor family returned,
they nearly lost their heads.

They found a stranger sleeping;
their house in such a mess,

and when this girl awoke she ran.
To where is anyone's guess.

So help us please to find this girl
who committed such awful crimes,
and be sure to support the Bear family
through their trying times.
Dear Grandma

Jacquelyn Anderson

Dear Grandma,
Sorry I couldn't visit your apartment full of shit.

A collection of damp spitty cigarette butts, still smoking in their ashy graves.
Reeking of a cat long since dead, leaving phantom piss stains.
Rotting senile Lunchables explode from a tropical fridge.
How can you be so fucking fat if you never eat?
The bathroom a shrine to murdered beauty.
Hair nets strangle, bloody lipstick tubes rip sagging flesh, pancake face cries into the mirror.

Smoke hangs like regret unsettled.
Filthy filmy windows, trap your losses.
Keep it dark, for the devil does his best work in shadows.
An oil slick cave too gloomy for bats to shit in: here it is always midnight.
4 dollar vodka and vicodin.
Your bread and wine, body and blood.
Communion of the depraved.

You play the victim, the Christ archetype.
You have done this to yourself.
Your grandchildren hate you.
Your children hate you.
You hate you.
Why won’t you just die?
Hope I don’t see you at Christmas.
Love,
Jacquelyn

Clyde the Cadaver

Gabriella Fora

Visiting with Clyde, I’d say he never looked better, for a cadaver that is. The top of his skull lay next to his open head as if it were the bicycle helmet that he forgot to put on that day. The slits of his eyes were draped by his hooded lids, but I was told his glossed marble eyes were still underneath. At first I had no intention of touching anything; I could barely stand up straight. But suddenly something inside me grabbed a pair of gloves and went at it.

Clyde’s lungs were like hard, dried up sponges, as if too much clay got stuck within the holes. His heart was the motor of his body, and just like the engine of the fastest car, this one raced blood through his veins until his last breath. I ran my finger up and down the telephone line that made up the arm’s tendon—as it was, literally, a signal and response mechanism. The meat on his shoulder reminded me of roast beef that’s been left too long in the oven and begun to dry out.

Later that day I was asked to go out for some barbecue, but I instantly declined, for the only image I could muster up was Clyde’s ribs, smothered in barbecue sauce.
Those Eyes
Gabriella Fora

Anywhere I go I can’t seem to get away from those eyes. Those eyes that read me like a scanner, and are quick to judge every move I make and everything I say. Those eyes that travel in packs, but always target an innocent individual. Eyes that analyze and criticize on instinct. Eyes that are cunning, quick, and hungry. Hungry for their next victim. Hungry to cut them down for that ounce of satisfaction. But even they know the feeling is only temporary; so they repeat their cultish practice and continue to exchange other’s pain for their pride. If you’re not careful those eyes can tear you down, and make you question the truth behind your own eyes. But one day the sheer glaze will disappear from their eyes, and the invisible boundary they have created will crumble. They will learn to see others the way they were meant to be seen. And they’ll realize that their eyes are no different than mine.

How to.... Run a Marathon Every Day
Mary Ellen Hoeffner

I awaken this morning, opening my sleepy eyes and begin to peer around my room only to find everything just as I had left it the night before. My gym bag lying open on the floor with black Nike basketball shoes, an orange and black practice jersey, ankle braces, and a water bottle spilling out onto my carpet. On the chair in the corner of my room lay all the clothes from the day before in a heap waiting to be put away. Scattered upon the glass top of the desk my Calculus books and calculator rest awaiting another day of use at school.

Once I see everything is in its proper place, I roll over and stare out the window at the morning sun shining down through the cold, crisp winter air. I should be happy. It is my senior year, my chance to shine. The year when all my hard work over the past four years is finally going to pay off, but no, I wake up this morning depressed and exhausted. I say to myself, “Here goes another day of having to run yet another marathon.”

One would think that after running a marathon every day for the past thirty seven months I would finally be used to it; unfortunately, not. Each new day comes bringing with it another race. This morning my body is tired; I am shot both physically and mentally. I have no more energy to run, but I muster up any ounce of strength I can find and drag myself out of bed. Down the hall to the shower I attempt to do some of that positive self-talk crap that I keep on hearing people say should help me cope. This morning that sure doesn’t seem to help any.

I stand in the shower allowing the steaming hot water to pour over me with the hope of it washing away this feeling of emptiness, the feeling like I have nothing else to give or offer. While scrubbing the shampoo into my long blond hair my head starts to spin, my eyes become a haze slowly going completely black. I reach my hands out to steady myself against the shower wall attempting to remain upright and not collapse here in the shower. My breathing is labored and my heart beats against my chest with torrential force as I try and
regain my bearings. After a few minutes the dizziness passes, my eyes become clear, and I quickly finish showering in hopes of avoiding another episode. I survived the first five miles of the race.

After getting ready for school I continue my routine by sitting down with my brothers and sister for our usual bowl of cereal. Before I begin eating I pull from the shelf three prescription bottles. I opened each bottle one at a time laying out one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven pills on the placemat. Seven pills it would take to get me through the race today. Swallowing down the first three of the day was the first checkpoint in my run. With each pill sliding down my throat a sense of anger surges through me. "Another day of dependency on meds," I say to myself. "Is this what my life has come to? A life that is completely dependent on medications to get through a day. How pathetic." I struggle to get past this feeling, attempting to replace these feelings with something positive, but today it seems so hard to do.

I make my way to school and enter the locker-room only to be greeted by all of the hyped up girls giggling and laughing about the latest drama and gossip. I have no energy to expend on these high strung conversations and exchanges, so I quietly make my way down the hall to class and wait for the bell to ring. The rest of the day passes at a dreadfully slow pace. I watch the clock longing for the final bell to ring. The last class of the day is Calculus no less, and my eyes feel suddenly very heavy. I listen to the lesson as long as possible before I fall asleep on my desk. I awake to find my teacher standing over my shoulder tapping me on the back. I sit up quickly and apologize for falling asleep, although I wasn't really sorry. I didn't have much of a choice, my body just decided to give up on me. The final bell rang at last. I had made it through the first 10 miles of the race.

Now it was time for basketball practice. I love basketball. It is one of my greatest passions, but unfortunately my body doesn't allow me to excel at this sport. I get dressed and pop another two pills to help make it through practice. Every practice starts out with running a mile. This should be relatively easy for an avid basketball player, but no, not for me. My body refuses to build up any measure of endurance. It seems as though no matter how hard I push, how much I train, how much I run, my endurance doesn't get any stronger. All of the other girls run with ease while I struggle to even complete this daunting task. It is in moments like these that I feel so inferior. As captain of the team I should be at the front of the pack leading my team around each lap, not at the tail end struggling to even keep up.

Once the mile is complete, I help lead the team through our usual stretching. I sit down and count out the time as we stretch and loosen up our muscles. The coach blows the whistle and calls us all over. I hop up only to sit right back down again to avoid passing out. The all too common symptoms set in; my eyes have gone black while my head spins in circles and my heart pounds within my chest. I slowly stand up after a minute and make my way over to the rest of the team. Mile fifteen complete.

After careful instruction we proceed into our next drills followed by five sets of guts up and down the court. At each line we are to bend down and touch it with our hand. As I make my way up to the first line I bend down, and feel all of the indicators screaming at me that I am soon to pass out. I run over to the bleachers and collapse upon them with my hands above my head and my feet resting on the wooden surface. I close my eyes and let the feeling pass. I eventually regain my composure and jump back in practice. Mile twenty finished, barely.

On my way home from practice, I can hardly wait to eat the dinner my mom has prepared. I walk in the door and immediately sit and scarf down every bit of salad, chicken, and rice that cover my plate. Eating was one way that I could provide myself with a boost of energy. I take the next set of pills and quickly whip out my homework as fast as possible. All I want to do is crawl into bed, give my body a chance to recharge for the race tomorrow. Mile twenty-six, done.

The reason for my daily running of a marathon is definitely not something done by choice. My freshman year of high school I was diagnosed with an illness called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. It is an illness which affects the functioning of my blood vessels. In a normal person, their blood vessels constrict to send the blood up into the heart. In my body, my blood vessels do not con-
strict on their own causing there to be a lack of blood in my heart. This causes my heart to race uncontrollably, which in turn causes me to get dizzy, light headed, and sometimes pass out. With each accelerated heartbeat extreme fatigue consumes my body. The doctors explained to me when I was first diagnosed that my heart works at the pace of a normal person who runs a marathon every single day of their life. So, this is why every day is a marathon.

The tips I have learned throughout my four and a half years of having this condition are many, but can be summarized in seven points. One, don't hold your hands above your head for too long. Two, take your pills even when you don't want to. Three, take a nap. Four, don't stand up too quickly. Five, don't touch the line when running guts. Six, get your feet above your head and lay down when you feel like passing out. Seven, on the toughest of days find someone sturdy to lean upon. Seven tips to go along with seven pills. This is the key to knowing how to run marathons successfully.

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**Missing**

*Emma Sleeman*

One beat-up teddy bear is all that remains of the little girl I lost. Two button eyes watched her disappear—no one else knows where she went. Three torn threads show the love he once received, revoked. Four matted paws remind me of the child who carried him everywhere. Three moth-eaten holes reveal the years spent in my dusty closet. Two floppy ears heard me close the door and walk away. One beat-up teddy bear tells the story of when I surrendered my childhood.
To Be a Jedi

Casey Kerns

I often find myself wishing to be a Jedi
That the force was strong within me
With the council I would comply
I often find myself wishing to be a Jedi
The dark side I would always deny
And I'd be wise like Obi Wan Kenobi
I often find myself wishing to be a Jedi
That the force was strong within me.
Ice Cream Man

Abigail Swanson

Most ice cream trucks play the same five note jingle looped over and over. It gets stuck in your head and in January you find yourself suddenly craving an orange push-pop.

In Mapleton, Montana, on a sticky, windless day near the end of August, an ice cream cart playing a different sort of tune rolled down the street in the center of town. The man who pushed the cart was near middle age and of middling height and weight. He turned a crank on the cart as he pushed and a beautiful layered song rang out of a speaker on the top of the cart. The music shimmered through the air like ice crystals on the wind.

Like any ice cream truck, this one needed only to let its song sound to be surrounded by a crowd of eager children, dripping wet from swimming pools and clutching damp dollar bills.

Other trucks held two and sometimes three rows of brightly colored tubs bearing labels like Bubblegum Birthday Explosion! or Fudgy Banana Mallow Ripple. Some of the more respectable carts even carried an old crystalized tub of French Vanilla for the sensible adults who sometimes accompanied their children to the carts.

This particular truck, though, held only one tub of ice cream. It bore no label, but the side of the truck read: Mister McTrillium’s Ice Cream For YOU! Single dip of your perfect flavor $1 Double Dip $1.50.

Some children, upon discovering that they could not order their usual two scoop Fudge Tracks with rainbow sprinkles, left the cart sad faced, with their money still in hand. But not many. Mister McTrillium had found that children are generally adaptable and will usually play along, at least where ice cream is concerned.

The first girl in line looked skeptically at the cone Mister McTrillium handed her. It was a silky orange color with darker orange flecks. “This isn’t my perfect flavor,” she pouted. “I get cookies and cream.”

Mister McTrillium smiled. “Try it.”

She took a hesitant lick and her eyes widened. “Marmalade,” she smiled and took a huge mouthful. One of the other children whined, “but I don’t like marmalade.” Again, the ice cream man just smiled.

The next child in line was a young, dark haired, frail looking boy named Joey. As Mister McTrillium reached into the same un­marked ice cream tub, silver scoop in hand, Joey whispered, “I don’t mind marmalade.” But when Joey’s scoop was heaped into his cone, the children gasped. It was brown, rich and shining. The children whispered to each other as Joey bit into the cone. His small white teeth cracked through a chocolate shell and revealed a soft pink cream underneath.

“Chocolate dipped strawberry!” Joey exclaimed loudly, a chocolate ring around his smiling mouth.

Next, a scoop with petals, shaped like a flower and tasting of honey and rosewater was pulled from the cart. A stocky boy named Bernard beamed when his dark reddish brown scoop proved to be roast beef flavored, though the other children groaned and held their noses. The next boy in line eyed the cart nervously but when his cone came out, it was green, topped with a dollop of whipped cream. The whole line clapped and the boy pronounced it the best pistachio he’d ever eaten.

There were cones of raspberries and cream, butter brickle with real butter ribbons running through, fresh blackberry, chocolate fudge brownie with rivulets of frosting, lavender cones and honeydew melon.

When at last the line was gone and the children had all gone back to their sprinklers and sandboxes, Mister McTrillium raised his head from his cart and looked around.

There was a man leaning against the trunk of a broad red maple tree about a hundred yards away. His oil stained, dark blue jumpsuit bore the name Andy. The ice cream man smiled and Andy walked slowly toward the cart. “Ice cream?” asked Mister McTrillium.

“I remember you,” said Andy while fidgeting with the zipper on his jumpsuit. “You haven’t been here in thirty years. I looked every summer.”
"Oh? well, I travel." The ice cream man smiled a vague smile.

"You remember me? Summer of '79, right here on this corner?"

Mister McTrillium did not respond so Andy continued. "You remember. I bought a cone. It came out peach, but it was rotten?"

"It was filled with little white worms," Andy's voice was angry now. "They wriggled in my mouth." He shuddered. Mister McTrillium was not smiling now, but watched Andy carefully. Andy stare at the ground where the toe of his thick work boot rubbed a groove in the soil.

"I got mad," he said. "I pushed Becky Jones down and stole her Lemonade flavored cone. But when I bit into it, my mouth was full of worms and rotten peaches again." Andy's foot stopped scuffing the ground and he looked the ice cream man in the eye. They were the same height. "You do remember, I was so angry."

"I pushed your cart over. I guess I hoped I would find good ice cream inside. Or I just wanted to break something. I was so angry," he said again. "Not just then, but always, growing up."

He fell silent. Mister McTrillium watched him curiously while Andy stared down the street, lost in thought. He spoke as if from far away.

"When I threw your cart over, I told you to give me a new cone. A good cone. Like everyone else got. And you said,"

"I said Andy, each person gets the flavor they deserve. Only a flavor that truly suits who you are will come out of the cart."

"And then I kicked your cart and the wheel fell off."

"You demanded that I give you a different flavor, but I told you that I could not."

"You told me that I was a sweet boy, but that something was rotten inside of me. You said I had to cut away the rotten part or all my ice cream would be filled with maggots." Andy looked back at Mister McTrillium. "I've changed, you know."

"I'm glad to hear that Andrew."

The day neared its end. The shadows lengthened and the air began to cool. Andy and the ice cream man stood on a quiet corner in Mapleton and looked at each other across the ice cream cart. They appeared to be the same age.

Andy handed Mister McTrillium a crumpled dollar bill.

"I'd like a single dip cone," he said.

The shimmering scoop of purple cream was run through with dark red ribbons. Andy opened his mouth wide and sank his yellowing teeth into the the side of the scoop. For a moment, with his eyes closed, he appeared lost in ecstasy. Then his eyes opened. Boiling with anger he spat a writhing mouthful of maggots drenched in sickly smelling purple sugar on the ground at Mister McTrillium's feet. The ice cream man took a step back.

"Rotten," Andy snarled. He spat again, threw the cone on the ground and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He stepped over the cone, now just a pile of sticky maggots squirming on the hot asphalt.

"I want a new cone," Andy said.

"Now Andrew," Mister McTrillium took another step back. "I've changed, goddamn it!" Andy pushed past the cart, grabbed the ice cream man by the front of his shirt and threw him roughly toward the cart. "Give me a good cone, old man."

The ice cream man knelt on the asphalt in front of his cart. Two of his shirt buttons were ripped off and his pale chest showed through the hole, sprinkled with wiry grey hairs.

"Andrew, you know I can't do that. That was your cone. There isn't any other."

Andy charged at the ice cream man before he finished speaking. He kicked Mister McTrillium in the stomach and when he doubled over, Andy kicked him in the head.

Andy kicked and yelled, but Mister McTrillium never made a sound. Andy grabbed him by the shoulders and raised him to his feet. Blood trickled down Mister McTrillium's face from a number of small cuts. It ran thickest from his nose and the corners of his mouth, where several teeth had been kicked out.

"Last chance," Andy said. But Mister McTrillium shook his head sadly. He looked slightly regretful as Andy wrenched his body
sideways and plunged Mister McTrillium's head into the open tub of ice cream. He held Mister McTrillium's head in the ice cream, made soft by the sun, until his legs stopped twitching. Then Andy turned and walked slowly up the street, hands in his pockets.

Mister McTrillium's body hung limp over the side of the ice cream cart, up to his shoulders in Lemon Meringue. Near his left ear was a swirl of graham cracker crumb crust.

The next day it was 104 degrees in Greenbough, Ohio. Near the center of town there was a large, green park. In the center of the park, a concrete oval supported four tall metal flowers that sprayed water down on shrieking children.

On the street an average looking man of middle age pushed a small ice cream cart. As he turned a crank on the side of the cart a beautiful layered song rippled through the air, like ice crystals on the wind.

Goldfish Constellation
Abigail Swanson

The sky crashed
Splashed my pants
With mud, up to the knee.

You crossed my lips
And the ocean swelled
Pushed
Clumped, wet sand over our shoes
And a goldfish popped out of my boot.

The goldfish skittered
Down main street
And a million dry teapots
Screamed-- scarring the air around my head
And the hair around your ears curled and smoked.

The hair on my arms prickled
Ashen
And charred my sleeves,
Squeezing fire out.
The moon pulls
At my low tide coffee cup
Cratered desolation pits
My stomach
And the wind howls wild;
But just around the edges.

Few organisms can survive desiccation.
I can
So long as the path remains
Cleared, and the sky stays up.
How often does it rain
On the first planet
Beyond our line of sight?
Can their water dissolve blood?
Or steel?
Ordinary table sugar?
If I shower in it
Will it clean me?

The last man to come this way, left
only a few balls of hair
That will never fall fully
in to the vacuum.
Christus ut Navita

Zeke Fetrow

Qui navigans me es. Ego navis carens vela. Aestus cursusque tui sem-pre portant me. Aquae ex Dei fluent sicut lux de caelis.
(You are my navigator. I am a ship without sails. Thy tide and currents to carry me. The waters shall flow out of God, as a light from heaven.)

Notes On Contributors

Jacquelyn Anderson was born and raised in Portland, Oregon and has attended Concordia University for four years. After graduation, she plans to be an English teacher abroad and eventually back here in Portland. She enjoys reading literature of all kinds, and hopes to share this passion with her future students. One of her favorite quotes is “Happiness is nothing but everyday living seen through a veil,” by Zora Neale Hurston.

Colin Allenbrand is a sophomore at Concordia University. He has lived in Portland his whole life but has traveled all across the world, giving him many experiences to draw inspiration from while writing. He tries to implement humor in all his writing, even in more serious pieces, because that is just part of Colin's personality.

Russ Canham lives in the Beaumont-Wilshire neighborhood with his wife and their two miniature dachshunds named Berlin and Grechen. His wife is an occupational health nurse at Liberty-Mutual and he is in his last term of studying accounting at Concordia. Russ previously worked in the computer chip industry for 24 years before being laid-off. He plans to finish at Concordia and take the CPA exam and hopefully go into tax work. His hobbies include traveling, gardening, and writing. He would like to write a novel sometime before he retires.

Trevor Church is a Sophomore English major born here in Portland. He has spent much of his life moving around, and has decided that the gloomy Portland weather is why Portland has so many great writers. He hopes to leave America after college and spend the rest of his life exploring Europe, Asia and the Middle East, all before settling down in Ubud.

Benjamin Crane is a freshman from Greeley, CO. His fields of study are music and psychology. Many of Benjamin's hobbies include music, backgammon, drinking endless amounts of coffee, and anything that is relatively cheap or at least around people. One
particular quote he wished to share with us at The Promethean is: “If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world.” The Hobbit, J.R.R. Tolkien

Cole Dahle is finishing up his junior year at Concordia. He is a Business Major with a minor in Sports Management and is a member of CU’s soccer team.

Austin Dunn is an English Major with a minor in Exercise and Sports Science and will finish school in August. This is Austin’s second year at CU, after transferring from Central Washington University last fall. His favorite type of writing is non-fiction, although he likes fiction as well. Austin is on the men’s basketball team at CU and enjoys being active, which includes hiking, biking, golf, tennis and all other sorts of outdoor activities.

A friend and mentor once wrote of Dylan Evanston: Dylan is verbose, has an ugly love for adverbs and a keen eye for grammatical errors. Behind black-rimmed hipster frames is a lazy prized pupil who, in addition to his textbook smarts and witty zingers, has a magnificent head of hair that every woman should run her hands through. He is too lazy to write his own bio, and this one seemed serviceable.

Zeke Fetrow is a Senior Music Major at Concordia University -Portland. He’s a regular dude! He loves basketball, barbecue ribs, and wants to conduct opera someday.

Benjamin Fitzgerald currently resides in Mesa, Arizona, a despairingly sprawling suburban jungle less appealing than a dirty rat carcass smothered in honey sauce. He works two jobs, has no friends, and spends his free time watching Friends, wishing he was Ross, and drinking Samuel Adams. In three months, he plans to embark on a 2500 mile bike trip winding across the western United States.

Gabby Fora is a sophomore with a big smile and a dry, sarcastic sense of humor. Although she may look small and dainty, she is a ball full of energy with a sassy attitude to match. She enjoys making people laugh and, more recently, has been posting video blogs online. Her New Year’s resolution was not to spend over $10 on any article of clothing, which, thus far, has been maintained.

Casey Fuller has lived in the Pacific Northwest for 33 years. He studied literature and cognitive science at The Evergreen State College then received his MFA in creative writing from Pacific Lutheran University in 2008. He’s worked as an auto detailer, burrito roller, fruit vendor, note taker, office worker, and forklift driver. He is studying at Concordia to become a high school English teacher. “FDR Memorial” was written in a class taught by Jan Albrecht and is dedicated to her.

Lauryn Helmers is a junior this year majoring in Exercise and Sport Science, while completing a minor in Psychology. She is not only a student but also an athlete, a member of the Concordia women’s soccer team. As the youngest in her family, she enjoys spending time with her older brothers and parents; whether it is by enjoying the outdoors or simply watching a movie together.

Jake Herold is a splendid human being. While he writes things goodly, his ability to turn things in on time can be lacking. He has a penchant for mocking authority figures and doesn’t like to be told what to do. He is a boy scout, a black belt, and loves to crochet. He urges everyone to not be dumb.

Mary Ellen Hoeffner is a freshman at Concordia University. She is pursuing her Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree. Being the only birth child, Mary Ellen has grown up with seven siblings, all of whom were adopted. The majority of Mary Ellen’s growing up years was spent on a ranch in rural Eastern Oregon. It is because of this unique upbringing that she has found a passion for her family, her faith, the outdoors, and serving others.
Casey Kerns is a senior at Concordia majoring in Secondary Education with her endorsement in Language Arts. She grew up in a small logging town in Oregon with her three brothers, all of whom have inspired her writing in some way. When not doing homework or grading papers, Casey enjoys video games, cooking, reading, and watching 90’s TV shows. She enjoys every aspect of writing, and hopes to one day complete a screenplay.

Matthew Lai, a sophomore from Mililani, Hawaii didn't discover his passion for photography until the age of 15. Since then, Matthew has been exploring new techniques and styles by simply playing with the camera. On April 17, 2007, Matthew and his younger sister, Emily, created Hope Photography. Hope Photography is the signature he and his sister use as a brand of identification Matthew plans to continue photography in hopes of starting his own private business.

Monica Logan is a junior this year, majoring in English. She was born in San Jose, California, and her favorite color is blue. Her future plans include going to the Concordia Law School in Boise, ID. While this is the third time Monica's work has been accepted, she is very honored to be accepted into The Promethean this year.

Lorien Pelletier was born and raised in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. She is a current sophomore studying Secondary Education with an endorsement in Advanced Math. Lorien is involved in numerous activities and clubs around campus, and she enjoys being with friends. Photography is a fun hobby of hers; it is her life dream to take pictures for National Geographic magazine.

April Powers is a senior English Major with minors in Spanish and Art. She was born in Alaska and grew up all along the West coast. Stylistically, she enjoys fiction and creative non-fiction, as well as poetry. She tries to understand each character's unique perspective in her writing and gains inspiration from her experiences and the people around her.

Bethany Quesnell is a senior English Major who can't decide where she is from. Her biggest dream is to one day invent a sarcasm font. This is her first appearance in The Promethean.

Brianna Richards is a senior English major. She loves to write and she plans to continue her passion in the vocation of grant writing upon graduation. Currently, she works in the Writing Center where she gets to help students with their writing. Her favorite things are a good book and a great cup of coffee. Check out Coava Coffee in SE Portland if you love coffee, too!

Justin Robertson is an entrepreneur and amateur violinist. He has considered being a hipster while he lives in Portland. The only problem is that no one likes hipsters; not even hipsters. Justin likes to be liked. He watches TV shows after doing his homework. He is friendly, serious, and at times funny. He aspires to be a third grade teacher. He loves working with kids and admits he used to be one himself.

Emma Sleeman is finishing her third year here at Concordia. She was majoring in Psychology, but her true passion is Chemistry. Emma was born in Atlanta but has traveled all across this great country. She greatly enjoys video games with her awesome boyfriend and watching silly movies with her favorite silly roommate. Emma loves her 3-year-old nephew, an adorable little ham who always makes her laugh.

Abby Swanson is a junior at Concordia University. She is studying Biology and English in preparation for a multifaceted career as a field research biologist, an astronaut, a writer for National Geographic Magazine, a writer of children's and adult fiction and a poet.

Dominick Toulouse sees the world a little bit differently. In his eye the lines between fantasy and reality blur. There is no distinction between the two. A sidewalk down the city is his yellow brick road. A squirrel on an oak tree becomes a vicious dragon.
Though a bit unusual to others he may seem,
he knows the truth:
that the dreams of men in the infinite form
become the illusion that we call the norm.

Micaela Tucker is a poem; most of her stanzas are unwritten. As a 22-year-old Bio/English Interdisciplinary Major, she is like most students who pretend to know what they want do with their lives. She dug her way to China to discover something unsearchable and found vibrant, breathtaking heartbreak. She has 1900 Chinese children, slays giants, eats pigeon, loves strolls in the rain, and wants you to sponsor a child at chinaorphans.org!

Joshua Urie is the Area Director for Neils, Elizabeth, and Weber Halls. This is his third year working at Concordia and he loves working with students. Before Concordia, he attended Azusa Pacific University for graduate school in College Student Affairs, working in service-learning. He attended undergrad at Wheaton College, double majoring in Philosophy and English Writing. He grew up primarily in Minnesota. He gives you thanks for reading his story.

Jeriann Watkins is a Senior English Major at Concordia. She wants to be a writer and an editor, as she loves to create, but also likes to improve existing work. She has an ever growing craft-box under her bed, full of odds and ends that will most likely never be used, but have great potential. In the very unlikely case she cannot find a job in this flourishing economy, she is quite resigned to the possibility of taking residence in a refrigerator box.

Vanessa Wendland is a Concordia alumna who was involved in The Promethean, The Concordia Chronicles, Sigma Tau Delta, World Club, and ASCU while she obtained her English degree. She is currently attending the MA in English program at Portland State University, where she is the news editor of The Vanguard, PSU's student newspaper. Her current writing project is a scholarly article that will be published as the introduction for a reprint of Gertrude Atherton's The Californians.

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