



THE OAKLAND REVIEW • VOLUME XII

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**OAKLAND
REVIEW**

VOLUME XII

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VOLUME XLI

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The Oakland Review was established in 1969 as Carnegie Mellon's literary-arts journal. Edited by students, and published in the spring, it serves to represent the best literary and artistic work of the undergraduate body of Carnegie Mellon. The first alumni edition was printed in the fall of 2009 as a way to showcase the talent of Carnegie Mellon graduates. Submissions are evaluated anonymously.

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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

We are happy to present the Spring 2016 edition of the Oakland Review, Carnegie Mellon University's literary magazine. For over 40 years, our magazine has been proud to publish the work of the Carnegie Mellon community. We hope you'll agree this collection of undergraduate work lives up to the high level of craftsmanship set by its predecessors.

One of the unique difficulties of being a member of the Oakland Review board is acting as both a friend and critic. We meet each week to discuss submissions, but we discuss other things, too—our classes, our own writing, our extracurriculars, what we're doing this weekend. Our organization serves as an opportunity to let undergraduates talk about literature in a comfortable space, and many of us have become close friends. But it can be challenging. Though the board reviews submissions anonymously, the work on these pages is the work of our classmates. Critiquing each other is hard, but signing a letter of rejection is even harder. Despite this, we're so grateful for the opportunities the Oakland Review has brought us during our four years here. We hope that this journal reflects the complexity of the undergraduate experience—our peers' talent, but also their challenges and how they've grown.

We are indebted to the Carnegie Mellon English Department and to the Creative Writing program for their support of this organization through the years. We would also like to thank Sharon Dilworth, our faculty advisor. To everyone who submitted work for our consideration, thank you for sharing your art with us. And to our members, to the Oakland Review—thank you for all your hard work and for four years. As we look towards graduation and finish this issue of the journal, we know you are one of the things we will miss most.

Sincerely,

Emily Pond & Sophie Rose Zucker
Editors-in-Chief

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Christopher Schuler

Open Letter

I heard you left a party last week by chucking a beer
at the host's head, and that it took three people
to pull the two of you apart, and that now she's losing
her security deposit. I am doing well, am in love

with a woman who sleeps in spurts; last night
she dreamt that a three-eyed witch sat on her chest,
but when she woke the hag stayed for half a second
and spit blood on our sheets. What I'm trying to say

is I'm six states removed from when you told
me you saw spiders crawling up your arm every
time you drank whiskey and then asked me to pour
you another shot. I don't want you to write back,

I just want you to know that I have your umbrella,
and your umbrella leaks, and I'm keeping it.

Opuntia

Miguel lay in his cot atop ruffled sheets, his upper body propped up by a tower of pillows. His right leg rested in its cast on the windowsill, his foot pointing straight out to coax the soothing air to seep between the skin and plaster. It was a cloudless day in July and the cool lake breeze gently billowed the ancient curtains of his once-green fishing shack as it drifted in through the window he'd struggled to open earlier that day. Miguel had awoken enveloped in a gelatinous layer of sweat that had seeped out through every pore in his dark skin to form a saline mold of his body. The dusty air had been thick enough to chew on and he'd felt it blanket his throat and lungs as he strained to force open the unyielding window.

The receding lake had once melded with the horizon, but it now looked more like a still portion of a wide river. Across the murky waters the old docks of Tocuaro still stood several meters above the sand five years after the lake had receded beyond their reach. On particularly clear days Miguel could pick out the ruined house he once governed from, still half-standing between the skeletons of two olive trees. In his mind he was still Tocuaro's mayor, working without pay to lead the settlement across the lake to which the town had temporarily relocated. These days, however, "Tocuaro" was home to only a dozen fisherman at most, and the wetlands they'd built their fishing shacks on hadn't been wet in years. Miguel let his eyes wander and, to his dismay, used only one hand to count the dejected fishing boats floating shiftlessly across the lake's surface as they trawled for a catch that might have gone extinct the day before.

Miguel had known for years that Tocuaro's future was no longer in fishing, but had hardly been able to convince anyone of the necessity of change and to his constant disappointment, anyone who listened, left. This exodus left Miguel alone in his efforts to revitalize Tocuaro, implementing scheme after scheme without any real success. The latest had been cactus

farming, and it was this scheme that had led to Miguel's broken leg. He had read in some farming publication that the cactus plant had untapped potential to become a permanent crop in more arid areas and could produce fruit for up to fifteen years. Miguel had never eaten a prickly pear in his life, but the idea absorbed him so fully that he dedicated the next week to harvesting seeds from the few cacti in the area and reading whatever he could find about cactus farming. Excited and consumed by constant thoughts of armies of Opuntia cacti marching across the dried lake, he would lie awake at night until finally capitulating to insomnia, at which point he would leave his shack and pace around the dusty docks until sunrise. Before planting any seeds, Miguel reasoned that even cacti need some water to flourish, so he began work on a crude water tower to capture what little rain Tocuaro still received.

He'd been working far into the evening one night when he lost his footing in the twilight and fell off what he had ironically dubbed his "effigy of progress." The hastily constructed supports for the main tank buckled inwards under his shifting weight and as soon as he hit the ground, he knew his leg was broken. Fortunately for Miguel, his friend Fernando had just finished tying up his boat for the day and heard his cries for help. He borrowed the only vehicle in town, an old pickup truck, and drove Miguel to the hospital in Pátzcuaro where he stayed for two days before Fernando returned him to his shack, where he remained, apart from the occasional crutch-aided excursion to the lake, for the rest of the week. Every day at around one Fernando brought Miguel lunch and ate with him before taking his siesta. On this cloudless July day, Fernando had made Miguel steamed rice and canned beans served alongside his only catch of the day. Miguel shimmied his back up his tower of pillows to sit upright for his meal and Fernando assumed his usual post in Miguel's rocking chair. Fernando cleared his throat.

"I'm thinking of leaving for Pátzcuaro." Miguel chewed his food and nodded slightly as if taking time to chew the words themselves. "I think Luisa was right about the lake. I've got to move on. It'll be tough, but I think if I leave soon I can smooth things out with her." Two weeks earlier, only a few days before Miguel's accident, Fernando had come home bitter after

a particularly fruitless day. His wife, Luisa, suggested taking their children and leaving the lake for Pátzcuaro and before they knew it, they were neck deep in one of the worst shouting matches they'd blundered into during their marriage and Luisa was herding the kids into their old Mitsubishi. As she started the car, Fernando went back inside, poured himself a glass of tequila, and put on the football match. No matter how high he turned the television's volume, he could hear the Mitsubishi's engine growing fainter and fainter through the din of the crowd and the excited shouts of the commentators. When at last he could no longer hear the engine, Fernando ran outside to catch one more glimpse of the car, but it had already driven out of view. He went back inside, poured his tequila out, turned the TV off, and stood weeping in the thin silence of his empty house.

The next day Fernando called Luisa's sister, the only person Luisa could have stayed with in Pátzcuaro, and pleaded with her to let him talk to his wife. The more desperate his pleas became, the more obstinate his sister in law became in her refusal to let him speak to Luisa until she inevitably hung up on him. He called a dozen more times that day without an answer, but the night before his announcement to Miguel, he received a call from his wife during which he agreed to decide whether or not he would join her in Pátzcuaro by the end of the next day. He'd been uncertain on the phone, but as soon as she hung up, he knew that no matter how much he mulled it over, he was going to Pátzcuaro the next day. He planned on calling his wife at the end of the day to arrange a time for her to pick him up, but he couldn't leave in good conscience without trying his best to convince Miguel to leave with him.

"The drought's not going to end anytime soon Miguel, you should come stay with us."

Miguel shook his head. "I'm still the mayor Fernando, and I have a duty to make Tocuaro the best town it can be."

"Don't you think your accident might be a sign that you should leave? Do you really think it's part of God's plan for you to waste your life planting cacti in the desert?"

"We can't know what God's plan is Fernando, all we can do is make the best of what's given to us. 'Draw water from the stones,' they say, so that's what I'm going to do."

"What stones can you draw water from Miguel? In a few years, maybe sooner, this will all be dust."

Miguel sighed. "You're wrong, Fernando, you just don't get it. When the other fishermen tie their boats up at sunset, I can hear them from my shack, cursing and grumbling about how the lake has abandoned them. The lake has abandoned no-one. It is those who have abandoned the lake in their hearts who are unable to catch fish. Yes, in the meantime, Tocuaro will have to find a different way to make ends meet, but someday the lake will return and when it does, you'll be sorry you ever left." Fernando saw in Miguel's face the same unbreakable resolve he'd seen even as a child and understood that any further attempts to convince him would be in vain. Miguel finished eating and thanked Fernando for his help over the past week.

"If you change your mind and I'm gone, call this number." Fernando handed Miguel his sister in law's number and left.

The doctor in Pátzcuaro had told Miguel that his bones would take much longer to heal than they would have in his youth, and if he wasn't careful they may never heal properly at all. After a few days of lying in bed, however, Miguel had grown restless and began using the crutches he'd received at the hospital to take short walks around the docks. At first his armpits bruised, and the effort of hobbling just a couple dozen meters left him exhausted, but soon enough Miguel was able to make his way around the docks with relative ease.

That evening, Miguel was out by the shoreline on his routine walk when he spotted a lone fisherman he had never seen before docking a canoe. He had trouble making out the man's features in the dwindling twilight, but as he hobbled closer to the canoe he confirmed that he had never seen the fisherman before. The man was shorter than Miguel, had long black hair, and even from a distance he could tell he was emaciated. A grey cat moved cautiously along the planks of the pier and in one swift motion, the fisherman grabbed the cat, snapped its neck, and began eating it raw. He tore off one of the cat's back legs and ate it as he would a chicken's. Grey tufts of fur stuck to his chin as blood dribbled down from his mouth and soaked his shirt. Miguel hobbled towards the pier as fast as his crutches would allow him, but the man did not seem aware of the injured man making his way across the sand.

Suddenly, the cat writhed out of the man's hands and fell into the water. The man jumped in after it, swimming breaststroke along the widening stream of blood discolouring the water behind the animal. Miguel shouted at the man, but his cries went unheard as the man and cat swam farther and farther out towards the crumbling docks of Tocuaro until the sun set and he could no longer make them out.

When Fernando arrived at Miguel's shack with his evening meal, he found Miguel in a state of total panic. The interior of the shack had been turned inside out as Miguel rushed to sardine everything he owned into a large duffel bag. Fernando laughed and told Miguel he was pleasantly surprised that he'd changed his mind, but that there was no hurry since Luisa wouldn't arrive until the day after next. Unfazed, Miguel raved to Fernando about what he had seen and, rushing around the room, repeated over and over again that if he stayed any longer, the lake would devour him. Fernando, setting Miguel's meal down on the windowsill, could hardly comprehend anything Miguel was saying and tried to convince him to wait for Luisa, but saw it was no use when Miguel slung his bag over his shoulder and told him he'd hobble to Pátzcuaro if he had to.

"OK Miguel, you win. I won't have you hobbling through the desert. I'll go borrow a car from Eduardo." Eduardo had lent Fernando his car for free when Miguel had broken his leg, but Fernando knew he'd have to bargain with him this time. All in all, it took about half an hour for Fernando to get some money from his house, bargain with Eduardo, and start Eduardo's ancient car. By the time he pulled up at Miguel's shack, he was gone.

Fernando drove around the settlement and halfway to Pátzcuaro and back, but Miguel was nowhere to be seen. Fernando pulled over to a small, nameless bar haphazardly placed by the desert road like the skeleton of an ancient whale whose ocean no longer existed. There were only a few tired people in the bar, and none of them had seen Miguel. Mexico was playing Argentina on the old CRT television placed up high on a dusty shelf in the corner of the bar, and as Fernando walked back out through the dust to his car, he could hear the announcer panicking as Argentina scored another goal. After a couple tries the decrepit vehicle shivered as if it had

just come back from the dead and Fernando drove back to the lake. When he returned to his shack, Fernando opened his windows to let the evening breeze rejuvenate his stuffy house and through them watched the sun ripple in the lingering July heat as it burrowed its way beneath the sand.

Fernando spent the morning of the next day searching for any traces of Miguel or the man he'd mentioned, but there were none to be found and nobody he asked had seen anything. He continued wandering around the settlement until he came upon Miguel's half-finished water tower. For a few silent moments, Fernando stood by the tower shaking his head at Miguel's poor, but inspired craftsmanship. A strong gust of wind blew across the lake towards him and he heard the tower creak with all its might as it struggled to stay upright. Fernando doubted it would last the week.

Eventually Fernando resigned himself to spending the rest of the day fishing the lake one last time. As usual, the fish weren't biting, and Fernando spent four long hours floating wherever the meek currents took him until he finally felt a tug at his net. A jolt of excitement ran through him as he felt the weight of his net. Then he saw the crutch. Fernando gasped and started shouting Miguel's name. He dove into the water, unsure of what he hoped to find, but dead certain of what he did not want to find. To his dismay and slight relief, he found nothing in the murky waters, decided to call it a day, and with a heavy heart, rowed back to shore. The crutch was the only thing Fernando caught that day and it was the last thing he ever caught in the lake. Fernando spent a sleepless night thinking of the crutch and of what Miguel had told him before he vanished and before he knew it, Luisa was knocking on his door.

Fernando recited the apologies and pleas for forgiveness he'd rehearsed in his mind, but without any of the feeling he'd composed them with. Luisa easily picked up on this and began berating him for the way he'd so willingly abandoned his children and for not packing anything before she'd arrived, but soon realized he wasn't going to argue with her and quietly began helping him move furniture and clothes out to the car. Fernando couldn't bring himself to tell her about Miguel and mumbled his way through more apologies as Luisa started the car. By then Luisa had realized something else was afoot, and knew that there was no need

to press Fernando as he would tell her everything when he felt he was able to. As they drove out of the settlement towards Pátzcuaro, they passed by Miguel's shack. A single *Opuntia* cactus flowered by the doorway.

Taylor Poulos

Daily Affirmation

You are a mirror
And I am seated in my chair
I introduce myself, and you stare at me
I am a go-getter, I say
I am well respected and physically attractive
You, mirror, like me
And you sit
Visibly agitated in your frame
And explain that I am only a friend

Jennifer Huang

Amerian Ninja Warrior on TV

Ben is nesting again, swatting away spider webs in neglected corners, wiping away grease from summer sweat, vacuuming crumbs and bunnies that come out of nowhere. Always vacuuming, a constant loud hum behind the cheers and jeers as fans watch pseudo-heroes jump off of vaults and stabilize themselves between two walls. They call it a *jumping spider*. They all think they are winners. I lie beneath the slow fan and drown out the sounds. My toes are cold. *Maybe you have an iron deficiency*. I close my eyes. *You should use that light I fixed, the one for sadness* Ben says. Kacy Catanzaro gets an interview. I don't know if she's supposed to be famous, but she is in this world. The hum stops. Flashbacks to 2012. We're in Dallas. No, she is. The first woman to complete a course in the final rounds. I pull the covers up to my neck. *I did this amazing thing three years ago and now I keep coming back and failing*. Ben climbs into bed. He shakes his head. *She shouldn't have come back to the show. They always say to go out on top.*

Katherine Huang

Virgin

I want to dip my fingers like tongues
into the twilight.
Did I ever tell you?
I want to dip my fingers like tongues
into the twilight and lick the paint
all over my skin until I wear
nothing but tattoos.
You'd only have to be scared
if you won't look at me twice.

But I'm too scared to do it.

The last time I wanted to,
I choreographed my heart instead
and put mittens on her baby-fat hands
before I let her go. There she is now!
Gliding up the waist of the moon,
a shadow of white light. I have
a trick for not missing her
until she comes home. See these?
I saved a few summer berries
of her laughter, ruby and gold,
in these hummingbirds on my earlobes.
They help me block out
the sound of lonely spaces.

Sometimes I meet people
the way a lavender soap tray

scraped across the bathroom counter
makes a flock of Canada-goose calls
like words from my mouth
until winter falls face-first.
Don't ask me if I need your scarf:
I like it when the Christmas air
carves a smile on my chapped face.

Oh god, how rude of me! Will you
come over and warm yourself
with this new drink?
I had a mug of it last night
after I brewed it from yester-
morning's stardust,
and woke up today
in love with the world.

Christopher Schuler

Elegy for an Evening

*You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this
at this time of morning. But here you are...*

– Jay McInerney

Sometime between extinguishing
your cigarette in an abandoned drink
and getting a twenty minute lecture

on the architecture of Nazi Germany,
you managed to lose both your keys
and train of thought. Exit the lesson

with an *excuse me*, think privately
that perhaps your new acquaintance
was a bit too blond to have chosen

that particular topic, but, then again,
those who live in stone houses should
take better care of their glassware. Resist

the urge to pour another drink, resist
the seductive, empty loveseat, for the love
of god, resist the acoustic guitar resting

lonely in the corner. Make your way
to the back porch, let the wind paint
your cheeks Franzia red. You feel burnt

and undercooked, caught between heading
home and igniting old flames. You hope
your roommates left the back door

unlocked, promise to be more careful
the next time, wonder whether this night
marks a beginning or an end.

Jacob Gordon

A Second Thought

My mother once told me, in a hushed whisper, on our porch in Tannersville, that my father had undergone a difficult life. She told me this on a thick, summer day, just after he had left, as the car started outside, his fishing poles lying in the trunk. Because I was young, I thought she was explaining his reticence. I thought she was explaining why he rarely talked, and often disappeared to fish or hunt alone. So I nodded, accepting this vague explanation, naïve enough to believe that the details of my father's character would be presented to me at a later date.

I see now that she was apologizing to me. That's why she sat with me on the couch, why she glanced at me with eyes wide and why she was silent until she stood up and went back inside. She wanted me to tell her that it was okay, that I understood his solitary nature, that it was not normal, and that I would not be the same way.

If I had understood that, at the time, I would have accepted her apology without a second thought. I was always trying to make her feel better. She was a timid woman, a housewife who avoided conflict at all costs and once bought a vacuum from a door-to-door salesman. Though I might have been able to comfort her, I probably would have been lying. It was probably already too late for me. I was probably already locked into the solitude, the wordlessness, the ennui that would occupy my time up until the first day of 9th grade when, sitting on torn foam in a rusty school bus, the dome of brown hair in front of me rose and rotated to reveal a face with lips that moved and said,

“Who the fuck are you?”

•

I believe, before that point, I had never heard a swear word spoken. Muttered, maybe, at a caught fishing line by my father in a small, wooden boat. But spoken, aloud? Never.

I don't even think it registered as accusatory.

"Sam," I said, my voice wavering and strange to my ears.

"Sam," he confirmed, in a slow drawl. His slender fingers were curled across the top of the bus seat. "The name's Nolan."

He stuck one hand out to me, and I stared at it. I could feel my heart beat.

"Shake it," he said. I looked at him,

"What?"

He laughed like syrup.

"Shake my fucking hand, Sam."

•

We talked, that morning, of our expectations for high school. Or, rather, Nolan talked of his expectations for high school. He, like me, had just transferred to Tannersville High School. Unlike me, he had plans, and high hopes.

"I'm ready for those high school women, man," he said to me, in a hushed, hurried voice. "I ended shit with my other girl over the summer."

I nodded.

"I spent, like, all of last year high," he told me. He thinned his eyes and fixed them on mine. He leaned towards me and whispered, "I've been thinking about dealing. Get some of that money." He drew his head back and dipped his chin, expectant. "You know?"

I didn't know. I was curious about marijuana, as I was curious about women, and outer space.

"I know," I answered, sagely.

•

We had a class together. It was algebra, the period before lunch. Nolan slid into the seat beside me and immediately began recapping his day. The classes

he had, the girls he had seen. He only stopped talking, really, at the public request of our teacher, midway through class.

"Please, you two, stop talking over me. I don't want to have to give out detention on the first day," Ms. Bellmont said.

I might have protested her inclusion of me in the threat. I remember my initial reaction, the sudden stomach-turn of injustice. But when I turned to Nolan, my mouth parted in a mild outrage, he was grinning. I learned, then, what most children had learned years before: that there was more pleasure to be found in being an accomplice than there was in being acquitted.

Because we had sat together, we left the classroom together. And because we walked together to the cafeteria, we stood in line together. And so, naturally, once we had our food, we found a table together. It wasn't until we were already sitting down that I became aware. I looked to my right and saw, down the long plastic-wood table, two people eating together, obviously friends. And the same beyond them, and another at the table behind ours. And I realized, bristling with pride, that if any of them were to look at me and Nolan, they would see a pair of friends, just the same as any others. And they would not think twice about it.

"Ms. Bellmont was a bitch, man," Nolan said from across the table. His eyes were set on me again, squinting, like razors. "Yelling at us like that, threatening us." Nolan spat. "What a bitch."

I reflected on the event. Yelling and threatening were exaggerations, but they weren't all that far off from the truth. Though I knew little of male communication, I could sense that my complicity would be of significance. It would unite us against a common enemy.

"Yeah," I laughed, a laugh that was not mine. "She sure was a bitch."

I waited for Nolan's approval. I hoped I had used enough conviction. I hoped he wouldn't see through me, see that I had never cursed before. That I had never had a real friend. I hoped that, in those six words, I had managed to conceal my true identity as a virgin loner, who had never even gotten high.

His grin came delayed, with those squinting, shining eyes.

•

Nolan never ended up selling weed like he said that first day on the bus. Nor did he follow through with any of the other immoral or illegal plans he outlined in the following days. I'm glad he didn't, for if he had, I surely would have been by his side, unquestionably terrified by what we were doing, undoubtedly excited to be doing it with him. That's how I felt the first few times we got high, down by the river.

Below the unpainted wooden porch, across the unkempt lawn overgrown with daffodils and wildflowers, down the hill studded with trees and jutting rocks, there was a river where I would sometimes fish with my father in the summer. It bent through the outskirts of Tannersville, winding around the gas stations, through the staggered country houses and deposited into a lake called Colgate.

It became our ritual, or maybe our habit, to go down to that river after school. We were liquid, spilling from the school bus into my driveway, pouring across the lawn and racing down the hill. The first to emerge onto the boulders from the branches and bramble earned the simple prize of a small smirk, to be inflicted upon the loser as they arrived. Like so many other things, this contest was never agreed upon, nor spoken of. This amazed me, that Nolan was able to imply tangible things in the same silence that my father had left so empty.

•

Perched on a tan boulder, cross-legged and holding my ankles, I watched Nolan roll a joint. Though we were partway into Autumn, he still sat as he always did, with his feet dangling into the river, his ankles splitting the water into small and turbid waves. He lit the joint and inhaled, once, and then again.

"If you," he began, leaning to hand me the joint, "were going to, like, commit suicide."

I took it from him and dragged.

"How would you do it?"

I snorted, told him he was high, and took another hit. He turned towards me, his eyes glassy and blue, his mouth slightly agape.

"Yeah," he grinned. "Kinda. Aren't you?"

I laughed. The water arched, tense and shining, where it met Nolan's ankles. The golden autumn light refracted shifting shapes onto his feet, where hair was beginning to sprout. I was.

"Kinda," I agreed. When I moved to pass him the joint, his smile had softened, partially fallen.

"I'd shoot myself," he said. He was staring into the water. "With my old man's gun." I followed Nolan's line of vision to a crawfish on the pebbles, moving slowly against the current. A cold wind swept along the river. Tendrils of panic threatened my peripheral vision. I had considered this question before, in private. I did not know that anyone else had.

"I'd jump off a building," I offered, alongside the joint. He inhaled and nodded. "A really big one." I felt the cold seep under my handknit sweater. I coughed, and there was silence. I looked down the river to where it bent and disappeared into the forest. "Could be fun."

I heard him choke, giggling. Tiny spurts of smoke, erupting from his lips like small clouds twisting in the mountain air. When I looked to him, his mouth was wide and his eyes half shut, his head thrown back, his chest convulsing with silent laughter.

I was surprised at first. Hurt, even, that he would laugh at something that felt so serious to me. But as I watched him shaking, heard him squeaking, I began to feel this pleasant tingling. It was like static electricity, darting across my skin, buzzing in my mind. I felt that it was coming from Nolan, some sort of energy that he had chosen to share with me. I started laughing and it came from my stomach like carbonation.

In some dimension a plane passed above us, and the river flowed and wound into Colgate Lake, and my mother lay in bed and my father drove home from work. But somewhere else, there was me, and there was Nolan, and we were laughing.

•

The river half-froze. Blue and white mushroom snowcaps on the rocks, ice creeping over the water, still flowing, fighting to stay alive. Nolan and I wore thick coats and threw each other down the hill after school. We spoke of our

parents, of our pasts, of each other. Snow fell thick outside my window. There was a knock on my door.

“Dinner’s ready,” my father’s voice came through the door, deep and rasping.

“Okay,” I called back. It was usually my mother who came to fetch me from my room. When I opened the door, he was still there, barefoot on the hardwood hallway floor. I was startled.

His beard and chest were graying, and I was reminded of his age. When I was younger, he picked me up from school while my mother was sick. He stood out in the spinning flurry of parents and on the ride home I asked him why he was so much older than the other dads. He told me, his eyes set on the road and his hands gripping the steering wheel, that he didn’t meet my mom until he was older. I asked why and he said that he had been married once when he was younger. I asked what happened and he said nothing. It was spring and the roads ran slick with melting water. Later in the drive, a deer bound in front of us and he slammed on the brakes. The seat belt left a bruise across my chest.

“Your mother and I were thinking we’d all go skiing when school lets out,” he said to me, in the hall. I nodded, and my eyes fell to the ground. He was silhouetted in the hallway light and he spoke again. “You don’t work downstairs anymore.”

I used to do my homework at a desk my parents had put in the living room for that purpose. My father would read, or grade papers, on the couch adjacent while my mother prepared dinner. He was a professor of Literature at the local community college. Were it not for his continued employment, I would not have believed that he could talk for the length of a lecture. Then, after walking Nolan to the bus stop, I went up to my room.

“No,” I answered, growing uncomfortable. He looked down at me and I felt a sense of dread in the crescendo of silence. I was afraid that he would ask me to explain myself. I worried that he would tell me I had been acting strange and not spending time with him. Or worse, attempt to explain himself, in some alien and forced manner.

Of course, he didn’t. Instead, he turned and padded down the hallway. After a moment, I followed.

•

We went to Vermont for two weeks. The snow was deep and the skiing was good. On the lifts, my mother asked my father and me about our respective schools, and we answered. Twice, at dinner, my father inquired about Nolan. Once, to find out where he lived, and again, to find out how he got home every day. They had met, of course, in passing, over a limp handshake that had embarrassed me so much that I later described my father as the weak, silent type.

When we got back, I called Nolan and told him to come over. He said he’d be there that night with a surprise.

I could feel his grin through the telephone circuits.

•

Later that night, as the winter sunset burned orange over the trees, a car pulled into my driveway. I ran out to meet it.

Nolan emerged from the passenger side. Silhouetted by the headlights, the snow crunched under his feet as he walked towards me.

“Sam,” he said. “You know Jane, yeah?”

The headlights turned off and the car went silent. The driver’s door opened and a figure slid from it. She held out her hand as she approached.

“Hey Sam,” she spoke. “I don’t think we’ve actually met. I’m Jane, I go to Tannersville.”

Someone inside turned on the lights, and suddenly she was illuminated. Her hand was stretched towards me. Painted nails, a thin wrist, a small silver ring wrapped around her pinky. It dangled from her jacket sleeve, which was cross stitched and creased where her elbow was bent. There was fur on the shoulder pads and some of the wisps of white reached towards her neck. I stared.

“Man, you never were good at shaking hands, were you?”

His drawing laugh drew me back to the present. There was Nolan, smiling at me. But his eyes were wide, held open against their natural squint. They flitted to her hand and I followed them. Then I understood. I grasped her hand.

“Sam,” I told her. She curled her lips and tilted her head. Her nose was thin. Words burned inside me. Who the fuck are you?

•

Although it was late, and although it was cold, we went down to the river with flashlights. I hurried down the hill, dodging trees in the darkness. When I got to the bottom, I donned my victory smirk. I turned to find Nolan and Jane still near the top. He was standing downhill from her, arms stretched, prepared to catch her if she fell. He said something muffled and she laughed, a high-pitched sound that rose and fell, rolling down to where I stood alone.

It was a cloudless night and the moon reflected off the ice and snow, revealing a sparkling silver in the world that the dark had hidden. We sat on a rock, trading pulls from a bottle of whisky Jane had produced from her inner jacket pocket.

“I’ve heard an earful about this place,” Jane said. “It’s beautiful.”

“Yeah, man. Me and Sam have been practically living out here.”

“You guys are so cute,” she laughed. “I’d think you were, like, childhood friends.”

I glanced up from the line I was drawing in the snow. Nolan and I shared a grin and I felt a flash of joy.

“Well, don’t you worry, Sam,” she teased. “I won’t take up too much of his time.” She let herself fall sideways onto him, her fingers curling around either side of his waist, so that he had to put his hands on the ground to steady them both. She pushed upright off him and they laughed. Nolan dipped his chin towards his neck and raised his eyebrows at me. The whisky boiled in my stomach.

“So what do you think, Sam?”

“What?”

“The drink, man. You like it?”

“Oh,” I said. “Yeah.”

“I think somebody’s getting drunk,” Jane giggled.

I considered this. Nolan and I had shared nips, and even bottles of wines, stolen from his parent’s liquor cabinet. But nothing to this extreme. Nothing like this, where my thoughts moved slow, and my field of vision was wide.

“Maybe,” I mused.

“I think I might be, too,” she said. “Oh fuck, Nolan, no way I can drive.”

“We’ll sleep here. That’s cool, right, Sam?”

“Yeah,” I answered, staring at the moon’s reflection in the current. “Yeah. You can sleep on my floor.”

Later, we climbed the hill deliberately. Sneaking through the dimly lit hallways, we crept past my mother’s kitchen, and my parent’s bedroom. In my room, we finished the bottle and laid out some blankets on the floor. I felt jittery and thought I would not be able to sleep. But I did, instantly, with my vision pulsing slightly and my stomach churning.

•

The sky was a cold blue when I woke up. Birds were chirping in the empty trees.

Nolan was in the bed with me. Facing me, his eyes closed and lips open, the blanket resting on his stomach. His arm lay bent in the space between us and I took his hand.

I must have thought that he had left Jane on the ground to be in bed with me. I must have been drunk, to think that his presence had nothing to do with comfort.

His lips were hard against mine, chapped from the cold and the alcohol. There was warmth in his mouth, in his breath, and I felt it in my own mouth, and saw it, in his eyes when he drew them open, when they squinted as he smiled.

I held on to that smile for a long time. To me, then, it meant that there was something that could be saved, between us. I wasn’t delusional enough to think that we would be together. I just thought that we could be whatever we were, if I could explain, or apologize. Friends, I guess.

Of course, I know now, why he smiled. He thought I was Jane.

“You fucking faggot.”

It’s the only word that ever sounded worse in his deep, Upstate drawl.

“You fucking faggot,” he spat at me, staring at me, jumping out of bed, over Jane, where she slept on the far side.

“What’s going on,” she muttered. He threw his shirt on. She was already dressed.

“He’s a,” he sputtered. “A fucking faggot.” Then he yelled, “he tried to fuck me!”

And then they were gone. A car started in the driveway. A light turned on in the hall.

My father was standing at the top of the stairs. He must have heard everything. His hair shone in the light above him and his face was set, his eyes locked on me, standing in my doorway in a large t-shirt and boxers. Tears welled in my eyes and began to leak, rolling across the curve of my nose. He waited there for a moment. Then he reached one hand up and pulled the string to the light. I heard the stairs creak under his feet, then the closing of a door.

And then there was silence, again.

I think I know why my father didn’t say anything to me that winter morning. I think he knew that anything he said would have been a lie. And for all the truths my father never told me, he never once lied to me. He never told me I could be okay.

I don’t hold that against him. I can understand why he kept so far from me growing up. I don’t blame him for protecting himself.

And I don’t blame my mother for inflicting him on me. Nor Nolan for avoiding me at school, nor Jane for telling her friends what happened.

I’m older now. I don’t hold resentments from my childhood. I moved out of Tannersville. I live in the city. I have a job. I have an apartment. I sleep with men, and I’m not embarrassed by it.

But I’m glad they let me leave in the morning. I’m glad I’m allowed to retreat home while I’m still intact.

Cause I wouldn’t want them to lie to me. I wouldn’t want them to tell me that I’m not alone. And if they were going to, like, kill themselves, I wouldn’t want to know how.

Alicia Iott

Wave and Staircase



acrylic paint, screen print, ink

Grace Wong

Homebound



beans, markers, fabric

Swirl



photography

Lindsey McClary

Movie - 1



digital photography

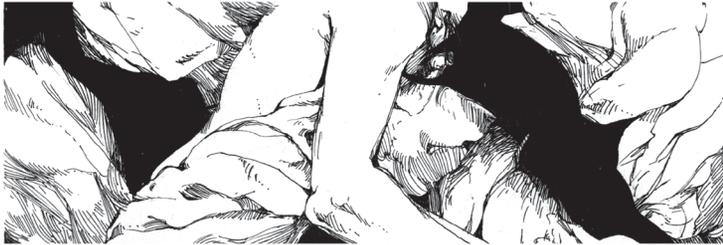
Movie - 3



digital photography

Sandra Kang

Untitled



pen and paper

Emily Charleson

Ballistic Nylon

As a keepsake
you stole
a sleeve
of my sweater,
without realizing
you severed the yarn
and I try
to remember
a time
before everything
unraveled:
when I wasn't
a moth caught
in a bath,
or this chiffon scarf,
wisp of a woman.

Cullen Wells

Tin Cans, Splinters, and More Addictive Things

You have always had a great imagination but now you can't imagine anything. It has been 46 hours since the last time you used and you're standing on a street corner shivering in the wind as you wait for your man. You couldn't sleep last night so you watched the six o'clock news and you know that it's so cold local schools were canceled for the day. But still you can't stop sweating and when the wind hits you right you feel like nothing but metal a kid could get his tongue stuck to. And as you pace back and forth on the sidewalk, you are aware that things in this world matter but at this moment you cannot accept it for you are not of this world. It is foreign and you some immigrant in a dying man's skin. You look at the concrete and sometimes elsewhere but nothing is known and shapes have no edges, words no letters and the wind starts again.

When the man is good, you are good and when he is good he puts the light on in his apartment bedroom. A lighthouse to all lost sailors. A beacon of solace for those who sweat as they shiver. You think of that prayer from when you were a kid. Lord, the giver of light? Or is it life? Either way, you feel it applies. But still the man's room sits black and empty. In times when you are more alive, you wonder how the man gets around his room late at night without an eager junky coming to his door. But that thought now seems ridiculous, for who cares? 46 hours, so certainly not you.

For the year that you've been using you've never had a withdrawal. You've heard junkies of all degrees of toughness say that it's like going to hell and back. One man who stormed the beaches at Normandy, got a leg blown off and got hooked on morphine told you that its like war the way it feels like death is everywhere.

You used to imagine what war was like. You were six and nothing made you feel more alive than looking down the barrel of your rifle at your target.

Not the type of alive that made you feel like the best version of yourself, but the type of alive that made you lose yourself. The type of alive that made time slow and noises harmonize into one homogenous hum, a hum so quiet you heard the pounding of your heart creep up your throat, but you didn't recognize this noise or the person it's coming from. So you named him Major Cauley.

•

The bolt of the rifle clicked down as Major Cauley did the Sign of the Cross and kissed the crucifix that hung from his neck like he always did before battle. *God likes dead Nazis much as I do.* Then he looked at the lazily falling snow and thought it might be the last time he ever saw it, felt its numbing coldness and heard its muted crashings. It made him feel a bit more at ease. Like seeing his house at a distance upon return from family trips to Cape Cod. Now, nerves past him, he was ready.

The purpose of Cauley and his troops mission was simple. And curiously vague. An important message was to be wired at 17:00, delta company, only 8 strong, were to infiltrate the barn, eliminate all Nazi insurgents, intercept the message, radio it back to headquarters about 75 miles away, and wait for an airlift to take them back to salvation. No prisoners were to be kept.

For fucking liberty! Cauley slid up the stone wall that encircled the barn and served as a perfect barrier for the Major's boys and fired off three shots. *The center of swastikas make the perfect target.* Pfft, pfft, pfft. Hit, miss, hit. Tin cans and splinters flying.

•

When you first got to the city in 1961, you were in awe of how tall the buildings were. You grew up in a small New England town that had more trees than people. The endless possibilities, the continual stimulation, the humanity is what drove you away from the woods and onto the pavement. You thought about how pioneers on wagons were of a bygone time. The pioneers grew bored of God's creation and decided to make their own. The

wagon was traded in for a forge in which man's hand crafted steel and with that steel those same hands built buildings and then some more until there were cities and God's green Earth was almost gone. You thought that the city was man's Eden and kingdom, where man's pavement suffocated God's grass and man's buildings shamed God's trees. So man took God's grass and trees and moved it to the center of his kingdom. A park still sits, a small shrine to man's creator. And you, only 21 years old, thought how beautiful it all was. How the created created and destroyed other creations. It was all a big mess to you and it made you think of the way waves create themselves only to destroy themselves only to be created again.

Your first apartment was small, square and on the thirteenth floor. The walls were a grungy white and when you stood in the middle it looked like you were in a cloud the way all that white seemed to suffocate you. Nothing worked right, the couple on the other side of the 2 inch thick wall fought all the time, 4 or 5 cats roamed the halls, getting skinnier every time you saw them. Plus, you went there because you thought you could find the heart of humanity in the Eden of man's creation, not sit in a white room. So you gathered what you considered the necessary tools of an explorer of man's creation: a bus pass you found on the ground, a notebook and pen in case you felt inspired, a joint, three dollars for drinks and a vague understanding of where to go and how to use the public transportation.

You knew no one in the city when you got there so you traveled like a lone cowboy. For a while seeing the city was new and exciting but having no one to talk about it with made everything feel odd, like you were some spectre that none of the millions seemed to notice. Your expectations were wrong. The city turned out to be an isolating place and you felt like most of your time was spent riding subways with no one but characters in books.

You felt like an over-written cliché. You felt hollow. There were people like you before and there would be more to come. This world didn't need you.

•

You've been in the cold for two hours, awake for 27, and haven't eaten in 33. Whatever's been coming from your nose all afternoon is now frozen onto

your lip. Air is all you consume, sucked in through purplish lips and clattering teeth. And you've never been more aware of your every atom. You look at your arm and it looks like your bones are giving up and getting smaller and maybe that's what's causing your discoloration. Your yellowy skin feels tacky like wet wax and then brittle and black like it was in a kiln too long and could fall apart any instant. And inside your head a lumberjack tries to cut down a tree but messes up and causes the tree to knock another over, which knocks another over and you wonder how big the forest is in your head because trees have been falling all day and with each the ground becomes more loose and more tender to the roughness of falling bark. But most of all you are just cold. You vibrate like the metal of a crash cymbal.

You remember that there is something you must do but you can't remember what. You feel like you need to puke. What is it you need to do? You can't be sure, so for now you can only wait. And every minute passes like a lifetime, every bead of sweat a death without rebirth, another shiver and everything gets blacker and nothing can stop the self-pity of feeling so much death while still alive. Things will be better when you are good. Maybe you will even remember what you need to do.

•

In Cauley's mind all of this made sense. Well, maybe not all of it, but enough. He was fighting for his country, keeping freedom alive, killing Nazis and loving it too. Yeah they might be brothers and fathers and husbands and sons and he wasn't sure what exactly they were doing wrong—something about Austria and Poland and the Jews—but he was told to kill them and he didn't become a Major by not following orders.

It was not a time for thinking but a time for doing. War isn't a study, it's an instinct, something that's deep inside some men and not in others. Cauley, more myth than man, had the instinct and his troops knew it.

Get outta here. That's nothing! One day, and I saw this mind you, he ran out of ammo. I tossed him a mag and he threw it right back, went running right out onto the field. Shots are flying left and right and he's out there killin' those motherfuckers with their own fucking helmets.

I heard he once dove on a grenade to save his men and was out fighting the very next day.

I was with him. Didn't see it but I know guys who did. Musta scared the fucking thing!

On a nightly basis, the boys would laugh as they sat around the fire and Cauley, still within hearing distance, pretended to be drifting away under the stars. He loved his boys. He wanted to be their hero. He would do anything for them.

•

You met Chet Nesler at a bar. Chet always makes a point of introducing himself to as many people as possible. He asked you what you did. You said that you wrote poetry, but that since you got to the city you hadn't written as much as you thought you would and nothings been published and you weren't sure how you were gonna make rent. So Chet ordered another round and a few more and by then you were drunk and filled with elation that another human recognized your presence. Two hours later you were at his apartment on Sixth with him and someone whose name doesn't matter. Chet wanted to get high. You remembered you brought a joint. Chet put on a Dylan album. The joint had gotten flattened at some point in the night but it still smoked fine.

"Is grass all you ever do?"

"It's all I've ever done."

"You mind if I shoot up?"

You didn't. You are a man of curiosity, you wondered how everything was done, you wanted to ask him what it felt like. You asked him questions along every step of the way. You had no intention of doing it, you just wanted to know. The thing you did not understand most was why the cotton ball was involved. You were told that heroin can come with germs and particles of shit you don't want running in your blood and that the cottons help filter stuff out.

The needle went in and blood went out. Chet's eyes got lazy and his pupils got small and for the first time you noticed how golden his eyes were. He sat there smiling and he started to rub the back of his head into the sofa

he was sitting on. This made him laugh. He looked around like he'd never seen his apartment before and you wanted to ask him more questions but you didn't want to interrupt him.

"Do you want some?" His voice was thick and friendly.

•

You don't remember how you got here or where you even really are—you must be told. In times when you are good you know these things, but for now they are lost and you found your way by something primitively instinctive, something that runs in your blood. The man's window doesn't quite look right. Maybe you aren't at the right building. You turn to the side. What you see scares you. You recognize one or two of the faces, but you can't remember the names. One looks at you with golden eyes while he waves and you wave back, not caring who it is. You wonder if they've all been standing there the whole time and you just failed to notice. You've seen them around at bars or the man's or the boarding houses that you stay at when things are tight and you know they've seen each other too. But the good times some of you shared were in another life so you all pace and rub your arms silently like longtime buddies in some asylum for people who's brains don't quite work right. It's even colder than it was earlier and now that the day has faded away with you and the streetlights provide more than the sun, you know that more like you will begin to stumble over guided like summertime moths to the man's bedroom light.

•

Get the machine gunner in the top window! He is taking too many men! One shot, one kill. The sound of glass cracking was heard about a half-mile down the nearby stream by a perky eared dog and his owner, leisurely fishing using bloodworms as bait. Cauley always had a good shot, he even won the annual shooting contest the year he graduated from the academy. And, more importantly, he knew how to orchestrate great battle plans, being the one barking orders during snowball fights for as long as he could remember. He

was the youngest Major in army history and he knew his story would last longer than his skin.

Major, we're losin' one over here! It's Michaels, it's bad. Fucking bad!

Fuck. Michaels? Already lost Lucas and Martin! And Johns is too hurt to fight, clipped in the thigh. Big vein, too. Had to take him off into the woods so he would be out of the way.

Does he have a cross to pray with? He could use one.

Excuse me, sir?

Listen, Matthews, I want you and the ones remaining on the right flank to go around back. There's a creek bed you can lay in for cover. Shoot a lot of rounds, throw a grenade or two. Just get some attention back there so we can move-in up here. I want them to hear you in Berlin, got it?

Cauley's boys listened as they always did. As Cauley reloaded his rifle there was an explosion and the ground shook. He heard men yelling but the words were foreign, gibberish. He peered over the top of the wall and saw no one. The sun was getting tired, hanging low and heavy with gold and the broken glass twinkled like the snow. *Isn't it beautiful?*

Your brother was still alive fighting in Europe whenever you had a bad case of the flu at the age of six. The doctors were worried. Your fever was too high. With two of his sons closer to death than he, your father's voice quivered as he paced around the hospital room. You never imagined your father could look so afraid.

"Don't worry, I'll be better before you know it." You assured him. "Just a venereal disease." You weren't sure what that meant, but you heard on the radio that it was a problem for the boys overseas. "I just can't wait to be back out there fighting." You have always been good at being strong for others when times are bad.

After laughing and with an easy smile, your father told you not to tell that to anyone at school. But you weren't in school for a whole two weeks and by then the Major had fully recovered and had many orders from Washington waiting for him.

You are like ink in water. You try to hold yourself together but you can't. This is what you've dreaded ever since the first night you used with Chet. You know that all of this could stop. Somewhere in the city a needle and a spoon sit, waiting just like you. You think of that first time you used with Chet. How the needle pinched you when it went in, how your blood swirled in the dropper. How the feeling rose in you. Thick and smooth like warm salt water. Everything was beautiful and the weight of months of loneliness in the city melted away. For the first time since you arrived, you felt at home, at ease, like when you were a kid and you saw your house upon returning from Cape Cod. You wish you felt like this now, but you don't. The world is scary and opaque and it smells like something that doesn't trigger any memories.

You try to imagine what Cauley would say to you but you can't. You wonder if he would fight for you, or if he would think you were a lost cause. You aren't sure and you start to cry. You feel like you've deceived yourself. Something comes to you then leaves. You feel it in swaying with the tides and it's almost onto shore. What you must remember is scraping the sands of your brain.

Cauley's life had not been long but he would be fine if it ended out here, in battle, next to a barn with shattered windows during a light snowstorm. His blood mixing with that of his troops, even the Nazis, seeping into the earth, fortifying the plants and drowning the ants. He wondered if you had them side by side if you could tell the difference between free blood and Nazi blood and if bloodworms were called bloodworms because they ate blood and if that is in fact the reason, if the worms could taste the difference. Cauley was almost certain he would be able to tell, even if some stupid blood-eating worm couldn't.

Cauley ran for the door of the barn. The two men he kept out front with him followed. They heard someone scream. *Fuckin' shit!* The Major wished

he wasn't able to understand the words. The two young soldiers followed Cauley's order to get on the sides of the door. Cauley kicked it in and fired three shots blindly. Two of them missed but one hit a Nazi. *Right in the fucking head!*

The Major caught sight of himself in a mirror that was dripping with the blood and flesh of the Nazi. He had never seen himself in battle and he did not recognize who he was. *There's a certain look a man gets in his eyes when he's out here. Whether he's brave, scared, angry, proud it's all the same. It's the look of an animal whose only want is to stay alive.* Cauley had seen the look in plenty of other men and he thought what he told his men before battle that day was true, free eyes and Nazi eyes alike. But as he caught his in the mirror he thought he might have been lying. His pale-blue eyes didn't look like everyone else's. They looked happy, at home.

He must have stood there staring a second too long because he was out of position and a Nazi from the top floor took notice of him and shot into his direction. Cauley jumped out of the way, diving to the floor where the muddied footprints of Nazi's had outlasted some of their creators. Cauley's arms went out ahead of him as he went to the ground and a splinter two inches long went into his forearm. Unlike many of his friends from back home, he was never afraid of needles so this did not scare him as much as it might someone else his age. He picked himself up, got behind cover and, with a wincing face, he pulled out the splinter and watched the blood rise to his skin, getting more vibrant, more red with every drop. A small pool of it collected in a muddy bowl made of Nazi treads on the wooden floor.

When your brother's body was found somewhere in France in 1945, you didn't attend the funeral. Cauley did. Face of stone, Cauley made it through the funeral when you know you couldn't have. While looking at you, military men whispered behind cupped hands. You knew what they were talking about. How strong you looked. How the rest of your family sat there crying and you just sat there, some primitive look in your eyes which, focused on the flowers in the viewing room. You thought they did a lot to liven up the place,

give it a sense of majesty and renewal. You adjusted the bandages on your arm. Cauley got scuffed up the day before storming a barn.

Everyone knew how much you looked up to your brother, how this probably hurt you more than anyone else, but Major Cauley wasn't sad. He was proud, even happy a brave young man got to give himself to his nation in a pursuit of maintaining freedom. It was an honor to go like that as far as Cauley was concerned. Cauley adjusted the bandage that was on his arm from a two-inch splinter he took to the forearm the day before during a mission to intercept a radio message from a barn. Even though Cauley told yourself you were proud your brother went like that, that was the last time you ever created Cauley, ever used to as a way to be strong for others. He never left your brother's funeral and since you've felt weaker.

You forgot your wallet. Your breath gets fast and uneasy. You think you need somewhere to sit down. You run your hand through your pockets. You check the ground under where you've been standing. The wallet is gone. You're stomach turns, you feel completely defeated and tears run from your eyes into your mouth. Salt water. You rub your hands on your arms and the way you can still feel the pressure even after you've stopped reminds you that you are just made of wax that can be molded. You don't think you will make it. You think about being buried next to a New England barn whose windows were shot out years ago without a casket so that someday a flower red as blood could grow from you. You hear a plane overhead and you think that it might be the Soviets. That they will end your agony for you. That time will keep tick, ticking if only to the footsteps of an eternal procession of cockroaches.

But the man is a good man and he always tries to make sure he has what guys like you need. Yeah sure, he has skin in the game, but the lips pursed, eyebrows raised look he gives you when you've been off the stuff for too long is of genuine concern and he doles it out the way a mother puts a bandaid on a young child after kissing the wound. You think he will probably let you slide on this one, that you could get him back next time. You feel a little better, not a lot.

•

Because there were less gun-shots and less people agonizing in German, the Major knew his boys must have done a good job around back. Cauley could tell the difference between an American and a Nazi rifle just by listening to the sound of it being fired and he deduced that there must only have been one Nazi left. *Hope the others are all rotting in hell.*

Cauley ran into the middle of the barn, firing into the top level where the shots had come from before. His first few were undirected, random, but as he got closer to the radio that they were to intercept a message from, he caught sight of the last remaining Nazi. Two more shots. Pfft, pfft. One missed, but the other got the Nazi in his neck.

•

You were five and the way the sand ran through your fingers made you feel uncomfortable. You wanted it to be more stable. You watched the waterline fade back into the sand before the next wave came. The line that separated the wet sand from the dry mesmerized you. You went down to the waterline and started building. Whole cities protected by moats and levies. You were the creator. The king. You took unruly, loose sand and made it into something real. The tides of eternity endlessly closing in. The sand city survived one wave, but there would always be a next. The tides would change and the city would start to crumble. You would run your hands up the side of the castles. Grab some dry sand to try to even it out. Before you could make all the repairs necessary, another wave. More buildings collapsed and you became frantic. You could feel everything closing in. You dug the moats deeper, took a plastic shovel and started to build a wall. Shovel after shovel of sand in front of your city. You wouldn't let it all fall apart. You saw your father laughing at your frenzied state. You thought about how he just couldn't understand. That to him it was only sand and water, but to five year old you it was rapturous.

“Hey, soldier. I think it's time to pack it in. Why don't you leave up your sandcastles and see if they last the night.”

You looked at what you'd created. A whole kingdom. You thought that it'd never be able to last the night. That the castles needed you to fight for them or they wouldn't last. You couldn't let the tides of eternity do that to something that became a part of you. You onto your kingdom. You felt your weight collapse into the sand, your creation became your destruction more and more as you rolled on top of it.

•

For as long as you have existed, you've known that existence is a privilege. That it's something given and taken without the care of the tides of eternity. So you've always played with your fate like a sandcastle, creating and destroying at will. You know that a man who counts his life by hours, years is a man of ignorance—age should be counted in deaths and most people don't have to count too many times. But those who sweat as they shiver are like cats and by your metric have lived more than any man who merely dies once. Still though, you know that maybe one death is all a man ought to have and anything more is superfluous and unnatural.

You are too tired to stand so you lean up against a structure that you can only assume is a building, maybe a bank or an office or something. And from this new vantage, you see more of this scary and grey world. Across the street someone sits exactly like you, but he shakes his hand and something in it and something rattles and every now and then someone helps him out because he's not already too far gone, he isn't waiting for the man, the light, he is too alive for that. And in the softness of winter, all you can here is that clanging noise coming from his movements and you wish to tell him that his gestures are no more than an insult to the dying and the dead and that he should not take movement for granted because he's only barely more here than you are. But your mouth makes no move and your weak lungs are reluctant to focus on anything other than the air which keeps you here.

You still can't remember what you've forgotten. You thought for a while that it might be the wallet, but you've come to terms with that and still feel something unknown is sloshing within your depths. You again try to search through yourself for it, but it feels further away now than it did before. The tides have washed it out so far you can barely feel that it's still even there.

•

The battle had been won, but the last Nazi still stood, clutching his wound. Trying to walk but stumbling the way moths fly like they have a broken wing, the Nazi went towards the railing. The boys from outside rushed in and they all cheered with a primitive joy of first discovering fire. Nazi blood rained down on them like champagne. Cauley looked up at the dying Nazi, into his eyes. His boys ran over to pick him up in honor of his heroism, but he pushed them off. Stand back! The Nazi, still standing by the railing, had the same look they all do and over the railing he went. Cauley only thought to protect the boys he loved, pushing them away.

The drop wasn't that far, 20 or 30 feet, but by the time he had landed on Cauley, he had been traveling with great speed. The sound of the Major's neck was like stepping on a branch in the dead of winter. Sharp and crunchy. Blood came out the sides of the Major's neck where the bone peaked through. One on top of the other, the two soldiers bled. Separate pools worked towards the center of the room, towards the radio. After they met in the middle it was impossible to tell that the blood ever came from two different soldiers.

"Hey soldier, what're you makin' so much noise for?" A man with a fishing pole, a perky eared dog, a cup of bloodworms and two hooked fish looked into the barn, unaware of all the carnage. He just saw tin cans, splinters, broken glass that shimmered like snow, and blood that he could only assume belonged to his son, who lied on the ground, an odd smile on his face.

"Bandage that up before dinner." The man was pointing at the fish and then walked away.

•

You met Cindy O'Haire on a subway when you were about to stick your hands into the pockets of a sleeping homeless man. "This time of night," Chet told you over a round of drinks he paid for, "bums ride the subway on a loop just trying to nod off. They rarely have much, but are are easy fuckin'

targets." \$3 didn't get you high anymore and although you knew it was wrong Chet's suggestion grew inside you like mold. You thought that it was alright just as a temporary solution, just until something got published. So you and Chet planned to meet at the 42th street subway the next night at 1. You would ride it up into the 150s, taking as much as you could from those who had little. But Chet never showed. The plan was for you to hold a newspaper wide and obnoxious so that Chet had cover to take the cash from the sleeping bums. Chet didn't need to be there ripping off bums in the first place. He had a steady job and a nice apartment that still smelled like fresh white paint, but also a constant need to be on a rush from something. Drugs, sex, crime, anything to get the blood thick with life. He said that you could keep all the money you guys came up with, he was along for the ride.

You waited until 1:30 and you had already caught the attention of a transit cop before leaving. You thought of just going home, but you hadn't shot-up in almost 14 hours and you were starting to feel a little sick. You thought of Normandy. Of what it would mean to make a sandcastle on the beaches of Normandy. You pictured the one-legged morphine-addict veteran. You felt the urge to fight and you hoped on the next subway.

"You don't have to do that." She sat casually, arms to the side, her voice soft and airy reminded you of when you were a kid and you would blow balloons up and let them go before tying them off and they would fly around the room.

"What?" Her voice could barely make it the 20 yards it needed to reach you. You heard her but you asked anyway, maybe you just wanted to hear her voice again.

If Chet had shown, he would have handled this situation. You have never been the best at talking with pretty girls and he was always one of those confident idiots who never felt uncomfortable during conversation. Chet would have known what to say to the woman. Maybe some lie about how he knew the man, an old drinking buddy, and was just leaving him a few dollars. But you couldn't come up with anything clever, you'd convinced yourself you absolutely needed your fix and that was the only thought you were capable of.

"I said you don't need to do that."

You weren't sure how to respond to such a thing. How would she know?

“If you’re hungry I have some food at my apartment.”

You looked at her stomach. It was rounded like an orange and you felt a certain closeness to her, to her stomach.

“No it’s fine. I just really need some money.”

You turned around to get back to stealing but the homeless man had awakened and was sitting up and staring at you.

“What do you want?”

You walked away from the homeless man quickly and sat near Cindy.

“Are you sure you aren’t hungry?”

•

It has been 50 hours and still the room sits black. When you stare into the dark sky you can’t tell it’s snowing. You miss the way a lighter makes the heroin bubble in a spoon, the familiar tug of a needle. You should have went home hours ago, given up, but you can’t. You think that if you leave the street corner you’d never be able to make it back. That you will fall dead in some alley and no one, not even Cindy, would notice you were gone til it was spring and the snow melted and your body was revealed. That can’t happen. This light must go on. You need it to.

Where could the man be? You have no idea. You think that maybe the cops have him. That they’d see that you called him 15 times before you decided to wait on the corner. They are probably at your house right now, talking to Cindy. You will be sent upstate to shiver and sweat in a six by six cell.

•

Cindy didn’t know what to say. You kept on insisting. You told her that you wouldn’t take no for an answer. You were drunk and she was pregnant. You were both leaving a party in Brooklyn.

“Come on. We are just a few blocks away, aren’t we?”

“It doesn’t matter. I don’t want to go.”

Cindy looked around and she saw everything she knew. The area around where she grew up hadn’t changed much in the years since she left. Cindy

walked fast down the sidewalk, her head to the ground. She could sense herself passing stores she once frequented, friends she once loved. She didn’t want to see any of it.

“There is nothing to be embarrassed about. I mean you know me, I don’t live like a king.”

“I’m not embarrassed of anything?”

“What are you then? I just want to see where you grew up.”

“Let’s just not talk about it.”

“In third grade I pissed my pants in front of everyone in gym class.”

“What?”

“I told you something I don’t like to talk about, now it’s your turn.”

“I just don’t want to go. I have some bad memories there and going back won’t help anything. Just please, can you stop asking me about it? If I want to share something from my childhood with you, I will.”

And you have never asked since.

•

Your mom died while she was giving birth to you, leaving your father with the peculiar and terrible choice between holding his dead wife or his newborn son. Your father wasn’t sure what he was crying about more and your 12 year old brother waited outside the delivery room, never fully able to forgive you for what you did to his mother. Ever since then, you have been very aware of how creation and destruction are forever connected. You feel the guilt your family thinks you do.

You’ve always loved to play with wax. The way that it allows fire to destroy it and then recreates itself only to be destroyed again. It makes you think of eternity, of waves and cockroaches and the way the trees and grass are barricaded by the city. You would see how close you could get your hand to the flame of the candle. You thought about how simple everything would be if you were just wax and could melt away. If creation is beautiful, and you are sure that that is true, then destruction must be as well. So you created Major Cauley, only to destroy him, over and over. And each time it made you feel more alive, like you were getting another chance at life.

•

This is it. Here they come. Two cops just pulled into a parking spot right in front of you, at first you didn't think anything of it, but now you realize that you are shuffling away, too aching to move fast. Terror spreads in your body, through your bones and into your skin. Without leaving the car, one of the cops takes out his flashlight and shines it on the sickly crew awaiting their captain.

“Your dealer isn't here. He's running from us. So you better be getting home now. If it were up to me, you all would get taken into the station, get locked up, but my partner here is a man of sympathy and I don't feel like doing all the paperwork myself.”

Before the cop finishes, you are already walking again. You aren't sure where, but you hope you will make it home.

•

Cindy ran her hand through your hair before she put month-old sleeping Patrick into his crib without gently kissing his forehead the way you do. Then she laid down next to you on the couch. You were asleep and she wanted to whisper the truth to you. Wanted to tell you who the father really was. How she didn't even know his name. How he paid to touch her. How he could be any one of multiple different men. How he didn't matter to her then and he sure didn't now. How she couldn't love Patrick the way she knew she should. How she needed you, your love and strength. She wanted to whisper that deep into your ear. Let it tickle your insides, see how it made you feel, what it made you do. But she was afraid. The time you told her that her keeping secrets was way worse than whatever the secret could be ran through her head. But she liked that you couldn't judge her for what you didn't know. Cindy told you that she would never judge you for using heroin. She said that everyone has flaws and that that is alright. You've asked her what hers is. She can't even get herself to tell you when you are asleep. Instead she gently kissed your forehead.

•

Anytime you asked about the father, Cindy said she didn't want to talk about it. She said that she loved him very much and that he hurt her and left. Even though that meant that you could be with her, it made you angry. She was so kind, so accepting and yet someone had abandoned her, abandoned their creation. You hadn't been high for nearly 24 hours and your temper was starting to flare up. You asked for his address and said that you would teach the guy a lesson. You'd never been in a fight outside your imagination, but dying for a good cause has always been on your bucket list so you were willing to take on the challenge. The pregnant woman you loved was as good a cause as any.

You got so angry she started to cry. She told you to never bring him up again, that it was the two of you from now on, that nothing from before you met mattered to her. You held her until she was asleep and her stomach stopped moving. You listened to her wishes and haven't brought up the father since.

•

You are at the door of Cindy's apartment. You're not sure how you got here but you are grateful for it. You've forgotten something, you know that, but at least you can lie down in your bed.

But before you can get to your bed, you need to puke. The change in temperature is too much for your body. You make it into the bathroom, but throw up all over the floor. You think that you'll never get to shoot up again and that you'll never not need to shoot up again. You think that this won't ever end. That your life has been made simplified like that of wax. You get the primitive look in your eyes an animal has when its only want is to survive.

A thought comes to you and it gives you life. Your body feels lighter. Maybe this is what you've forgotten. That you didn't actually have to leave the entire time. You've been saving up old cotton balls. Chet told you to do this. “Save them for a rainy day, get like ten together and you will be back. Good as new.” You go to your closet and take out the shoebox you use to

keep all of your goods. You take out all the cotton balls you have saved up in a plastic bag. It's almost a full shot. You think of how dirty it must be, how deadly, and you can feel the relief already. For the first time, your headache goes away. You start to smile and everything is becoming more familiar.

•

Heroin has been a special friend to you. When you got to the city, you thought you'd find the sublime out in the streets. But in the winter the snow didn't stick to the pavement and the people all seemed distant. You found the sublime on couches in dirty apartments, swirling in droppers blood trying to stay together, warming insides thick and smooth like saltwater. You found the sublime in alleys that smelled like piss. In bathroom stalls that smelled like shit. But it all seemed just fine to you. Just perfect actually. As long as you were with your faithful Heroin. You'd been together a whole year and you never felt Heroin's absence until now. You've thought about leaving Heroin behind at times, but life without her scares you. You are dependent on this friendship. It travels in your veins and makes home in every cell of your being. Heroin has taken all your freedom, your imagination and kept it for herself. You stopped carrying around a pen and paper. You felt you didn't need to create beauty when you lived it.

You've told yourself that you're alright with this arrangement. It has always felt natural to you, comfortable. You've been floating in warm salt water, not a care in the world. But Heroin isn't really like that. You've known that the entire time, you just never admitted it to yourself. You've really been out on the beach. Right where the waterline faded into the sand. Trying to protect your kingdom. Or out in the fields, rifle in hand, Cauley and his beloved boys. Heroin has given you something nothing else could have. Heroin has made something real for you that before you could only imagine. Heroin turned you into wax that melts, reforms and melts again.

•

Cindy gave birth to Patrick four months after you met her. You weren't in the

hospital with her, you were high in someone's apartment who you'd never met before and hadn't met since. She gave birth alone, squeezing the guardrail on the side of her bed because no one was there to offer a hand. You came home to a message on the refrigerator from her telling you it was time. It was marked for time only five minutes before you got home and you became terrified. You thought that something bad might happen to her, something you couldn't bare see. You wondered how your dad was able to live after seeing your mom pass her life onto you and you thought about calling to tell him the good news. But you didn't. You put your shoes back on, found Chet and went to that strangers.

It's not that you didn't love her, you loved her too much. You felt like you could say anything to her. But you've always felt she's held something from you. You've never liked that she wouldn't tell you about her childhood, her life. You've hated her for not opening up to you, but you spent so much of your life lying to people that having someone who could know all your truths was too refreshing to give up. You read her some poetry that you promised yourself to never read anyone. You even told her about the missions Major Cauley went on. You told her that you were never sure why, but Cauley was a tragic character who always died right after being the hero. The last time Cauley fought, you told her, was day before you heard your brother died. She's never told you anything so personal.

But just a month after meeting her, you had been evicted and she offered to take you in. You told yourself that you weren't using her, that you really did love her, and you believed it. You would have stayed with Chet but when you asked him he laughed and asked what he would tell the ladies when he took them back to his apartment only to find a passed-out junky on the couch. He had created you and abandoned you.

But Cindy let you use in her apartment and you two would sit there in silence after you shot up, your hand on her stomach, your eyes closed. You could feel the baby move around and you felt warm and soothed like you were in the womb too. One time she broke that silence. She told you she loved you. It was the first time either one of you said it. You wondered what she saw in you. You weren't sure and that only made you love her more.

•

You are ready. Chet warned you that reusing cottons was dirty and should only be used in an emergency, but this is an emergency if there's ever been one. You hold the needle to your arm, ready to watch the dropper dance with blood, confirming that you've hit a vein. You poke in and you feel the needle loose in your arm. You move it around, looking for a vein that isn't already too scarred. You take out the needle and try again. And again. Your arm is bleeding from multiple places and you are sweating with anxiousness into your wounds. There is a salty burn. You take a deep breath.

•

Your father has a glass of whiskey in one hand and the telephone in the other as he stands at the kitchen counter you used to eat breakfast at every morning. He hasn't spoken to you in 9 months and the last time he did you didn't sound too good. You told him you hadn't met too many people yet, but that you loved the city. He asked how you'd been paying rent—you told him about the apartment you worked at two nights a week as the doorman while you tried to write something, but you didn't tell him about the robbing.

Phone in one hand, drink in another, your father is nervous. You are all he has left and you abandoned him. He didn't drink much before you took your mother's place. Your father decides that it had been long enough and he dials the same number he dialed 9 months earlier.

Ring. He still lives in the same house you came back to when you came home from the hospital. The same house you haven't come back to since you moved to the city. Ring. He starts to tap his feet and his reflex is to hang up the phone. But he doesn't. Ring. He still thinks about teaching you how to shoot a rifle almost everyday. About him reading you the headlines from overseas. The cards from your brother. Ring. He would tell you how great the war was going. How the boys would be back in no time. You knew he would lie to you. Ring. In school you heard boys talk about what really was going on. You knew your father was just trying to protect you. Ring. Every

night you and your father prayed for your family's safety. And every now and then he still tries to talk to you about your mother and brother, but you don't remember them anyway. Ring.

“Hola.”

“Um, hello. I um, is...”

“Lo siento. No hablo ingles.”

The line is dead. Your father puts the phone back on the hook. You haven't spoken to him since you were evicted and Cindy took you in.

•

The first time you saw Patrick, you were amazed at how smooth his face was. How he looked timeless and untouchable, too pure for this world. You were too scared to pick him up. He was two days old and Cindy had just gotten home from the hospital. She asked if you got her message on the refrigerator. You told her you didn't and that you were worried sick, but that you were happy that you could be there now. Cindy held Patrick far away from her body and you wondered if he looked too much like his father. You didn't know. You told her that you loved Patrick as though he were your own. You kissed him on the forehead and he smiled a little.

That night you just stood there looking at Patrick sleep and you thought about how beautiful he was. You thought of Patrick as the city. Patrick had been created by a one, but he would be shaped, crafted by another the same way the island on which the city sat was made by God but recreated by the image of man. You thought how that city was made of sand and how you must protect it from the waves.

•

You wipe the blood from your forearm with your left hand and then rub your hand on your pants. You stick the needle back into your arm and it all feels so familiar. The entire world all day has felt distant, but this feels close, natural, like your blood is telling you to. You take the needle back out. You think of just giving up. But all you need is one more try, you are sure of it.

You aren't sure where Cindy is. She does this sometimes, just leaves, unaccounted for hours. You've told her that good mothers don't do that and she's agreed. You think that maybe she's actually the one using you. Sometimes this scares you but when it does, you just shoot up again and everything feels a little better and you know she will be back sometime. But sometimes even shooting doesn't leave you feeling quite right, so you, when you feel afraid, take Patrick in your arms. He can't understand you, but you have promised him many times that you would protect him with your life. That you wouldn't abandon him like his father or feel shamed by him like his mother. You've held him so tight, your eyes closed, that you couldn't tell where your skin ended and his began. Then you can actually start to feel better because you realize you can't be the one who is scared. Just like Cauley had to wear a brave face to protect his boys, you must do this now too.

But then Patrick starts to cry. At first it startles you. But then you realize what you've forgotten all day. Patrick needs more diapers. You didn't get to shoot up yet, but your sickness starts to fade away. Everything is clearing up and the world is beginning to show its beauty once more. You look outside. In the streetlights you can tell that no snow lazily falls, but you suddenly feel more at ease. Like seeing your house upon returning from family trips to Cape Cod. You decide you can't risk taking such a dangerous shot without first helping Patrick. You set the loaded needle onto the coffee table for safe keeping. Then you remember you need to grab your wallet before taking Patrick into your arms and heading back out into the streets.

Kelsey Dolhon

For Emily

I think of you whenever a train rolls by,
how you told me you tried to run away
and I could only think of the many times
we'd stop and wait for the whistle
as it blew past, the tracks just skirting
your back fence—a world beyond
anything, boundless opportunity overlooked
as we grew up in the neighborhood,
two kids happy going nowhere. I could've seen
you'd outstrip even me in wanting more,
the dreams of stardom while I was content
with freeze tag, riding bikes to the community
pool to eat French fries and watch the boys
slow-pedaling past, uniforms flashing
baseball heraldry. Em, you were thinking
bigger back then, even while I switched
schools, and I don't know what becomes
of deferral, or how you lost it to that asshole
in his back seat, fifteen and praying
to tinted windows, how you showed me
the scars when he left—*hoop earrings*
you muttered, tugging sleeves. Somewhere
between your deleted myspace and his plan
to elope I felt the door slam shut, because
you hadn't told me before, because you packed
a bag and waited for the night train that never
came, because you're still here and happy,
so you said, an aunt since six, watching a family

eat itself alive. Statistically speaking, a friendship hitting the seven-year-mark will last forever or for life, whichever's shortest, and we've sped long past data. You know, there's a train behind my place now too and it's always left without me. Because I'm home a month already, and I still haven't called you up.

Katherine Huang

#klutzing

the toe of my golded
sandal heartbeats
over the curb
and i physics
like it's the law
does it logic
that a milli-
second cats itself out
in the 8am sun
before
oh shit i'm concreting
diamonds my dephoned
palm andmypride
coffeeseverywhere

Anthony Comport

When the Distance Closes

line after line of these sickly yellow plinths in the goddamn tube,
like hallway in a mirrored funhouse.
an underground carnival, and whole gang's here,
behind these jaundiced prison bars.

I miss you and I'm scared.

I cling to one efficiently, desperately.
I'm going to a new place!
but these corridors loop across months and miles
circle from head to tail, teeth to guts.

it could swallow you along with me and I'd never see you.
I'd never know, you'd never let me know.

I want you to touch them and wring your hands clean of this city.
but you like massive contamination to be the state of things.
I think you drink so much just to feel clean like I do.
I hoped we could start clean in a new place.

I can't look at pictures of you smiling with dirt in your teeth.
I'd peel back that pixelated flesh to suck on the marrow and find the color.

expectations drove my dreams beyond what you deserve.
they were immeasurable and unkind.
my hopes for you went to the sun and in and beyond.
I would've went in with you and burnt up.

just to come back something clean and new.

it wasn't a creek that cut across our youth.
it wasn't a chapter scrawled with lightning.
it wasn't snow to let melt in the spring.
it was just plastic.
inedible and permanent.
pure waste churned out by loneliness and laughter.
little flecks left in the meadow, the junkyard, the wasteland.
And you let it all rot like that. You took the train to somewhere else,
someone new.

I think about you and feel grey disappointment. I'd chase you to the stars
and back.

Jennifer Huang

Luffy When Her Father Dies

A man is carting bananas across the street, and Luffy is watching.
She is smoking a cigarette she stole from her father's secret stash.
The pocket of his old leather jacket he never wears.
Will never wear again.

And Luffy will take that jacket when they split his things up.
And her brother will take the Swiss Army knife that has rusts on the sides.
Her mother won't cry.
She will only cook chicken soup with steamed Brussels sprouts.

But for now, Luffy inhales everything she hates.
Tulips. Bees. Hail. Coffee. Midnight.
The man with the cart stacks the bananas into a truck.
She wonders why she smokes because it makes her mouth taste like dirt.

A desert for the cacti her father loves to plant. Loved.
The smoke burns right at the back of her throat till her eyes water.

Kelsey Dohlon

Insomnia

I could sleep if the clock would stop glaring. I could sleep
if I could get a moment free from digital lime green,
the inevitable 2 A.M. cat fight. I could sleep if the thousand
orange eyes of the city would stop staring in my window,
a spectral Peeping Tom—*are you sleeping?* I could sleep
if I had a baseball bat under the mattress, like at home.
I could sleep if I had a snack, but I've checked and the fridge
is still empty. The world record for not sleeping is 11 days,
24 minutes. I could sleep if the springs didn't creak, if the bed
didn't sweat like a sponge. I could sleep given less than Miami
degrees, and my God, this is Pittsburgh. Where I'm from,
we have central air. I could sleep but this blanket is itchy.
I could sleep but there's nobody to get me a glass of water.
Some Christmases I'd go an entire night without sleep.
I could sleep but I keep thinking about how one of my in-laws
had a bug crawl in her ear while she slept. I could sleep
if there weren't bugs or Christmas, if it weren't always so dark
in the dark. Sometimes I draw the curtains, leave all the lights on,
roll shiftless on a mattress feigning sleep. I'm hungry. I could sleep
but I'm taking a walk right now because the trestle bridge reminds
me of home the way lonely things always remind me of home,
and when a train passes the faraway rafters shake, restless,
sleepless, oblivious to dawn in the headlight's lonely beam.

Contributor Notes

Emily Charleson

(2016) is a chemistry major and creative writing minor, graduating in the summer of 2016 with MCS college honors. She will continue her education through Carnegie Mellon's Colloid, Polymers, and Surfaces Masters program, which is in the chemistry and chemical engineering departments. While at Carnegie Mellon, she has received third place in CMU's 2016 MLK poetry contest and first place in Big Straw Magazine's poetry contest at CMU. In the past, she has received a Scholastic Art and Writing Gold Key for her poetry portfolio.

Anthony Comport

(2016) is an explorer, reader, coffee addict, Jesus Freak (Exodus 22:18), photographer, writer, nature lover, cider maker, authentic, original, liver laughter lover, spiritual warrior, horses, goal-setter, body painter, antique bicycle repairman, witch doctor, and aspiring hand model.

Kelsey Dolhon

(2015) technically graduated since December, is sitting on a degree in Professional and Creative Writing and has absolutely no life.

Jacob Gordon

(2016) is from Brooklyn, a biochemistry major, and a creative writing minor.

Jennifer Huang

(2016) is an artist and writer. She aims to find nontraditional ways of integrating the visual with the written—from embroidering to express grief to rendering

2-D animations to complement her poetry. For more of her work, visit www.huangjennifer.com.

Katherine Huang

(2017) is a junior biological sciences major who enjoys creative writing, not the other way around. She is spontaneous at all temperatures and has a special place in her heart for bad science jokes.

Alicia Iott

(2016) Alicia Iott is a computer scientist/artist studying at Carnegie Mellon University. She has a passion for creating experiences for people using virtual worlds, video games, charcoal, paint, and anything else she can get her hands on. Alicia strives to create experiences that straddle the boundary between surreal and real, that falls somewhere in the uncanny valley. Feelings of detachment, memory, depersonalization, and disorientation play a large role in her work.

Sandra Kang

(2017) is a double major in Art and Professional Writing, minoring in Business Administration. She is definitely a DP3 concentration and loves/is trying to master all of it—drawing, painting, printmaking, and photography. She finds herself prone to trying to capture the human figure.

Lindsey McClary

(2016) is an undergraduate senior studying math and photography, but has been taking photographs since childhood. She has exhibited as part of group shows in Chicago and Pittsburgh and had work published in the Tartan newspaper. Her work utilizes a range of techniques from traditional black and white processes to contemporary digital image manipulation, and she tends to use a combination of these processes to create the final image. Currently, she is continuing to learn new ways of creating imagery by embracing

alternative processes in printmaking through exposing various light-sensitive materials. Her images seek to uncover and exploit the idiosyncrasies of human perception by abstracting familiar forms.

Taylor Poulos

(2016) is a Senior at Carnegie Mellon University, where he studies Information Systems, Human-Computer Interaction, and Creative Writing.

Christopher Schuler

(2016) is an undergraduate majoring in Chemistry and Creative Writing. He writes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. He was previously published in the Spring 2015 edition of the Oakland Review.

Ian Sears

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