The Tulane Review

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Send Me to Rain

Tory Lambert

Watch your mirror, watch your ceiling. Feel my neck. Suck breath through teeth and pull. A pinch of skin, catch it deftly. The moon in two fingertips. Can you feel it?

Can you say much? Don't say, hello money. You're my quarter's own. Maybe I'll hail the sky. Watch me hail the sky.

Grow and wait for the charge and gravity periodically wrapped in a body. Give it and I'll let it turn yellow and flat and forget warm. Somehow I will or they or maybe just lay down and let it sweep.

Two men like rose in my mirror. A garden here. See nothing and suppose lace. Suppose patiently. Suppose lace and glass are advantages. Too few are in the water. Patience. See and say that's what I will. Day and lace is done but men in rows in my mirror. Bear it and guard it if I can. Men in my mirror. Patience and patiently. Watch it please.

Forget you who addresses me more. You say much. You say it like, hey over there. Watch me irresistible, absolutely eager. Watch me be the one. My neck, my ears. Watch it, watch the ceiling. Watch you pull watch you press your fingertips. No heat here. Neck and lick. Here it is, I'll sell it because of you. Mute it and get it.

Somebody is someone's mother.

Yawn and slip, forget your mother. Slip so there's something to do. How about saying someone done it. Someone done it same as you. When you came you took my summer. Look at you, my camera summer. Carrying a big bit of my someone.

Care about where you're looking. Care if you done it. I'm against these for something. Again forget that I can't see there's nothing for it. Cause it to mute them who get it. Leave me flailing by my feet.

God I God I

Leave me like the colors temporarily and the things that disappear behind the door. Let the colors pass in autumn and leave them on the bottom. Leave me and pass what moments send.

Maybe I'll say it to you like, hey I'm not there. Maybe I'll hail the sky. Maybe solo and maybe me on my feet. Saved by the by, saved by the more.

Stand still like a different me.

Lose what I say along the room. Mirrored in lace. Sun falls in my arms. Those lucky enough to have it. See it when it's best and throw it away.

A piece a day, a piece is done.

Hear and see that there's a mountain. Say it's water and say it's sensible. Embark where there's not and encompass more. Three days will be fine. Three days are in vain.

The old day, the old video.

As you can see you touched all that's been had. You can't feel the feel for more summer. And there's nothing for the months. Here and here you will forget me. Get new and mirrored. Remember what I said.

The day will be passed and put in autumn. Keep the feeling of wanting the sea. And each day there will be more, due to reasons out of sun.

Send me to rain too.

Here there will be what you can't. Suppose I'm on my feet. Suppose I find a pair and keep it. And see who will be in my place if you really want it. Everybody wants it.

Who's who? Everybody walks this way.

Boy

Michael Mendieta

crave to see you now
staring at me
through coke bottle glasses,
your beauty
playing a colorful game
brown orange green
splashed across your face,
a single koi fish entangled
in a strand of your DNA
softening your hard features
enough that only your beard scratches
rubbed up against my face.

Bird in Space

Charles Herbert

Write your night on your hand and
make your dispassion passionate.
Awake and wash it off.

An artist of erasure works
within the Field of Erase – making
a blank canvas blanker, fading to
its zenith as a Brancusi.

The conference of experts in the
Field of Forgetting will now convene;
the purveyors of Delete examine the
swaths and make vast clear-cuts of Remember.
The modern day backspace enthusiasts
suggest surge protectors exploding.

Slam the door on before;
we are setting out to find
the opposite of panacea.

These are your arms after five years, and
your embassies within me
have all been put on high alert.

Cursor.
Blank –
Tomorrow's think tank.

Creation Myth

Joanna C. Valente

You ask me why I never pressed
charges. I drink the rest of my gin & tonic,
begin to tell you how a man

discovered eternal life in 1988. He found
it on the ocean floor. Instead of dying,
jellyfish age in reverse—bury themselves

until tiny flecks rise in gleams, endlessly
rocking. An injured medusa will sink
& reabsorb into the ocean floor—

it will wait. Eventually, a polyp will form
to reproduce a medusa. The easiest way
to make a jellyfish regenerate

is to mutilate it. It does not feel when
attacked. Someday I won't feel anymore
either. We both play dumb

when the bartender asks if we're okay
—I rock my chair the way a mother rocks
her child—ocean rocking a sailboat in arms

of salt. Self-control is difficult for humans:
our hearts still primitive. I scratch at skin
until a new layer reveals

impermeable. In the dim light of the bar,
all the bodies so dense, black secreting
from their pores. They almost disappear.

When it's time, you ask my name. Look
for J's—you'll find them everywhere:
24 hour diners, cliffside harbors in low

sunlight—hotel rooms with unsure
women. I was there once, in a room with
a man. It was late-winter in a big city

where lights no longer cared about sounds
during sex. He taught me how to keep my body
still & thin as pine needles, how to listen

to Billie Holiday cry in the backseat of my car,
how to take a pill so a child remains unborn,
how every spring, fewer azaleas stay

in bloom. I smelled my cunt souring,
something gone wrong—something dead.
Violence never far from the hands of men:

hands around neck—my life still believing
in the yet-to-be. The future has changed.
Early bloomer, still waiting for the one poem

that will bring me home. I didn't tell you how
I used to think of all the ways to fall in front
of cars, sacrifice my body to get what I had

before. I used to pray for a new body by moon
light, a return to being human. I leave without giving
you my name. I do not believe in punishment.

J is for Dickkk

Marie-Claire Serou

Earth's atmosphere:
Our Womb.
It was always alright,
That we were waiting
Living to pay to live

Then Something.
At last. But,
Alas!
I feel you
Sitting somewhere
Not thinking about me

The injustice of it!

I writhe here in these words
Crying indignantly
Like my toes have been cut off
Because
In another dimension,
We lay in the grass
And I get bored of you.

Memphis Downbeat Blues

Erik Iverson

(Chant) Break your body, break your soul:
Big boss-man sippin' kool-aid 'neath the watertower
(Call) Break your soul, break your sound:
The comp of guitars hittin' rocks in the Tennessee sun
(Holler) Break your sound, destroy your spirit;
Whore yourself for cigarettes to pay the cranky rent.

(Clink clank, chink chank) Bone yard tambourine:
Your gang of four, your rhythm racket protection section boys
(Chick-a-tick-a-Chick-a-tick-a) Brushes like a rattlesnake, coiled on a snare:
A bottle of mud and a new Stetson hat
(Plick—plunk—plick—plunk) Broken banjo, stolen blues:
Starin' down the barrel of a loaded tenor sax.

(Verse) Whimper softly on mangy springs, a different set each night:
Hounds sniffin' for blue notes hidden in your trousers
(Bridge) Squeal for the audience; hard labor for tips:
File at your chains for hours with the comb of an heirloom harp
(Chorus) Lonesome whistle blowing down a Beale street alley:
Trapped in a twelve-bar prison.
Never see the light of a B section.

The Summer Before

P.S. Dean

My teenage heart turned evil
for the thighs of private school girls,
the woman appeared in the driveway.

My father counted out her hundreds
on the hood of his car and took the sign
from the window before signing over the title.

Even the cops would wonder the reason
she drove toward the murky water
and pulled a pistol out of her purse.

I imagine her barefoot at the reservoir
and hanging a white dress on the antenna,
the tattered flag from heaven's crest.

Some nights, when the wind howls
through the trees and the moon gleams
in its shell, I believe in a different world.

I know a place of water that comes only
from a long way out of town toward God
through the trespassed breakers of a dark heart.

God in the Bushes

P.S. Dean

Andrew and I snuck out of the house
to skim the neighbor's drainage ditch for bait.
He kept a lookout for God, the black lab
missing one leg. The neighbors pulled the stray
from under a school bus last fall, found the dark knot
of fur whining near the back tire.
The shelter vet gave him a nub and a new name,
said it was either heaven purged or demon saved.

I felt the seed ticks at my toes,
my sneakers already chucked in the tall grass.
Andrew handed me the net.
The minnows darted like magic needles
in the flashlight's beam.
I heard God rustling in the bushes
before he came panting out
in the moonlight. He hobbled down
until he was at my feet. A shadow formed
across the space of his missing leg.

There are still things that can be made right.

Rosalind on the Canal Path

John Walser

You lightning struck
these branches, tore limb bark
like foil from a gift

exposed the living tap,
the darkest ring's verse.

In this Arden

the blue-algae sandshifts
on the water's surface

the only path I follow:
the songbird note shuffle
of your tennis shoes
leaf kicking November.

My fair, my sweet, my delicious, my drunk,
my awkward, my cardinal, my murmured

Rose, your tarentella winds sway
the charge-splashed sky
like the mumble of sheet steel
struck thunder

like gemmed feathers.

DO NOT KILL PORCUPINES OR YOU WILL GET NOSEBLEEDS

James Grinwis

Maybe it is best to be ignored,
warrior of outrageous.
You were always there and now
its totally different, I have trouble
cleaning which is a symptom
of my trouble seeing you gone.
Then I go back to warrior of meek
and no longer have trouble
cleaning. When a couple tells you
they met through a dating site
it may be better not to immediately
think they are losers though
you may suggest that it
is the unexpected in life
which truly gives meaning. Some folks
in the midst of downfall
are like car alarms jammed
in a container truck en route to Sears
for the winter holidays, others
more like pieces of spearmint
being gnawed into little white
pavement spatterings. Morgan Freeman
on this show called "Through
the Wormhole" helps us to see
the micron infinities to
destiny. There is an ode girl,
a green bean girl, and a toasted owl
girl in this town and I am somehow
not friends with them. It is about
how a clarified item in nature
looks to you after a night of
no sleep. Or how the underside

of the skin feels when in
intense emotional pain, though people
feel such things in varying
physical places: the chest,
the neck, the belly. In the universe
of the laundromat, I saw
a thread unwind like the end of the earth.

We Howled At The Stars, Smaller Than Us

Stuart Chittenden

On moonish nights walking home, from The Cricketers,
Eight Bells, Cherry Tree
or Miller's Arms, when the sky's belly glowed from the co-
rona of sodium lights, like that
kid
in the Ready Brek advert, we would stop at the Chinese take-
away and buy fried rice
and curry sauce, corroding into a styrofoam cup with two
plastic spoons. Ambling
up the hill by the A2, the town's four lane artery and vein
folding over the river terrace
ripple,
until the gravel drive of the allotments where we'd sit, backs
against the chained gate
and plotted terrains of chalky soil laced with nitrogen,
tended by urban
farmers that sowed surface loam with lettuce, carrots, and
friable marriages,
scooping rice congealed yellow by spiced gravy, belching lager
and curry at cars
speeding oblivious. We'd tip our chins to howl at the stars
smaller than us, some guttural whoop curdling over the city
walls below,
and stroll past parked vehicles, bending telescoped aerials like
metronomes
whose broken tips stirred the sugar crusted dark, before their
meteor's tail scything
delight
decapitated tulips or, better yet, peonies whose lolling heads
sailed over lawns
or tumbled onto desaturated streets scattering gray petals to
eddy at our feet.

English like a Second Language

Hannah Rugg

Silly little breath space
Clinging to words
Not just yet
Keep stumbling babycalfsyllables onward
On your spindly vocabulary
Newborn and still woozy
From the journey into light
If only I dreamt of dictionaries
Those adjectivearticlenoun tapestries
I'd be a poet
And you'd have stronger legs

Réverbère

Derek Sugamosto

it's said that children born
along the equator boast
dreams of a resolving sun

their search for shade spins
the world round and their
quest is a one-way loop

with peripheral longing
they sense a world full of lamps

The Hanged Man (XII)

Joanna C. Valente

In the beginning, *I* was not
a man. On waters I drank
to find home, the blackest
dark. On slugs served,
I ate to understand
the color yellow,
what a woman could
die from.

Do you remember when
we met? *I* could not say
how much *I* loved you.
In a waiting room,
a woman *I* love, who
doesn't even know me,
but loves me so much
she can't stand to
keep me like a dying
radio. She can't stand
to kill me the same
way she gave her
cat to sleep.

I don't kick to calm
her down. She will think
she is making
the wrong decision
if *I* move,
that *I* will come back
to haunt her when
she is older & married,
when she pulls down

a string to reveal
a bloodless tampon.

In the doctor's office,
I taste bitter, know
there is something
ugly about me. Never seen
I imagine her eating
slugs on rock salt
to satisfy me, me
a dash between her
and her lover, her
legs. Inside
her restless sleep,
I dream of breath.

It takes a certain kind
of skill to unfinish what
you started. It takes
a certain kind of love
to pronounce my
name, gorge
on slugs, to pull
yourself right out
of yourself. *I* heard
you when you said
sorry.

Voyager
(a canzonetta)

Taylor Graham

Where do we dream-travel, when dark
holds us fast in sleep? I've watched you
in long trajectory – not an arc,
but aimed past one o'clock, a zone
far beyond anything I've known.
I called. You looked back. Then you flew
as if each star became your leaping-stone,

the planet-orbits of our sun
outbursting telescope. A dream.
You traveled past the star-webs spun
of time; extending our short sight
that's bound by mortal's dawn and night;
past the heliopause, a seam
among stars unraveling in your flight.

But this is dream. Tonight I'll wake.
In the dark, might I sense a star
watching with distant eye? Mistake
or vision? Just pure fancy? Eye
of light gathering the on-high
in its design; a door ajar;
a blink. Now look again – at endless sky.

From This Upper Window

Heather Hallberg Yanda

Despite the grey autumn light, I believe
in a cloud's clairvoyance, the nameless rain's
certainty, and the willow's need to grieve
while below, the maple agrees: its stained
leaves circle in the wind as umbrellas
stroll by, the sidewalk eclipsed by color.
From this upper window, I take solace
in tea, a book, the remains of an hour,
just as a distant photographer takes
a picture of thought – sees the bricks' careful
details, the reflection the window makes,
and inside, the profile of a single
head bowed to read by a few last roses,
a glowing lamp – and the shutter closes.

Mea Culpa Includes

Peggy Aylsworth

You will not escape.
Goya

Though I'm my own original, a woman
with the moon deep in my bones,

I'm as much myself in you and you
carried in the eye of the sun,

even in the shameful shadows. An
American soldier kills eleven villagers.

Can I play innocent among the asphodels?
In the pit of me I step into the blood.

The doorless massacre, the man
as lion, charging from the fury of his gut,

carry some portion of my hand, turned
black, my mouth too full of cherries.

Sometime the Moon

Peggy Aylsworth

Does the table remember how we looked,
how the dim light held us, willing?
Important, said the man on TV, to ask
the right question, the answer
arriving tomorrow or not.
The open collar of your shirt
under the burnt orange sweater then.
Add the ocean, the full moon,
white, sucking the tide.
Today makes room for the on-going narrative.
Breakfast with dearest you. Caramel yogurt,
a slice of honeydew or raisin bread.
The doctor will speak heart-language
as the bird, the osprey
he once shot through a telescopic lens
side-glances from the wall.
He can say nothing to offset
the damage done, heard on the radio.
The legless man who ran the Olympian mile
has killed the woman he once loved.
What was leaves residue for the slippery is.
And the answer comes:
That kiss did complicate your life.

like hunger

Judith Ford

purple skunk cabbage
sharp beaks reach up like birds, like
orchids, like hunger

stone pier, boulders, boats
clamp down on lake to keep it
from flying away

fog swallows all sound
but surf and the moan of sand
castles collapsing

I try to be here
feet on earth; eyes, ears open
head filled with dry bones

sadness hollows heart
jet trail slits sky wide-open
clouds spill down my cheeks

It's hard to just be
leaves, birds, air, light, all silent
breath is not enough

four horses in field
listened as I wept, concerned
that I'd brought no food

patch of mayflowers
trees snapped in spring storms, white scars
my own broken parts

some days I'm all that
some days nothing, nobody
today, a raw nerve

low sun through wreckage
of bare branches finds sumac
and me, holding on

Such a Day

Pamela Hammond

After all,
on this day sweet peas
gushed perfume.
Bees grew tipsy on nectar.
Hummingbirds flaunted
florescence and
storybook clouds billowed,
utterly content.
A day, it was,
for easy birth and peaceful death.
A day to make less more,
too much less,
a day to beg
the Earth to slow
its rotation.

Silver Leaves

Monika Daniels

"Tell me a secret," you whisper,
trailing woven grass bracelets along my wrist.

"I fell from the moon," I whisper back,
"into the embrace of an evergreen,
and its greedy Nymphs bottled my tears
and turned them into silver leaves.

They hung these leaves along the branches,
shivering lights among the fir,
and solemnly they began to chant
broken prayers to an ancestor.
With one voice they appealed to the moon,
hoping my mother would answer to thieves,
for even with my transformed tears,
they still knew nothing of human grief.

They kept the leaves until they crumbled
and ravaged the tree in desperate distress -
those Nymphs would have offered up their lives
to feel something other than emptiness."

"I don't believe you," you say,
and the cool, green bracelet comes undone.
I shrug in your arms beneath the fir
and something silver catches the sun.

Dear Niagara Falls

Joanna C. Valente

I wrote a song
about you moving
New York into
an igloo reading
from crystal balls

giving answers
about why we won't
die in a supernova
but in Antarctica
swallowing what's left
of the titanic

sharing each of its
many hooves, light fire
to stories about birds
and mothers—mothers
and birds and bats

floating off the gulf
coast like toxic waste
with a sign that reads
please do not
swallow spoonfuls
only teaspoons

& please remember
to place gauze
inside your son's
marrow to prevent
cancer that will kill
him by spring,

only to release
moths belly down
on his grave, DNA
translates to speech
—now a mother
will finally know her
son's secrets:

a furnace thumps
& swans beat their
wings, gun-metal
shots melt an igloo
losing all helvetica
text.

CONCEIVE

Barbara Tramonte

For those that believe music is
in a superior key to writing
cicadas in your pudding
stockings in your hair.

For those who believe in freight trains
Soup bowls, carrot sticks, and peanut allergies
Look back and see the havoc

Why should Microsoft Word look like Gumby on a Mac?

For those who believe in clean linen and
Rag-lets; cleanse, swab, administer
Disinfect and wonder

For those
Huddled under micro-macro
Fabric

Whatever you think in the moment
Is a bat-patrol
Give it up.

Give up on anything you thought about
Give up on what you don't think too.

A Wash

Josh DuBose

There's the tickle and hiss from the tube sending oxygen up my nasal cavity, the silent drip of the I.V. lobbing prednisone into my bloodstream, and then there's my mom, sitting next to the bed watching The Price Is Right with the volume down, slaughtering a bag of Kettle brand salt-and-pepper potato chips, each violent turn of her jaw grinding them to mush, as if they're the reason asthma has kept me in the hospital for the last two days. It's my fourteenth birthday, the day I try to tunnel through the Shawshank wall, crawl through rivers of vile human waste for a rain-soaked crane shot and claim my male sovereignty.

Mom pulls at her shirt, brushes away remnants of the execution with three careless swipes, but when she pushes a strand of graying hair behind her ear, a piece of a once whole chip, a lone survivor of the oral death camp, escapes, hides just past her temple.

I take a breath, wheeze.

"Oh, you're awake," she says, standing to pull the covers over me, pretending not to notice the tent my dick is making out of the hospital gown. I grab the sheets, pull them higher, and cough from the effort.

"Happy birthday, honey. I can't believe you're already—"

"I'm hungry," I say.

"Breakfast should be coming soon. I can hear them wheeling it around in the halls."

"Give me some of those chips."

"What chips?" she says and opens the blinds. The sun makes me squint and wonder what kind of late October morning it is, just a cool one or the frigid kind that seizes my lungs, promising to suffocate me if I'm not a good little boy and don't scurry back inside to finish reading Prince Caspian. Sometimes I kick the back wall of my closet just in case there's a corridor to a magical world with a big game animal for a Jesus back there. Can't hurt to check. I might be able to breathe in Narnia.

"I know the steroids make you hungry, but no more eating junk in between meals. You don't want to get fat," Mom says.

"You don't want to get fat," I say, ashamed for not coming up with a more

hurtful quip and frustrated I can't squeeze my morning boner, give it a low five, a tight-grip congratulations for working better than that B-movie star hack called my respiratory system.

She sighs, stops futzing with the afghan she brought from home, the one she knows I love, even though I've never mentioned the anxiety-reducing power in its delicious tangle of colored yarn and knitted complexity.

Maybe I should be grateful to Mom for all the years of stiff fascination I expect from my penis. After all it came with the whole birthing package. No assembly required. But that credit would be in direct conflict with the blame I place on her faulty genetic makeup, resulting in the lack of air capacity in my body. So her score is still nil.

"Take a deep breath, sweetheart. You have to fight the side effects from all the meds. Try not to be so emotional," she says.

I nod, teary-eyed, hold my arms out for a hug. Her face softens as she slides the bedrail back, lets it down, and lays her head on my chest, thrilled at the prospect for an authentic mother/son moment. I pluck the potato-chip refugee from her hair and hold it up so she can see it before I toss it in my mouth.

"Those fucking chips," I say, getting one limp crunch out of it, not near the amount of in-your-face vindication I'd hoped for, but enough to send out ripples of righteous indignation into the atmosphere. There's nothing more satisfying than owning a piece of truth you can torture someone with.

The brown, maple-veneer door whooshes open, loosening the noose I just about have Mom dangling from, and a golden goddess, a nurse I haven't seen, walks in. The air gets thinner. My chest gets tighter. I hear the fluid in my lungs rattle.

"Hello," Mom says, leaning in to read the nurse's name tag, "Nathalie."

"Good morning. Everyone calls me Nat. And it sounds like someone isn't breathing so well."

My attempt to say it's no big deal, that I'm only on the injured reserved list and that she shouldn't consider this my regular look, comes out as a moist hack and then a whimper.

"This is Nathaniel," Mom says. "Are you going to be his nurse?"

"Oh my God. We're both Nats. I love it," she says.

I try to swallow the chunky phlegm asteroid in my throat without gagging so I can say something cool, like, "I'm into seventies punk" or "Those Nike Frees you're wearing are dope," both lies, but anything to impress. Girls love to be impressed. I read it.

"I just started on the day shift so I'll be around, but I can tell this one won't," she says and pokes my shoulder. "You look way too healthy to be here for long."

I give her a coy eyebrow lift and the practiced corner smile. It reads

charming but dodgy. Then I contort into Gollum with an uncontrollable wretch on the wad of mucus sealing off my esophagus, which, having nowhere else to go, manifests itself as a Guinness record book snot bubble growing from my right nostril. Mom holds the bedpan to my mouth. I shove it away and pinch the green-slime balloon coming out of my face, ditch the tacky residue in the folds of the bed sheet.

Nathalie sits on the side of the bed, takes my hand in hers, and checks my pulse. The sun, that greedy bastard, adjusts its position in the sky so that it can get the best possible view of her through the window. Damn thing has a whole world of naked sirens splayed out on every inhabitable beach, but can't keep its greedy touch off the girl closest to me. Its horny rays spread over her slender frame and fair skin, taunting me by caressing her cleavage and dancing behind the edges of the lacy bra I see through the buttons on her blouse.

She stares at the wall clock above me, her fluffy pink lips counting each bounce of the vein under my skin. The scent coming from her neck is like a breezy New Zealand meadow full of wildflowers, the kind that bees hover over even when there's no pollen left, hoping the petals will retract, trapping them in a sticky, sex-filled Thunderdome until they die from an overdose of pure ecstasy.

"Your heart rate is a little elevated."

"It's probably the meds," I say in my best baritone.

"You sound congested too."

Nathalie bends over the end of the bed to get my chart. I see the outline of panties underneath her white pants.

Mom glares. Her look says it's not polite to stare. I hope the scowl I return doesn't say my boner aches from longing. It does though. It aches.

"Okay," Nathalie says, "your bath."

"Bath?" I say.

"You haven't had one since you got here. You don't want to stink for the girls, right?"

"What girls?" I say, worried there might be some gaggle of do-gooder beauties parading from room to room, reading stories or singing songs to sick kids, all that 'giving back' business you see on the local news around the holidays, segments that focus on the volunteers' above-and-beyond commitment instead of the poor saps that have been victimized in whatever way. The last thing I need now are sad looks from overachieving teenage debutantes working up the charity section of their college application.

"I can just take a shower."

"Someone has to help you with the oxygen and the I.V. monitor. They can't get wet. I can give it to you this afternoon—"

A picture of Nathalie sitting on the lip of a clawfoot ivory tub in an open

silk kimono, nothing underneath, leaning in to kiss me as her soapy hand breaks the water's surface and climbs up my thigh, blazes across my synapses, sends all the blood in my body to my crotch.

I'm lightheaded, trying to be casual. I want to say something like, "Yeah, that'd be lovely. Can I bring a Shiraz?" But I feel my face redden and hear myself wheeze before the phrase gets past my engorged tongue.

"Or…your mom can…if you'd be more comfortable. It's up to you," Nathalie says.

Mom lays the afghan across the end of the bed and takes a seat next to the window.

"Whatever you want to do, sweetheart," she adds, knowing I'd rather perish from thirst in the Sahara Desert than let her sponge my naked body.

A breakfast cart slams into the door frame. We all jump. Nathalie steps to the side as a wood-and-steel struggle takes place before the cart gets through the door, and Devon pokes his head in.

"Breakfast time," he says and pushes a rogue dreadlock back into his hairnet and sees the look on our faces. "Doors in this place are shrinking. I keep telling them that, but they won't listen, say it's impossible, but we know the truth, don't we?"

Before I can recover Nathalie tells me to think about the bath, that she'll be back after breakfast, and leaves. Me and Devon watch her walk out.

"Who's that?" he says, checks his breath on the back of his hand, and pulls his baggy, white pants up his skinny, black frame.

"Nathalie," I say. "The nurse."

"Damn. Lucky you." He rolls the bed tray in front of me. "How you doing today, my man?"

I push my eyelids until the image of Nathalie and me in the tub dissolves into an explosion of blurry lights.

"I got problems."

"That just means you're alive, little brother. Life is a bitch," he says, making me laugh and cough as a result. Mom stands. Devon sees her.

"Pardon my Latin," he says.

"French," she says.

"Those people smell. Polite society pretends they don't, but we know the truth, don't we?"

Watching my mom talk to Devon is funny enough to make me clutch the bedrail, knuckles white, trying to keep the seismic shifts in my lungs from ripping my chest apart. It's useless. The cough sneaks up behind me like a dark-robed Spanish assassin, tightens the garrote around my neck. I can't breathe and know I'm going to die before I get my turn with this new wave of young, female middle-school teachers who text you sexy pictures of themselves and give private sex-ed instruction. They get caught because

some careless dip-shit is loose-lipped or their clingy have-to-know-everything mother goes through their phone. Then you testify in court, like, "Yeah, that's right. I nailed my Speech teacher. I'd do it again, Your Honor. And then one more time."

Devon sets a cup of orange juice in front of me, pulls back the foil top, and grimaces. "You want me to get the nurse?"

My eyes go wide and I shake my head, cough harder.

"Deep breaths, sweetheart," Mom says, taking some herself, showing me how simple it's all supposed to be for normal people. You know, everyone else in the cosmos. She grabs my hand and lays it on her chest. The slow, rhythmic rise and fall of her breathing goes through my palm, down my arm, and into my torso. My throat opens and the air eases the spasms, making them twitches which give way to actual currents of oxygen. I'm alive again.

It's mom magic. Black magic. White magic. I can't decide. For the moment, though, she's a miracle worker, like that lady who worked with Helen Keller, what's-her-name from that book.

My face is leaking sweat, mucous, and tears from the attack. I want to thank Mom for saving me, tell her I'd die without her, and beg forgiveness for the constant missiles of shit I've been firing her way. Instead I suck on the straw that Devon put in the orange juice.

"Thanks, man. That helps," I say. "Wish you were my doctor."

"Me too, because then I'd be rich, drive a gold-flecked Range Rover to all the spine surgeries I did. Never pay off my med school loans and have a fine girl with long—"

"All right," Mom says. "I think you should eat your breakfast, honey, before it gets cold, and Devon, I'm guessing there's some hungry patients waiting on you."

"Time is a human construct which means waiting for something is an illusion. People pretend that nature has patience, but we know the truth, don't we?"

Mom cocks her head to the side and works on the puzzle Devon just laid out. He tightens his thick ponytail, gives me a nod and a wink. It reads carpe diem and caveat emptor at the same time.

Dr. Stark scoots around the food cart, his soul patch leading the way. The Doc Marten clogs he wears are the exact same brown as the distressed and studded leather belt holding his faded-from-the-wash corduroy pants up. He's got a stethoscope hanging around his neck, but no lab coat for this douche. He's afraid people will think he's too into it, that he's not as alternative as his Soundgarden T-shirt suggests to people who don't realize Soundgarden stopped being alternative ten minutes before they came up with the name Soundgarden.

He fist-bumps Devon, who then goes to war on the door frame, trying to

get the cart into the hallway. Stark turns the chair around, sits in it backwards, and reads my chart while fingering the hair under his lip. Mom straightens her shirt and eyeballs the doctor. Every time he shows up, she gets the giggles until we start talking about the fact that I've been suffocating inside my body.

"Saw the Killers last night in the Echodrome," he says, looking up from the chart. "Brandon Flowers is a monster on vocals. Such a kick-ass show."

"I was here…in an oxygen tent," I say.

Mom giggles, "The Killers?"

As Stark tells us what it sounds like when ten thousand people sing "Human" in unison, the sun makes another malicious shift, lights my mother as a younger lady in her twenties, the girl before the woman, with dark hair setting off hazel eyes and smooth, olive skin that flushes around nice cheekbones. I realize, for the first time, that she's pretty, and by the way she's fumbling with the locket around her neck, she knows Stark thinks so too.

The thought that this woman could've been anything before being my mom is like thinking about an ever-expanding universe, space increasing into the nothing that doesn't exist, my mother having fleshy romps on crisp sheets with men before my dad. It grates my brain.

Stark rams a hand through his highlighted hair, sneaks a glance at her breasts.

"Nathalie is giving me a bath today," I say.

"Who?" Stark says.

"The nurse," Mom says and lets go the grip on her locket.

"Maybe. I mean, I don't know. I haven't decided. I don't see why I can't just take a shower by myself," I say. They stare at me. "What's the deal with my asthma?"

Stark flips chart pages. Mom gives me a touch on the leg. I lie back, try to find a position that doesn't feel like some ancient blacksmith is pounding out steel on my chest.

"The problem is the bronchial infection," Stark says. "I'm worried that inflammation could turn into pneum—"

"Right. I get it, but when can I get out of here?"

"When do you think he'll be discharged?" Mom says.

"Oh. Well, that's up to your body, killer."

"My body is the goddamned enemy," I say, starting to tear up because I can't knock him out with a blow to the back of the head, put his clothes on, and walk out of the hospital unnoticed to the black Dodge Charger I dreamed Devon hotwired and had waiting for me in the parking lot. He'd give me the slightest nod as I passed through the exit to the car, hopped in, and tore out of the parking lot. When I was down the road, Nathalie would sit up in the backseat and throw her arms around my neck. She'd tell me we were going to have the sexiest life ever and ask if I wanted a blowjob.

Stark and Mom walk out of the room, just far enough so I can't hear what they're saying. Not that it matters. It'll be typical bullshit: the prednisone makes patients emotional, adolescent angst, birthday in the hospital, it has to be hard on him.

I think about the bath, the opportunity to leave this cesspool with a real life Skinemax story mixed with the tale of the broken-legged horse that no one thought would heal, but then sets records at the Derby even with its autistic jockey. Later they end up winning the Korean war, or however the saga goes. It doesn't matter. I'll be a legend if Nathalie decides to bring me into manhood.

Then I look at the open bathroom door; its inconsiderate fluorescent glare is angry and buzzing. It illuminates the truth of my circumstance. I run the odds on not getting an erection if Nathalie touches my exposed, quivering figure with a warm sponge. As much as I'd like to believe she'd redden, smile, and finish me off, the truth is she'll ignore the taut periscope peeking just above the water line with clinical professionalism, pretend it's not there while thinking about the story she's going to have for all the other young and beautiful naked nurses as they change in the locker room. "It was adorable," she'll say, "like a little worm coming up for the rain. Oh, Bridget, your panties are so cute. Let me kiss them." Something like that.

I'll have to sit there, keeping the water warm with heat coming from my face, doing my best not to auto-ejaculate and coat the water with globs of stillborn potential.

This gruesome alternative unfolds, but a sudden rush of air from the door closing brings the hospital smell of plastic wrap and disinfectant to my nose. Mom hovers. I feel tired.

"I want to leave," I say.

"We can't leave yet, sweetheart. I know you're upset this is happening to you, that it's not fair, but you have to keep in mind that things could be worse."

"How?"

"What if you didn't have any legs?"

"They'd make me special prosthetics. I could do Ironmans, give interviews about overcoming adversity, and sue the Olympic committee for not allowing me to compete against able-bodied athletes."

Mom soaks it up, can't beat the logic, while just outside the window the sun rushes time, ticks minutes off the dial so it can revel in my weakness, wallow in my helplessness. I sit up, swing my legs over the side of the bed, and set my feet on the arctic tile.

"Nathaniel, what're you doing?"

"I'm going to wash myself," I say and grab the pole with the I.V. monitor, roll it to me, and know this is my only move. "Get the water running…but

not too hot."

She's surprised and doesn't move right away. I use my other hand to bring the oxygen over. She steps in the bathroom, starts filling the tub. I take four steps and smile because I'm setting up the twist that even I didn't see coming. The scoundrel who conquers his fears and sets justice in motion.

"This is a bad idea, honey," Mom says from inside the bathroom.

The oxygen tube snags my foot and is ripped from my face. I think about panicking, but stop and put it back on instead. I make the bathroom door, put my hands on my knees, and take wheezy gulps.

"You don't have anything I haven't seen," Mom says. "I used to change your diapers."

"Which I haven't worn for twelve years," I say.

Mom turns the water off, steps aside, and wrings her hands.

"I'll be right outside," she says and pulls the door shut behind her.

It's the first privacy I've had since being sentenced to the hospital two days ago. The knots on my gown unfurl with a pull. I smell my stink and step into the tub. The water is a flawless warm. I sit, careful to keep the I.V. in my left arm dry. The porcelain is cold against my back. I wet my face and let my lungs relax. The water rises over my stomach and my mind drifts to Nathalie's silk kimono. I lather my chest and pits, close my eyes, and give myself the soapy squeeze I've earned.

Never Have I Ever

Elizabeth Stainton Walker

December 5, 1999

The lights of the hotel swimming pool glow turquoise as we tread water in our one-pieces. For my fourteenth birthday, my mother has rented us a room at the Holiday Inn off Shackleford Road. She lies, watching television and smoking Tareyton 100s, on the queen-size bed in the room adjoining ours. We girls have stuffed ourselves with cheese pizza before putting on our bathing suits and braving the chill.

We cannot play Never Have I Ever. None of us has ever done anything, at least not anything sexual, which is what the game is designed to reveal. If one of us had, the others would know about it. We have gone to the same small private school for almost ten years.

So instead we play the game in the subjunctive: Never Would I Ever.

Wendy is perched on the concrete edge of the pool, pointing and flexing her toes into the heated water. She likes to ask the questions in this game. She narrows her dark eyes at me. "Would you let Blake Francis go up your shirt?"

"No!" we shriek, laughing and splashing her. Blake Francis is chubby and talks with his mouth full at lunch. I think of his peanut-butter-and-jelly breath, his sticky fingers on my flesh. I dip below the surface in an attempt to wash the image from my mind.

When I emerge, Wendy is asking the other girls if they would let Shep Downing put his hand down their jeans. Wendy has freckles and frizzy hair, and all her features seem to be located in the middle of her face. She does not shave her legs, and she still talks a kind of redneck baby talk, drawing out her "i"s to sound like "ah"s. Although she turned fourteen two months earlier, she has never admitted to getting her period. Even her feet are babyish, without a single callous.

I have been getting my period for nearly four years now, since the summer after fourth grade. I have been picturing boys' hands on me for nearly as long. I fall asleep at night thinking of imaginary boyfriends and their hands on my body. But of course to Wendy's question, the one re: Shep Downing

and my dungarees, I say, "Not me, I wouldn't."

"I would never let anyone do that," proclaims Jess. "At least not until I was married." Jess is slim and tall, with glasses and a mouth that is too large for her face. The water only comes up to her waist. Her long fingers pat the surface of the water as she speaks. Many of us nod in agreement. We identify as Christians, attending Southern Baptist and Bible churches that condemn premarital sex, along with underage drinking and *Dawson's Creek*.

I, too, am planning on waiting until marriage to have sex, but only in a vague, perfunctory way: I have never kissed anyone, or held hands, or had a boy like me.

Cassandra admits she would let a boy go down her pants. "Of course you would," I say, although with her pasty skin and back acne, I cannot imagine that anyone would be tempted to.

Wendy rolls her eyes and asks her, "What wouldn't you do, Cassandra?"

"Never would I ever…" She thinks for a moment, staring at the night sky as she bounces from one foot to another in the pool. "Vandalize a piece of property."

We look back and forth at each other in amusement – What the hell is she talking about? Doesn't she understand the point of this game? – before exploding into laughter.

"Why would you even say that?" Wendy asks.

"Yeah," Jess says. "It's like, 'Never would I ever cheat on my taxes.'"

"Never would I ever jaywalk!"

Our hilarity fills the pool area, in all likelihood waking the hotel guests. We continue the game – the real one not Cassandra's PG version – laughing and trading hypotheticals. We make promises as children that our adult selves will never be able to keep.

5 December 2005

My flatmates and I are pre-gaming with a kind of punch we have begun referring to as "the Fatal Bowl." The Formica table gets sticky as we ladle the lemony booze mixture into whatever vessel is handy – shot glasses, tea mugs, Nalgene bottles.

Twelve of us share this kitchen. I am the only American. Everyone else teases me for saying cell phone instead of mobile; candy instead of sweet; commercial instead of advert.

Without meaning to be, Sinead has become our ringleader. She is not slim, or particularly beautiful, but she is warm and kind and never syrupy,

and we all seem to gravitate towards her. Her mother is Irish, but she is from Kingston, near Wimbledon. It is her idea to play "I Never," which I call "Never Have I Ever," and Liam from Ipswich calls "Ten Fingers."

In junior high, the game was simply a platform to trade woulds and wouldn'ts, an opportunity to talk about sex when we were not wholly comfortable doing so. Now, at eighteen and nineteen and twenty years old, it has become a drinking game, too.

Sinead begins, of course. "I never slept with a woman."

The guys in the room smile, and take a drink. None of the girls do.

Next to go is Liam, who at twenty-six is older than the rest of us. He is sweet when he is sober and a beast when he is not. Last night he got so drunk he threw Lara's tabletop Christmas tree out our eleventh-story window. He made the punch tonight. "Well," he says after putting down his shot glass. "I never slept with a man."

The girls all drink to this. Back in the States, some of my friends are still virgins, or claim to be. None of my friends here are. This is their first semester away from home, whereas I completed my freshman year at college before applying to spend the semester abroad. Still, we are all new to campus, and these uncharted waters (the gym, the laundry) put us all in the same boat – the HMS Flat 11, sailing into the unknown!

Now it is my turn, and I say that I have never slept with anyone blond. Which is true, if you don't count oral. I have been with, as in had sex with, two people: my college boyfriend, and Sam.

Sam and I began sleeping together during our first week here. His father is Armenian. Sam is shorter than I am, with green eyes. His room is on the other end of the hall. That night, he lay in my bed with his head in my lap. I stroked his hair, so short it felt like velvet, until both my feet tingled with pins and needles. Finally, I rocked his shoulder to wake him. "You should probably go back to your room now," I murmured. He sat up violently, then sprinted back to his own room without saying goodnight.

The next morning, wearing his navy dressing gown, he taught me to love tea.

We have done it intermittently since. We are keeping it a secret, or at least we think we are. I don't know if it is a real secret, or a widely known secret. Something we only pretend we are hiding.

The other week was Thanksgiving. I forced everyone to gather around the Formica and say what they were thankful for. Sam said he was thankful for East Enders. Later, in his bed, he whispered, "What I'm really thankful for is you."

The group is still drinking, and Big Tom says he has never had a threesome, but then he takes a shot to show that, yes, he has had one. Lara says she has never had sex in her parents' house. We name places we have, places we

haven't. In a car. On a bus. We drink and drink and drink.

It is Sam's turn. He is wearing his cream-colored hoodie with brown writing on it. He tells the group, "I have never had sex with anyone who lives in Flat 11." He looks at me.

We grin. We drink.

December fifth, two thousand and ten

It's everyone's first visit to Sabine and Liza's new place. They moved in together last month. I have spent most of this evening helping Liza in the kitchen. I can tell she wants everything perfect and that it annoyed her when Sabine volunteered to drive half the party guests to the gas station for cigarettes. Their apartment building is a new construction, as is their relationship, and the beige furniture seems a little too big for the rooms.

Now Sabine has returned. The hors d'oeuvres have been picked over, and we have settled in the living room, some of us sitting on the floor because there are not enough seats. We're playing this game once again.

I start. "I have never had sex in a boat." Except I have, so I drink, thereby incriminating myself.

It seems I am the only one who has had sex in a boat.

James is seated across from me, also on the floor, legs crossed Indian-style, his jeans riding up to reveal sockless ankles. I heard him come in sometime after the cigarette run. It's the first time I have seen him in months, and I suspect there is a woman involved. That, or he is avoiding me. One of the two. Possibly both.

Sabine asks if anyone has ever had sex in public. She is curvy with dark, waist-length hair, and it is easy to see why Liza loves her. Her warmth is the reason we are here. Sometimes I catch myself calling her Sinead.

We list the places we have done it:

On a picnic table in a deserted park (James).

In a construction site after hours (me).

One of those airport trains that takes you from one terminal to another (Sabine and Liza, last month, apparently).

We trade secrets. We force intimacies. This is the way we make friends as adults.

One guy – I don't know his name – says he has never had a threesome. I think of the Flat 11 and wonder if there are only so many things we can name without repeating, only so many options when it comes to loving and making love.

James says he has never had sex with anyone without knowing their

name. A few people drink, but I am not one of them. I have known all my lovers' names.

It's back to me now. James still has not met my eye. "I've never had sex with anyone I didn't love." It might be the first time I have told the truth in this game since I started playing it in the eighth grade.

There is a collective sigh. Liza lays her head on Sabine's shoulder. Finally, the man whose name I do not know says, "Well, doesn't that just break your heart?" And the spell is broken.

I get up for another beer. The game continues with the usual questions of who and where and how many. James follows me into the kitchen.

He stares me down. I notice his black sweater is fraying at the hem, that he needs a shave. He asks me, "Did you mean it?" It is clear my confession has not softened him towards me.

I say, "No, of course not." Then, "So what if I did?"

James shakes his head, frustrated, then looks at the ceiling, speaking over my head as usual. "It's like you think we're bound by this secret or something."

He's right: I do think it. That sex has connected us, but the secret has connected us more. I carry the secret inside my mouth, roll it around on my tongue.

Instead of this, I say, "I was just playing the game."

And that, in its way, is also true.

And

J. R. Stewart

A languor creeps upon him and the buzzing stops, almost. If it doesn't stop, it is suddenly transported to the far reaches of himself and it seems unimportant to acknowledge its presence. He remembers having pain, but not the pain itself, the sharp cut and burn trailing through his spine and along his legs. It is far away, gone with the eyedropper and the short, cool squirt under his tongue, bitter yet strangely sweet. Lips brush his forehead and he realizes that his hands are being held, one on each side of the narrow bed. He smiles.

A rush of wings engulfs him and a crow sits on a small altar of rock, her head cocked, watching him with a glittering obsidian eye. Wind ruffles his hair.

"You are here," says the crow.

"I am everywhere," he says, surprised at the strength of his own voice.

The crow rattles with laughter. "Not quite yet," she says, "but yes, it is coming to that."

He feels a warm surge of gratitude, as if every molecule in his being were giving thanks for the world. His heart unleashes a torrent, a vast waterfall of feeling and

The toboggan picked up speed quickly on the upper slope and gathered momentum. He was lying on his big brother's back, holding tight to the hood of Tom's parka, his heart charged with a sparkling excitement.

At the bottom of the hill the river coursed through the hilly meadow, a clear expanse of white in the late-afternoon sun. The toboggan had started to slow a bit, but when they hit the ice, their speed picked up immediately, and they shot across the flat surface. The goal was to reach the other side. The boys did not hear the booming crack with the wind in their ears and their stocking caps pulled down tight.

The toboggan slowed and finally stopped, ten yards from the opposite shore. The wind had cleared the snow from where they were and they rolled off the long flat sled onto the black of the ice. Standing up was a slippery dance.

As they trudged back across the river, footing was easier because of the

new snow. His brother dragged the toboggan behind them. "You want to try it again, little buddy?" Tom asked.

His feelings were mixed. "Dad said we should stay off the river for another week to let the ice get really thick," he said.

"Yeah, I know," Tom said, "but it's fine." He stomped his boots to make his point.

A crack appeared immediately between Tom's legs and the ice began to give way beneath them. There came a wrenching cracking and screeching as the surface changed. Tom disappeared, swallowed by roiling black water. He heard a plaintive scream, but didn't know it was his own. He lay on the broken ice, his legs in the water at his knees, and his torso across the toboggan. The noise of the water was a menacing murmur tearing at his heart. Consciousness slipped from his grasp like a thread of mercury from a glass cup.

He awoke to a snuffling whine and a wet nose in his left ear. He felt the dog grip his parka collar and try to drag him away from the open water. He tried to help but his body wouldn't obey.

"Tommy," he sobbed.

His jeans were frozen stiff and he felt himself sliding, inch by inch, away from the jagged hole in the ice. The dog's breath in his ear was thunderous. The parka gathered under his chin and began to choke him as the dog pulled. He didn't care. His legs burned and

"Do you remember the dog?" the crow asks.

His rush of gratitude pauses. "Yes. It was the skinny old Irish setter that didn't seem to belong to anybody. He dragged me to solid ice and then lay on me so I wouldn't freeze to death. After that day, I never saw him again."

"Sure you did," rattles the crow, as merry as she can be. "Think about it."

He feels a flash of impatience, but suddenly, he was in Vietnam, crouched in a stand of mulberry. He was desperately afraid, hidden by a log as a column of black-clad men moved past him, not thirty feet away, talking casually and carrying rifles. He could not believe they didn't hear the heart hammering in his ears.

He'd been separated from his unit during an ambush and lost his orientation. When the column of Charlie had passed, he started breathing again and wondered which way he should go. He made a decision to follow the trail Charlie had been using, but in the opposite direction. He'd been just about to start out when a red wild dog, a dhole, loped from the woods and sat staring at him. Something about the way the dog's head was cocked, and his frank, penetrating stare, pierced his fear. He followed as the dog trotted off, perpendicular to the trail he'd first decided on. Within fifteen minutes he reunited with his sergeant and his buddies. They'd survived the ambush with a couple of bloody soft-tissue wounds, but were whole other than that. It was

only then that he noticed that he was bleeding from a hot crease in his scalp.

"Man," Sarge said, "we thought you were gone. Chopper's coming two klicks south. C'mon, gotta go."

He never did tell them about the red wild dog. He wasn't sure he believed it himself.

Years later he told the story to his wife and children, who accepted it at face value. Nobody sought to explain it away with some logical theory.

"No wonder you give to animal shelters every Christmas," was all his wife said.

His kids thought it odd, but cool at the same time.

"Dad," they'd said, "you're weird but it's a good weird."

He remembered beaming with a feeling of something almost, but not exactly, like pride. He still didn't know what to think of both stories. He felt certain that it didn't matter what he thought.

"Why?" he asks the crow.

"Pay attention," she says and spreads her shining blue-black wings to lift herself from the stone.

The narrow bed presses against his spine. Warmth engulfs his hands. He tries to squeeze back and hears his daughter's voice.

"Did you feel that?"

He hears his son answer: "Yes."

After a moment of silence his son's voice breaks through again. "We love you, Pop."

"Yes," his daughter says.

He squeezes his hands as hard as he can and feels, again, a brush of lips against his forehead.

"See?" says the crow gliding above him. "Each has made the world a better place, as you did. It goes on."

He doesn't know what to say as the crow vanishes and he stands in a wooded glen. A dog with a shining coat of glossy red runs to him, full of happy wag, and

The Flower Lady

Michael J. Compton

The first time my mother blossomed, we all acted as if nothing had happened. Despite the comically nonchalant way she turned to the breakfast table, beaming over a platter of French toast, we noticed immediately the clutch of pink mums arrayed beneath her chin like a beard, or a second smile. "What's that about?" my father barked, in that way he had of turning a question into a declaration that ended all discussion. Mother dropped the dish onto the table with a clatter, swept the mums from beneath her chin, and dropped them in the garbage disposal. She didn't turn on the disposal—sparing us all the spectacle of herself standing over the sink as the machine growled down her indiscretion. Instead, she took her place at the table, draped her napkin over her lap, and joined us in eating breakfast in our usual, quiet way as father read the newspaper. The incident was never mentioned again.

In retrospect, the choice of mums as Mother's first foray into floral expression seems rather obvious, with its double entendre of "mum," as in mother, and "mum," as in keeping quiet. Coming from a family of overbearing expressives—my maternal grandfather taught Latin, my grandmother fancied herself a singer, and my uncles all seemed to be artistes or performers of some sort—my more reserved mother was often referred to as "Silent Sal." My father always found her nickname funny, although I never recall him actually laughing about it. He would snort and comment that, around him, she never seemed to stop chattering. While that was an exaggeration, it was true that she did sometimes lapse into a nervous patter, always about the most mundane household business. She was the youngest in her family, and only girl, and when grandmother took ill and "retired" from her domestic duties, my mother became nursemaid, cook, and housekeeper. Unlike her brothers—or her "artistic" mother—she was never encouraged to be anything else.

Father was a man of forceful opinion and attenuated imagination. He was an inventory specialist for an accounting firm, and although he never said an unkind word, so far as I know, to any of my mother's family, it was impossible for him to hide his keen disinterest in Grandmother's impromptu recitals, my uncles' rhymed toasts, Grandfather's incessant Latin asides, or the perpetual

fawning the whole lot would shower over every embroidered napkin, outré gewgaw, or windblown leaf that fluttered their way. Their showiness, to him, was simply an elaborate cover for the fact that none of them had any money. He went to his grave convinced that he would eventually have to financially support one or all of his in-laws, and the fact that none of them ever asked him for a dime only aggravated his certitude on the matter.

I don't know exactly what my father thought about my mother's blooms—either those first, demure mums or the elaborate displays she later sported that sometimes made her look like a float in a parade—for he never spoke about them. Oh, he commented—once they became inevitable—but he never spoke on them. He dismissed, he derided, he even expressed resignation, but always in a truncated, inattentive way calculated to avoid any real talk on the subject. If you have ever seen a man walking down the street who stubs his toe for no apparent reason, then you know exactly the attitude my father presented in relation to my mother's floral fits. Either the very idea of their occurrence was so ludicrous that anyone who noticed them must be delusional, or they were so commonplace that similar blooms must be sprouting from the ears and kneecaps of every woman in town and so weren't worth mentioning. In any case, they certainly weren't what they appeared to be, which, it now occurs to me, must have seemed to my father as the severest slap in the face.

No doubt my mother was aware of this, as evidenced by those tentative, almost sad, little mums. But there was a rebellion in her that I'm not sure even she could control. Barely two weeks after the mums, she did the unthinkable—she sprouted a giant, red hibiscus, straight out of the top of her head. We were preparing for church, and she may have regretted the deed—or perhaps she calculated it—for she tried to pass off the hubcap-sized bloom as a new Sunday hat. Upon seeing it, my father's face seemed to turn as red as the flower, but all he said was: "I'm not going to church with you done up like that."

To my surprise, she didn't collapse into tears, buckle, or even bend. Instead, she straightened her spine—and surely, my childhood memory is faulty here, but it seems to me the hibiscus stood straight up, too—and she marched out the door and sat in the car, waiting for us to join her.

We didn't. We children sat silently in the living room—in our Sunday best, like visitors in our own home—as Father alternately paced or glared out the window. This went on for over an hour, as neighbors up and down the street left for morning services, each eyeing my mother as if she were some questionable new lawn ornament. When our across-the-street neighbors, the Kelsos, who were Catholic, returned from mass to see her still sitting in the car, my mother apparently felt she had pushed things far enough, and she

hurried back into the house before she could be discovered by our Baptist neighbors, or the Methodists, or God forbid, the Episcopalians.

If it was war between my mother and father, then my father was utterly vanquished. Or perhaps the single orange blossom that appeared behind Mother's ear the next day was not an expression of triumph but an offering of peace, for they never fought over her blooms again.

I remember that for the longest time she hid her floral adornments from her own family, and when she finally did let them in on her new activity their reactions were subtler than Father's, but perhaps even more disheartening. "It's just not you, Dear," I remember Grandmother saying. My uncles gave her blatantly insincere praise to her face and uttered catty asides behind her back. Grandfather was more encouraging, but the strongest praise he could ever muster was the phrase "worthy effort," which he repeated so often that it became a household joke. Mother was hurt by their attitudes, but could not have been surprised. They were absolutely predictable in their own self-declared free-spiritedness and absolutely rigid in their attitude that no one to whom they had assigned a particular pigeonhole should ever stray from it.

One evening, during supper, when Mother asked my youngest sister—only five at the time—why she wasn't eating her green bean casserole, she replied that she didn't like green beans, no matter how they were prepared—adding, with a sigh, "But it's a worthy effort." That my mother laughed as freely as the rest of us at the remark was a sign that her family's barbs could no longer touch her. On our next visit to my grandparents' house, Mother strutted under their outraged noses with a clutch of purple passion flowers sprouting from her rump.

In the neighborhood, Mother became known—at first with bemusement, but in time with affection—as The Flower Lady. Her blooms delighted children and old men. Her creativity and self-possession inspired younger women, and her new-found knack for getting attention invoked envy among her peers. But she was at heart a modest woman, and attention was never her aim. Her fame likely would have spread well beyond our own town, but she never consented to be photographed by the newspapers, and although the ladies of the annual Magnolia Festival asked many times, she never accepted their invitation to preside as queen.

Like a painter, she progressed through many modes and styles: she had a red period, a blue, a yellow; she tried naturalism, impressionism, expressionism. She even dabbled for a time in abstraction. She often said she could tell more about a person by their reaction to her "fancies," as she called them, than a psychologist could learn in a month of analysis, but the older she got, the less people's reactions seemed to matter to her. By the end of her days she rarely even looked in the mirror to see herself what she had done—

instead, she judged success or failure purely by how she felt.

When she died, Father responded with an unnerving silence. I wasn't sure if it was shock, or stoicism, or perhaps even some reawakened feeling of embarrassment. In the month Mother had been ill, Father had made all the arrangements for her funeral himself, and there was little for me or my siblings to do but play out our roles as grieving children. We were terribly sad, but for myself, I found it difficult to show emotion when my father put on such a show of manly sobriety. In fact, the strongest emotion I felt was anger, because at the end of the obituary father had placed in the newspaper he had inserted the words: "No flowers, please." To me, it was an insult to her memory, his last little assertion of control over the person who had, in life, so clearly grown beyond him. My sisters tried to excuse Father's action by arguing that cut flowers would just be a pale, painful reminder of the vibrancy of Mother's own blooms, but I wouldn't have it.

On the day of her funeral, I entered the bare church seething with resentment at my father's pettiness, unmollified by the tremor of his lower lip as he walked beside me to our pew. But there was something in his gaze, the way it was fixed on a point before the altar, that caught my attention. Following his eyes, I saw that Mother's casket was not merely open—it was bursting forth with a cascade—an eruption—of brilliant blooms that perfumed the air and set the apse ablaze with color. The flowers buoyed her up, so that her gently smiling face, wreathed in yellow roses and baby's breath, seemed to be lifted in anticipation of the ascent into glory. From the gathering mourners, the display elicited gasps, tears, a few shakes of the head, and many smiles and nods of recognition. Father approached the casket tentatively, looking older than I had ever seen, and kissed my mother's cheek. With a trembling smile, he plucked a yellow rose from behind her ear, sniffed it delicately, and placed it in his lapel.

It was then I recalled that the "no flowers" admonition was not the final statement in the announcement Father had crafted; that in my outrage I had overlooked, or failed to understand, the two words that followed; that, in fact, Father had known better than I how Mother had desired to leave this world and was only following her wishes.

What the announcement actually said was this:

No flowers, please.

None needed.

Two Days in the Upper Rigging

Ron Darian

I wake up in the goddamn crow's nest.

My right foot is cuffed to a U-bolt, and I'm willing to go out on a limb, so to speak, in saying the shenanigans have gone too far. At least Captain Dickhead has apparently been kind enough to leave a liter of Evian to keep me company. I'm guessing the crew is sleeping it off, but I hear footsteps on-deck, so I claw my way up from what is either the worst hangover of my life or possibly an actual coma, and I peek down through the slats of this overgrown fruit basket.

How the hell did I get up here?

Even though she seems a mile away, and through the semi-dark, I can tell it's Mona who is topside, sucking on one of her beloved Virginia Slims. If she has other vices, she hasn't rolled them out for me yet. She is sexy when she smokes, which I tell her whenever she lights one up. I also tell her to quit. I probably should make my mind up about that.

And now—the sunrise.

My kingdom for a Denny's Grand Slam Breakfast.

My Mona is sitting on the aft deck of the Adventure Lovers Small Ship Vacations' Gran Broma, her arms through the rails, those gorgeous 29-year-old gams dangling over the bigger-than-you-thought Caribbean. She better not fall in—I've got a good six months and most of my guts invested in this one.

But why isn't she climbing the rope ladder to join me? Or at least throwing me a key to get this leg iron off? She has to know I'm up here. The passenger list is me and her—the Queen Mary, this isn't.

And now I remember what she said last night. Play along with them—this is out of control.

Judging by the leg iron, I'm guessing she was right.

So this is my punishment for getting drunk? I'm from New York City. I'm a Theater Person. I'm on vacation. People should know I'm going to be an asshole.

My head hurts and last night is a mirage. I do remember something about a Mother Superior visiting her gynecologist for the first time, and

maybe parts of a few other bawdy jokes, as well as a large bowl of punch that the crew insisted we refer to as "Monkey Piss," and the ship's cook, more tattoo than man, banging on a set of steel drums, and Mona and I and all six of the crew playing Truth or Dare, and lots of good-natured ribbing and laughter and Mona playing the coquette. I also remember explaining what it's like to be a well-respected Off-Off-Broadway actor and having to shout over Mona, who, at the same time, is telling the crew how we met working for the same caterer at some Upper East Side kid's fancy-schmancy birthday party. Toward the end of the evening, I seem to recall a bit of screaming and yelling and then everyone shutting up and staring at me. Like if Stonehenge suddenly came alive and I was standing in the middle of it. Though that last part might be a dream.

At some point I either passed out or was sucker-punched, as I seem to remember getting a good look at the deck up close. This would also explain the splinter in my lip.

For whichever reason, the punch or the punch, at some point in the evening, my theater went dark. Then someone, somehow, dragged me up here—I didn't bolt my foot to this mast myself. Incredibly, for all this, I find myself only mildly annoyed. Though I do look forward to what my lawyer will say when I get back to Manhattan. Maybe this trip will pay for itself.

Mona is facing aft, so I can't see her face, but I imagine she's mesmerized by the same thing I am looking at right now: the majestic wake of our grand schooner. The way the low angle of the sun illuminates our froth, turning it into rock candy, into one long bright leash to the horizon.

Mona loves it when I wax poetic.

Jeez, my mouth suddenly tastes like rat's ass.

My kingdom for a 7-Eleven breakfast burrito.

My Gorgeous Actress Girlfriend takes a final drag and flicks the rest of her cigarette into the ocean like it's her private ashtray. Good thing the Ancients were wrong and there are no sea gods, because that's just the sort of thing, I would imagine, that would really piss someone like Poseidon or Neptune off.

She springs from her perch with those long gazelle legs, and for the first time I realize my Mona is down to panties and a white dress shirt, and I'm usually not the nitpicky sort, but I'm pretty sure I've never seen that shirt before.

I decide to risk a whisper.

"Mona!"

But my call is apparently buried under the roar of the ocean. Or maybe by the rush of wind through our rigging. In any case Mona goes on her way and tiptoes over what I can never fully accept as being called a poop deck, then scuttles her cute-as-a-bunny tush down the companionway.

Whatever contretemps might have ensued, Mona has evidently retained enough of the crew's goodwill to have free rein of the ship. If I know her, she'll have them eating out of her hand in no time. But do step on it, Mona. I'm getting a hankering for food, shelter, and sea level again.

Still no crew on deck, but I'm digging on the view. From this height, the murky green becomes a window. Below it, shadows dart and twirl like a bullfighter's cape—what a show! Schools of fish. Pods of dolphins. Porpoises or whales or whatever they are.

Sixty feet up, and in a way, I'm closer to the sea.

Now the wind kicks up and slaps spray across my chest. My baking skin feels like heaven.

Mona's faraway laugh. Below deck. Working its magic, I hope.

And so I'm thinking the website was right: A Schooner-For-Two Is More Than A Vacation—It's An Adventure! Well worth the price of that Toyota Camry it was silly of me to have been saving for. Because Mona and I are learning more about each other in this zigzag situation than we probably could in a year of straight-as-the-crow-flies bliss.

And now I think I'll close my eyes a minute and rest this aching head.

A hand joggles my jaw till I wake.

"Nighttime hello yes?" I say. What happened to the day?

Still, the stars are all the light I need to see that my Mona is holding up well. She presses what appears to be the Spanish equivalent of a package of Hostess Ding Dongs into my hand.

"I snuck these from the galley."

"Great. Let's eat them in our cabin."

She leans in and pushes the hair out of my eyes. "You really pissed off Captain Deikert."

So that's Dickhead's name. He sounds Dutch. Who died and made the Dutch people boss?

"I'm a little fuzzy on last night," I say. "Did somebody say something disrespectful to Dickhead?"

Mona's attention shifts to my ankle cuff. She fingers it gently, then shakes her head like she can't believe any of this is happening either. "He wanted to put you in a lifeboat," she says.

"Be better than this."

"And set you adrift."

"Not better than this."

"I convinced him to drop you off when we get there."

"Get where?"

She reaches behind her and produces a six-pack of Evian. "They're going to send up more later. I thought you could use some right away."

"I think someone gave me roofies."

Mona starts to say something, but low voices spilling topside catch her attention. She brings her lips to my ear.

"No one gave you roofies. You drank yourself unconscious." My Mona sighs. She grabs a strut and pulls herself up, hoisting a leg over the side, then corkscrews her other arm into the rope mesh as if Jewesses from Haddonfield, New Jersey have been sailing the bounding main for centuries.

Do all women look so fetching when they dangle?

"How about asking for the key to my leg thing?" I say.

"As soon as everything calms down. Just play along with them for now." She whips her other leg around to the rigging and starts down.

"But how much longer—I'm starting to get a little acrophobic and claustro—Hey! You want to have a little sex or somethin'?"

But, alas, my precious jewel has disappeared, my words doubtless lost, once again, to the roar of the ocean. Or maybe it was the rush of wind through our rigging—who the hell knows?

It's a look that could make me a shoo-in for Official Avatar of Dorkdom, but the boxer shorts I tore from under my beach pants cover my head and some of my neck and it's still not enough. My second morning up here and I've already got a tan that's probably lopped twenty years from my lifespan. I can hunt for scraps of shade if I stay awake in this heat, playing peek-a-boo with the sun around the topmast, but for the hours book-ending high noon, I'm basically seriously fucked.

I've certainly had enough of the swaying—the rocking of the ship is magnified up here. As far as answering Nature's Call, I don't want to even think about what I was forced to do to my poor Nike Air Maxes. Next time, Nature's Call is going airmail.

All of which are reasons why I've decided to take action. Mona will understand—she loves me. I will refuse to play their stupid game anymore, whatever the point of it was.

And now that I've worked up the stamina—and the spit—I'm going to start screaming my lungs out. Maybe this squeaky wheel can get some grease. Or at least a change in altitude.

I crack open another Evian. I wet my whistle. I take a deep breath.

I begin screaming.

The rotund fellow with the flies buzzing around his armpits reminds me his name is Gomez. He daubs the sweat from several of his chins with the filthiest hanky I've ever seen. It's hard to imagine which got the worst of the deal, the hanky or the chins.

I tell him it is nice to see him again, which I hope is an obvious attempt to be civil, as only seconds ago he was whacking me over the head with a rolled-up copy of Mademoiselle.

Repeatedly.

I estimate he got in at least a dozen good whacks, the last eight or nine well past the point when I stopped screaming.

So that's what a New York cockroach feels like.

It is evident this Gomez is a sadist. Already I see him fondling the magazine wistfully, readying it for another session.

I decide to use psychology on him.

"You are married, sir, yes?" I say. I'm not sure why I'm suddenly talking like a Norwegian.

"Sí," he says. "My family in Antigua."

"Antigua is very beautiful."

"You go there?"

"Of course," I say. "Well, not exactly. But everyone in America knows how beautiful Antigua is."

"How they know?"

I am not thrilled with the way Gomez is squinting, or how his hands continue tightening the magazine as it approaches the density of a baseball bat.

"In America we learn about Antigua because of what our teachers tell us in school," I say. "It is what our parents tell us. Every day. That Antigua is a beautiful country. A country to respect."

Gomez seems to find this pleasing. Which makes it all the more puzzling when he whacks me on the head again.

Thwack!

Hard enough to make me see cartoon lightning bolts flash at the peripheries of my vision—a final whack that hurts more than all the other whacks combined.

Then, calming for a moment, apparently satisfied he has at least put me on the road to a cerebral hemorrhage, he hoists both legs onto the rope mesh and descends.

My island a shithole, I can hear him mutter as he nimbly drops out of sight.

And so ends my experiment with not playing along. Because, for whatever it's worth, from now on: I'm playing, I'm playing.

Mona, my gorgeous hunk of womanhood—you were right.

Of course.

Mona has been sending up CARE packages to ensure I have plenty to eat, which is fine, as long as my intestines can continue figuring out what to do with Brand New Smokin' Mesquite-Flavored Slim Jims.

And now, before me stands my latest delivery boy. This one has some kind of official insignia sewn onto his Kelly Clarkson T-shirt. He has white hair and the burnt-umber alligator-skin of, say, a seventy-year-old lifelong outdoorsman.

I'm guessing he's thirty.

"I'm First Mate," he says. "I met you the first day."

"You speak nice English."

"Thank you. You told me that when I met you. Frankly, it was a little condescending then too."

"Sorry, sorry."

"Why is it so hard to believe people come from Boca Raton?"

I glance down through the rails. Four of the crew are laid out on towels. They're doing some kind of stretching. Mona seems to have gotten a Kundalini Yoga class going.

I turn back to my visitor. "Let's cut the bullshit, man. Am I ever getting down from here?"

"Tomorrow. Port of call, Miami."

"So you're not going to kill me."

"No—we voted that out yesterday. Almost unanimous."

I roll to my left to get another peek at Mona.

She looks good. Tight, tan, sweating. Everything I like in a woman. Last night she was partying like it was her last night on earth. Singing, dancing, drinking—making the best of this crazy situation. I applaud her ability to play nicely with others. Though I worry about her well-being when she disappears below deck for extended periods of time.

Oh, Mona—are you aching for me, as I am aching for you?

Thwack!

"Ouch!" I say.

Regretfully—another knock to my coconut. The first mate, I see, prefers National Geographic.

"I'm trying to tell you something," he says as he leans against the railing, the wood crackling under his weight.

Terrific. In a few seconds this moron will plunge to his death, and manslaughter will skyrocket to the top of my crimes.

"I'm listening," I say. "So what did I do that was so bad?"

"You got drunk," he says.

"Hey. Your Monkey Piss—your fault."

"You screamed, you yelled, you wouldn't shut up. You cursed at us."

"And that's it?"

"You made fun of our worst physical features. You really took your time with it. Some very hurtful moments."

"Is that all?" I worked a Slim Jim out of its wrapper and tore off a bite. Yuck.

"You screamed at your girlfriend. You commanded her to dance naked for the crew—which she refused to do. The first night, at least."

"Excuse me?"

"Kidding. You kicked Santiago in the balls when he tried to calm you."

"Is that so?"

"I tried to get you back to your cabin, you kicked me in the balls. You punched out Juan, then you kicked him in the balls. After that, we started to watch our balls."

"Okay, okay. Maybe all this wild Caribbean air has enticed me to let a few demons out."

"Then you threw Juan's cat overboard."

Excuse me?

No—what? I didn't do that. Please God, tell me I didn't do that. For the first time there's a pain in my gut that isn't directly related to highly spiced and desiccated animal flesh.

"You're lying," I say.

"No one holds that one against you. That cat shit in everyone's linens. Everyone hated that cat. As a matter of fact, that was the only thing you had going in your favor."

But now I understand. Clearly. That I deserve all this. I'm a monster.

"You ran up here like a lunatic," the first mate says. "With the captain's hat. Bad omen for a captain to lose his hat."

"I did this myself?"

"It was your girlfriend's idea to cuff your leg. She didn't want you trying to get down half-drunk. Frankly, the rest of us wanted to see you give it a shot."

There is nothing more I need to hear, yet I say:

"Are you the one who punched me?"

He ponders this for a moment. "You mean the first time, while you were conscious? That was Andre." And with that, the first mate of the Gran Broma bids his farewell.

Leaving me to some pondering of my own.

No moon. Just the stars again.

If all goes as promised, my final evening on the Broma. I espy a thin band aglow at the horizon. Not the sunrise. The advantage of a crow's nest (though I am discovering there may be others): I see land before anyone else. We are sailing toward the incandescent shores of Miami. Hotels and restaurants and cars and people. I'm looking forward to strangers.

Mona has joined me to say goodnight. She is wearing a dark bikini top under her Fruit-of-the-Loom T-shirt. She smells of tequila and lime and sunblock, and sits close enough that I feel the day's heat radiating off her body. I wonder if she can feel the heat off mine.

"Deikert is returning your money," she says. "He admits things got out of hand for everybody."

"I won't sue the bastard," I say. "I actually got a lot out of this."

"I had an idea you might."

"Kind of a Zen-thing. Like giving a big finger to the world."

She nods as if I just gave her something deep to chew on. Then she smiles and unscrews the cap of the jug she's brought.

"Monkey Piss?" I ask.

"Bacardi's."

I take a swig and pass it back. She takes a nip and winces.

"I came up to say goodbye," she says.

"Goodnight, you mean."

I'm playing dumb, but by now I know where this is going. She tells me she's staying on a few days, maybe a week, maybe longer. She's never seen the Turks and Caicos. I want to remind her they're all the same. She says she'll debark with me tomorrow because there's a few things she needs to pick up, phone calls she needs to make, but she won't be catching the flight to Manhattan.

"This is what's right for me right now," she says.

"Don't give it a moment's thought," I say. But of course she should give it a moment's thought. She should think about it over and over until it festers in her gut and becomes a cancer that eats at her from the inside out.

"I just want what's best for you," I say.

She kisses me on the lips. "I have a surprise," she says.

My mind races to the most vulgar interpretation of this as possible. Sadly, I do not feel her hand suddenly skittering up my thigh.

Instead that hand reaches into her hip pocket and produces a key. I'm afraid to ask how long she's had it. She unlocks my leg cuff and removes it.

I'm a free man. In more ways than I prefer to accept.

"Follow me down," she says. "Richard's ordered everyone to be nice."

Richard.

It should amuse me, but doesn't, that the man who has apparently stolen my girlfriend has a name that is remarkably close to "Dick Dickhead."

"Careful on the way down," Mona says. She conjures a look of concern, then disappears.

"Be there in a few," I say.

Though I don't think so. And not because I'm afraid to look anyone in the eye.

(Okay, maybe a little because of that.)

But mostly because, up here, the salty air is warm and familiar. And in six more hours it will be morning and Miami. Then a cab, a plane, another cab, my apartment, the rest of my life.

Just six more hours, and I have to go home.

Leaving

Andrea Kott

The sexton said we should do it before the ground got hard, that by Thanksgiving, everything would be frozen and we would have to wait until spring. So my family and I agreed on a mid-November Sunday before Thanksgiving, just after lunch, when the sun would be highest.

It was clear where the spot was. We could see it from the road: a small, deep square and beside it, a mound of earth. My half-brothers got there first, each carrying an urn: one containing the ashes of their father, the other, of our mother. My husband and I walked together slowly and met them on the hill.

The air was icy and the ground was dry. We took in the surroundings, the trees and the iron gate that circled the tiny cemetery, with its scattered, broken headstones. We stood around

the perimeter of the grave, stared down into it, then turned our faces skyward, hoping the sun

would warm our skin. One at a time we knelt, lowering our faces into the black hole, inspecting it for loose stones, stray roots, water, and pieces of trash or worms. We assured ourselves the spot would be peaceful and safe, going so far as to think it might even be warm. Then we positioned the urns, side by side, each of us reaching to touch some part of an urn and some part of one another. Here, I would leave my mother for the last time.

My mother hadn't wanted to be buried in a coffin.

"Such a waste of space," she'd said.

On her last visit to New York, before she got too sick to travel, she and one of my brothers bought a dogwood sapling to plant in his yard. It was understood that if she wanted to, she could rest there when the time came. They'd planted the tree back in June; the air was sweet with blossoms and freshly cut grass. My brother had centered the sapling in its bed. My mother had then covered its roots with soft, cool dirt, filling the hole and patting the mound she'd built firmly with her hands. They were strong hands; hands that had played piano in youth; hands that had cracked walnuts for homemade Hungarian pastries; hands that had beaten butter-frosting for birthday cakes and picked pinfeathers from raw chickens; hands that had sewed nametags

on camp clothes and spanked and soothed three children; hands that had lit cigarette after cigarette, stirred scotch-and waters and signed welfare checks; hands that, in a few weeks, would be puffy and bruised from needles delivering chemotherapy drugs. The dogwood wobbled like a foal, its spindly roots unsure in the new soil. Next summer, we promised my mother, she would see it bloom.

We should have guessed it would be over by then, even though Mom looked remarkably well that day, for a 71-year-old woman with end-stage lung cancer. The doctors had said she had six months at most. I suspect she knew this would be her last visit.

"Jesus, what have you got in here, Mom, free weights?" I'd asked as I lifted her crate-size suitcase at Grand Central Station. She was staying with my brother for a week.

"Vitamins," she said.

"Vitamins?"

"Vitamin C to fight the cancer. And Vitamin B. It reduces stress. And calcium-magnesium to help absorb the C." She smiled wide, her apple cheeks squeezing her eyes. She was panting, having lugged her bag up a ramp to the waiting area, all five feet of her leaning to one side, like a branch loaded with fruit.

"Why didn't you ask the conductor to carry your bag to the platform?" I scolded, realizing I should have met her at the train.

"I can do it," she said, sucking in words with gasps for air.

"You shouldn't," I said.

"Don't be silly."

"You're sick."

"I feel fine."

"You feel fine now."

"Please stop worrying, sweetie." She cupped my chin in the palm of her hand.

"Better hurry," I said, shrinking from her touch. "Everyone's waiting."

I wanted to take her tenderness; wanted to want to. But I was a survivor and I knew the face of the enemy. It had been 20 years since she'd thrown stinging slaps at my face and body, telling me how I'd ruined her life; since I'd roused her from drunken sleep to lead her to bed; or wiped her wet, boozy kisses from my cheeks. On the surface, our fights were always about small things: a chore I hadn't finished, or an errant look or comment. Deep down, however, they were about much more: my contempt for her drinking and the shame it caused us both; my need for parental love and her hunger for adult love. Like sparks on tinder, our words ignited our stores of need into fires of rage. Sometimes we'd scream at each other from across a room. Other times,

we'd stand nose to nose, our eyelashes practically meeting, feeling the heat of each other's breath. Hers usually reeked.

"I'm going to take your head off," she'd threaten, raising her small hand over my face.

"Go ahead," I'd bait.

"Miserable child."

"DO it."

"Rotten, miserable thing."

"Why don't you just DO it?"

"Heads are going to roll, young lady…"

"Why don't you just…" SLAP. First one side of my face, then the other. Then every inch of me that her hands could reach.

"You don't love me," I'd cry.

"No, young lady, you don't love ME." It went on like that for years, for as long as she was attached to liquor and whatever tranquilizers she had on hand.

The drinking had started after her first husband died. They'd been married for nine years and had two boys. He was 33 when they'd married and she was 20. Those years were the happiest she'd ever been. Then she was alone, with no job and two sons to raise. She studied electrolysis and practiced out of their apartment. She sent the boys away to boarding school and worked late, having a couple of cocktails before dinner to unjangle her nerves, one before bed to help her sleep, and sometimes another to soothe her when she awoke in the middle of the night.

Ten years later, she met my father. He was older too, and charming. He'd said he wanted a family, to adopt her boys and have a child of his own. But he was also a drinker and he had a temper. He'd thrown a pot full of hot coffee at my mother when he overheard her crying into the phone about him forcing her to do something in bed. It turned out that he liked boys in a way she had never imagined, grabbing my brothers' crotches when he wrestled with them. Then, for kicks, he'd stood them against an archery target, aimed his bow and arrow and laughed.

Before my first birthday, my mother left him, too battered to know which way to turn the knob on the stove to boil water for tea; too brittle, at times, to dress herself. There were no more men after that. No dates, no romance. Just deep drags on extra-long cigarettes, liquor and late-night movies that ended with a TV test pattern that hummed a single note until dawn.

By the time I reached the first grade, my brothers had moved away. Mom's electrolysis practice failed and she spend the next several years bouncing from one office job to the next, sometimes too depressed to show up. The first welfare check and box of canned goods from the food pantry were blows.

Food stamps were better. She could cash them and buy scotch or gin or vodka, whatever was on sale. Drinking bloated her from her eyes to her ankles. So, she wore

stretchy slacks that made a washboard sound when her thighs rubbed together. Drinking also made her melancholy and mean, quick to pick a fight. I was a teenager, counting the days until I could leave for college—or until she died. Long after I'd graduated from college, whenever she'd call, her speech slurred, I'd contemplate her death.

"When can you visit?"

"I don't know, Mom."

"It's so good to hear your voice. You don't call."

"I do, Mom."

"No. I call."

"Gotta go."

"You do that. You go."

Two years before her diagnosis, Mom moved to Florida to live with her sister and brother-in-law. They weren't drinkers, so my mother didn't drink, either. She lost weight. She started swimming.

"Come to Florida!" Her voice was upbeat, clear.

"I'd love to, Mom. But I'm so busy right now."

"Just a quick visit?"

"Maybe next month. You sound great."

"I feel great. I do water aerobics every morning. I'm making friends. But I miss you."

She called every week, wanting to know how I was, when I could visit, if I was in love. She urged me to call when I needed to talk, and occasionally I did, recounting my failed attempts at romance or bemoaning my fledgling career.

Twice a year, Mom came back to New York, hoping for reparation. But I guarded my time. I'd join her at one of my brother's homes where, away from the watchful eyes of her sister, she'd have a drink or two. She didn't get mean, but she'd get boozy enough to give me a reason to leave.

A few weeks after she was diagnosed, I flew to Florida. The cancer had spread throughout most of her lungs and was protruding from her neck, a fist-sized swelling right beneath her jaw. She'd grown tiny. Her hands trembled. She gagged when she coughed but insisted she felt well. Whenever she could she touched me. A hand on my shoulder, an arm around my waist. Each time, I slid from her embrace.

She suggested going to the beach. I questioned her strength but she dismissed my concern. So we packed a bag and headed for the shore. The boardwalk was scalding. I wanted to go for a run and asked if she'd be okay

by herself. She said she would take a walk.

"It's so hot," I said. "Will you be alright?"

"I'll be fine," she said.

"I won't be long."

"Take your time," she said. "Enjoy."

I headed down to the water's edge, dodging children and boogie boards. I'd forgotten my watch and set my sights on a jetty that seemed to be about a mile away. I breathed in the ocean and followed the seagulls and pelicans as they skimmed the turquoise waves. The wind was warm on my face. As my body worked, my mind relaxed. It felt good to be away from Manhattan, the constant din of traffic and sirens and subways. I was 34 and happy: I had work, a good apartment, and I was in love with the man whom I would eventually marry. Mom hadn't met him yet, but I knew she would like him. Just then, I thought of her, walking alone. My stomach tightened.

"She'll be okay," I assured myself. "I'm not going far."

I twisted around to see how far I'd run, and if I could locate the spot where I'd left Mom. All I could see was a mosaic of swimsuits and umbrellas.

"Just a few more minutes," I told myself. The jetty was a hazy apparition in the distance. I kept on, each footfall sinking into wet sand. The crowd was thinning. My legs felt heavy and hot. "You're almost there," I panted.

I checked behind me again. I was a million miles away. How long had I been running? It felt like hours. How long would it take me to get back? The jetty was in reach, but I turned

around and picked up my pace. I stumbled back over rocks and sandcastles. My head buzzed with the roar of the crowd, of children squealing as ocean spray splashed their legs. I ran near the water for firm footing, searching the crowd for the print of my mother's bathing suit, the bow on her hat. I plodded through mounds of scorching sand, snaking around beach blankets. Nothing looked familiar. The inside of my mouth was hot and sour. Sweat stung my eyes. The ground buckled and blurred. How had I managed to run so far? I raced to the boardwalk, scouting for the

lights of an ambulance or police car. My heart throbbed. My throat tightened. I flared my nostrils and opened my mouth, starved for air. Then I saw her, inching towards me, holding onto a fence and stopping to wipe her brow.

"Are you alright?" I gasped.

"Just a little out of breath," she whispered, managing a smile. I put my arm around her and supported her elbow. We walked, two steps at a time, to a shaded playground. I sat her on the back of a giant stone turtle.

"Put your head down," I said. "I'll get you water."

I got her a glass of ice water from the snack bar. Then I peeled off the

running tights I'd worn over my bathing suit, doused them in a nearby fountain and spread them across her back. She

shivered. We made it to our blanket under a big palm tree and drank iced tea straight from our thermos. I put my arms around my mother and buried my head in her neck. We both wept.

One week later, my aunt called to say that my mother had not awakened after her first round of chemotherapy. I returned to Florida. For two nights I slept by Mom's bed. The next day, she opened her eyes and managed a smile. I'd prepared myself for her death. Now, all I could think about was leaving.

"I have to get back to New York," I said.

"You're leaving?" she said.

"I'll be back in a few days."

When I returned the following weekend, she was unconscious. Her chest rose and collapsed and did not rise again. I stared at the monitor, awaiting the flat line beep. Her chest rose and collapsed again, the intervals between breaths getting longer. She smelled like baby powder. A nurse came in to neaten the room and close the blinds against the morning sun.

"It won't be long," she said.

I sat. I stood. I caressed my mother's arm. I kissed her forehead. Then I left.

Three months later, my brothers opened the urns and poured our parents' remains into the grave. Then, we reached inside and, together, combed dirt over the grey ashes, to keep them from blowing away.



She Flies Alone | *Jude Harzer*
Oil on board | 12” x 12”



Beauty in the Dark | *Le'Andra LeSeur*
Photographs



Looming | *Noel'le Longhaul*
Woodcut



Tunnel | *Noel'le Longhaul*
Woodcut and chalk

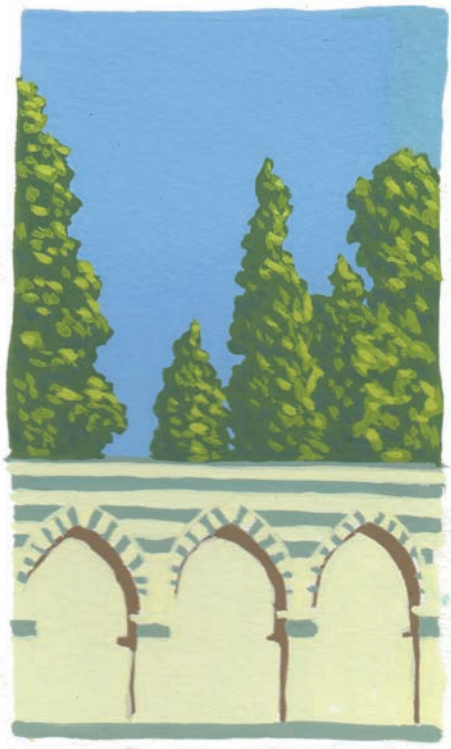


Untitled 2 | *Savanna Bailey*
Film photograph | 7”x 9.5”



Jacket | *Iva Kinnaird*
Woodcut Print | 22" x 30"





Italian Facades | *Adriana Gallo*
Gouache | 8" x 5"



Small Works of Savannah | *Ellen Bley*
Series of 10 miniature acrylic paintings | Each between 3” x 3” and 3” x 5”



Force | *John Hughes*
Pen & ink, watercolor on bristol board | 22" x 30"

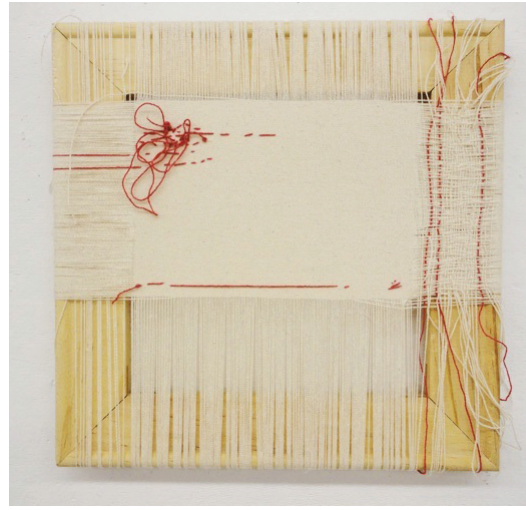


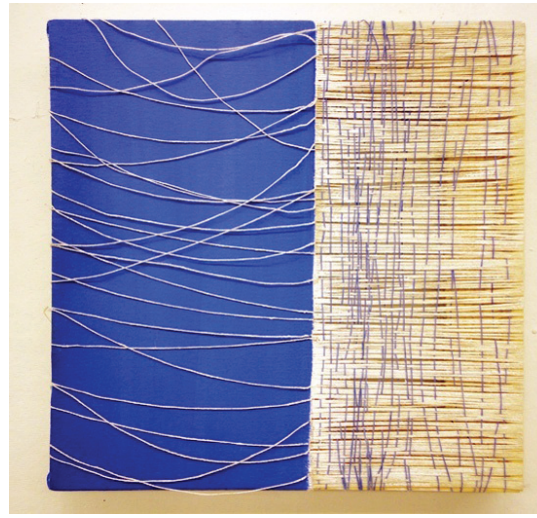
The kitchen sink | *Ricardo Nagaoka*
Photograph





Summertime Hotline Fun | *Maija Ekey*
C-Print | 14" x 20"

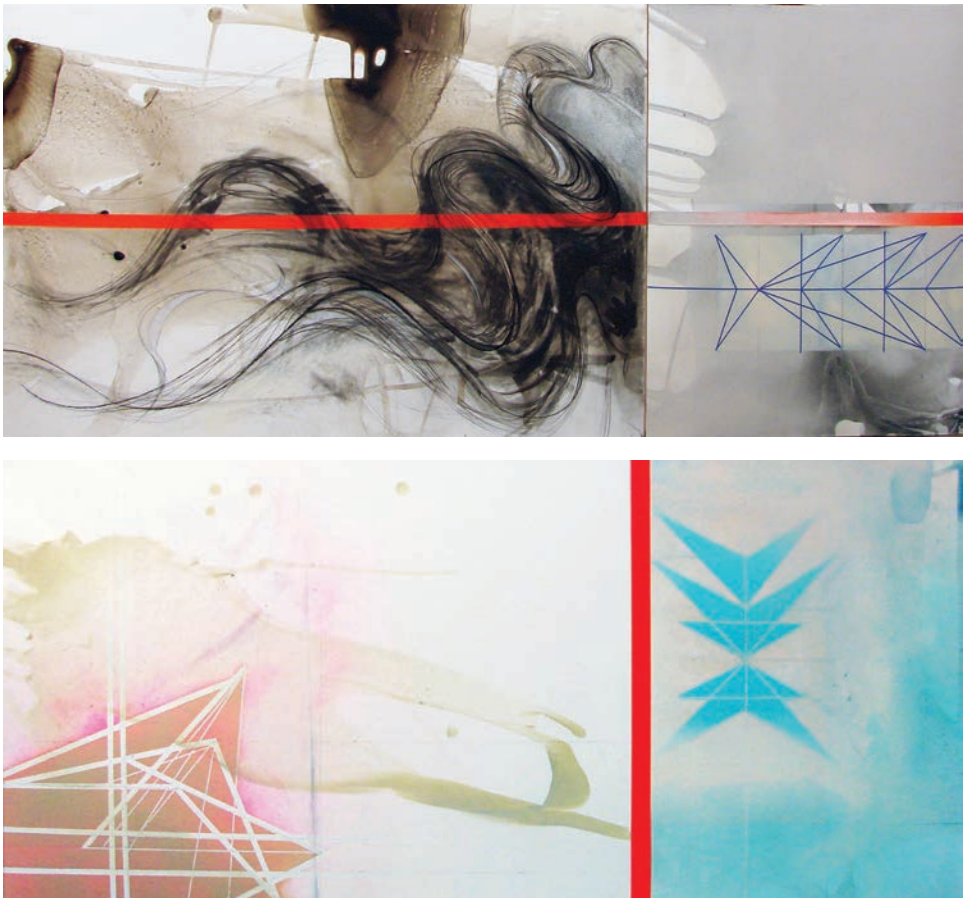




Limited but Limitless | *Ann Lee*
Top: Painted acrylic threads from deconstructed canvas and traditional canvas | 10” x 10”
Bottom: Acrylic, traditional canvas, and canvas threads | 15” x 15”



untitled | *Janine Wilkin*
Acrylic and oil paint on canvas | 18" x 28"



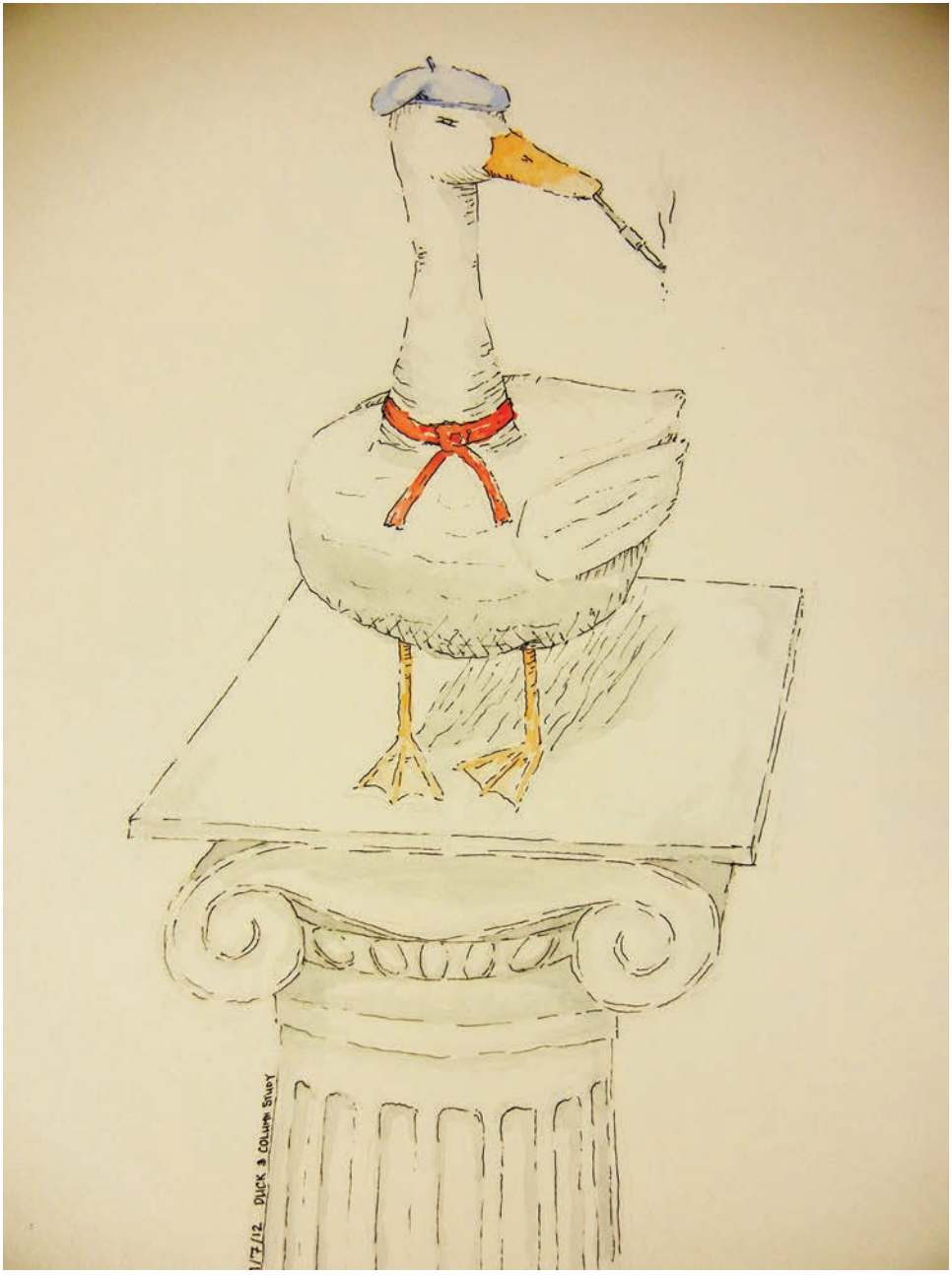
Top: **We work in the Dark, We do What we Can (Dames Point Bridge)** | *Madeleine Peck Wagner*
Pencil, graphite powder, acrylic, spray paint, and tape on Yupo | 25" x 58" x 4"

Bottom: **Daydreaming {for} Harts (Hart Bridge)** | *Madeleine Peck Wagner*
Spraypaint, acrylic, and tape on Yupo | 19" x 39" x 4"





The Shrapnel of Time (I) | *Allison Zuckerman*
Mixed media collaged acrylic paintings



Duck and Column Study | *Evan Wagner*
Watercolor | 16" x 12"



The Brewer's Blackbird Beauty | *Erica Ndubueze*
Photograph



Odyssey | *Samantha Fortenberry*
Photograph



Business Cards | *Walker Pickering*
Photograph

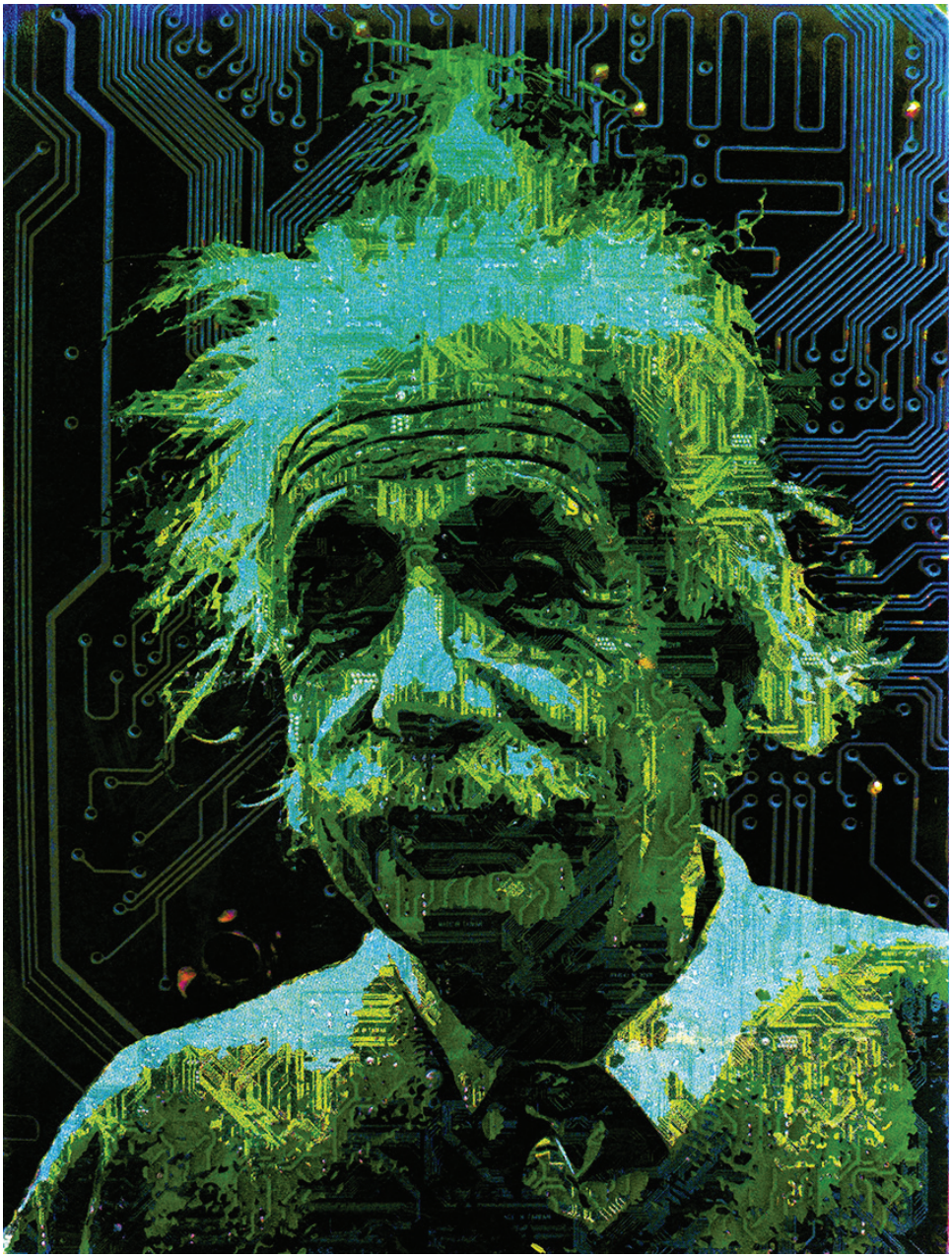








Selected Images from the Series "Nearly West" (1) | *Walker Pickering*
Photographs



Integrated Einstein | *Daniel Sanzone*
Serigraphy (Screen Print) on archival paper | 9.5" x 12.25"



The Future is Mine | *Daniel Sanzone*
Serigraphy (Screen Print) on archival paper | 9" x 11.5"



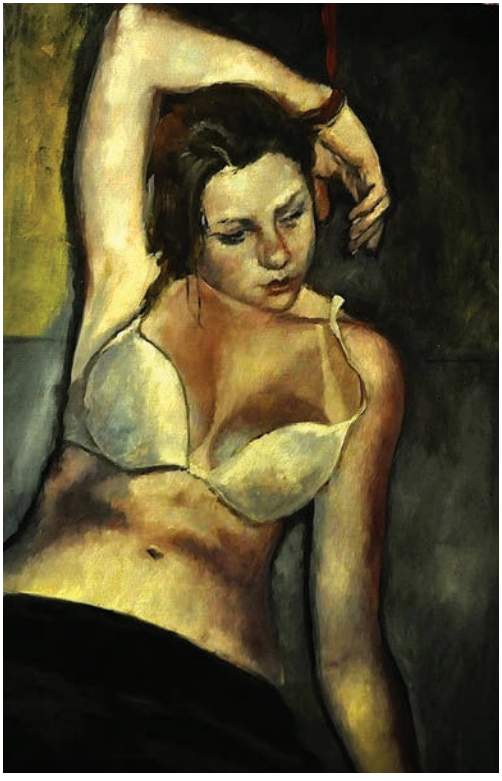


Selected Pieces from the Series "Legacy" & "Child's Play" | *Jude Harzer*
Oil on canvas, linen, and wood panel











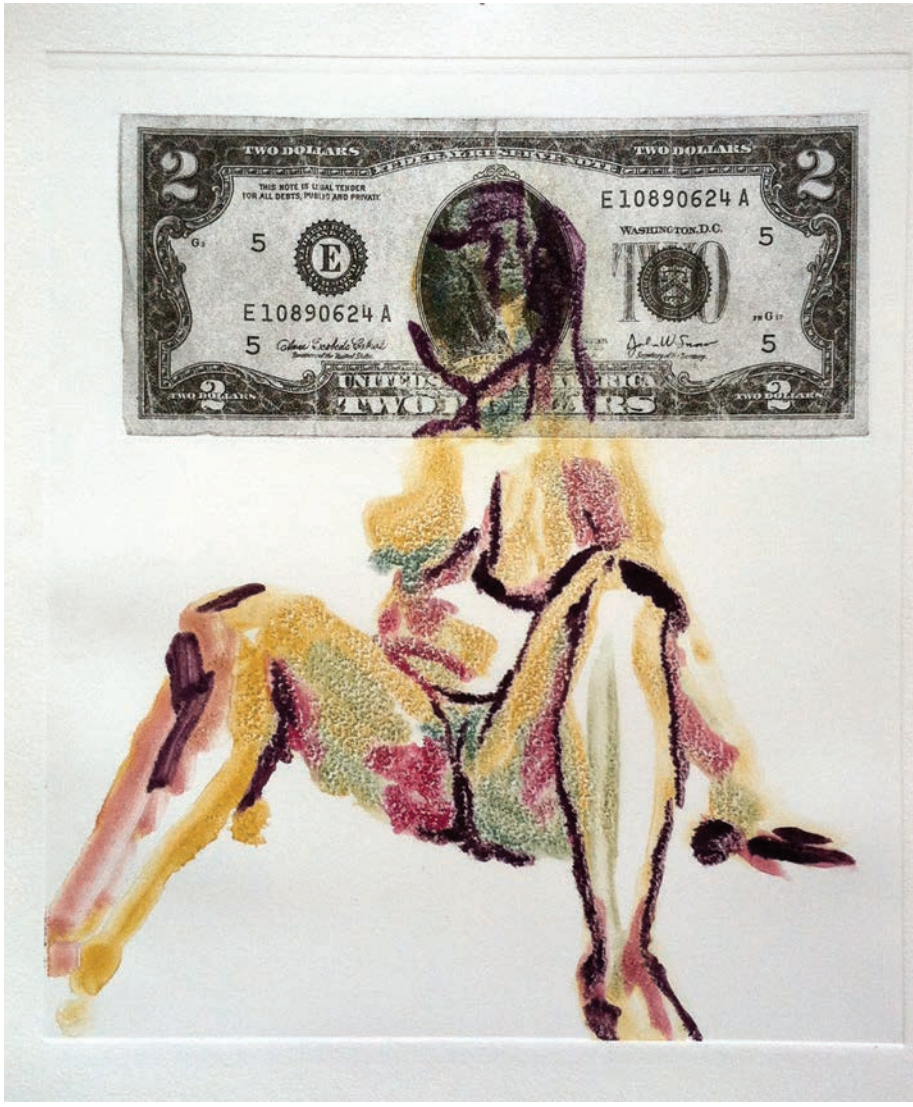
Untitled (male nude) | *Molly Knobloch*
Oil paint on paper | 15" x 11"



Untitled (chevron) | *Molly Knobloch*
Acrylic on paper | 15” x 11”



Pink | *Ellen Bley*
Illustration using pen, ink, and nail polish | 5" x 6"



Spending the Elusive Two Dollar Bill Wisely | *Emily Hoffman*
Xerox transfer over a monoprint | 7" x 8"



Dead Eyes | *Finn Schult*
Photograph



Sisters | *Emma Mattesky*
Photograph

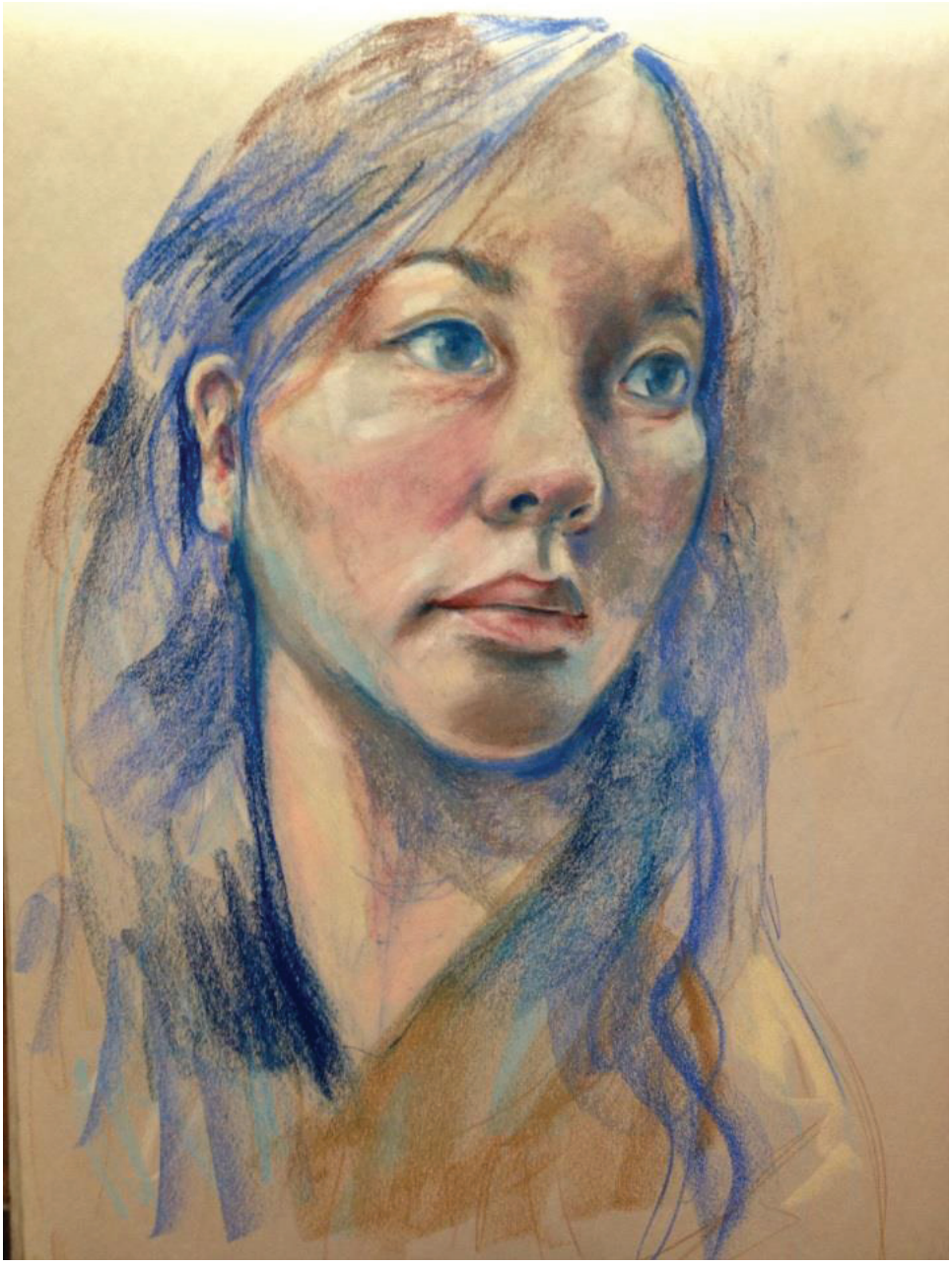








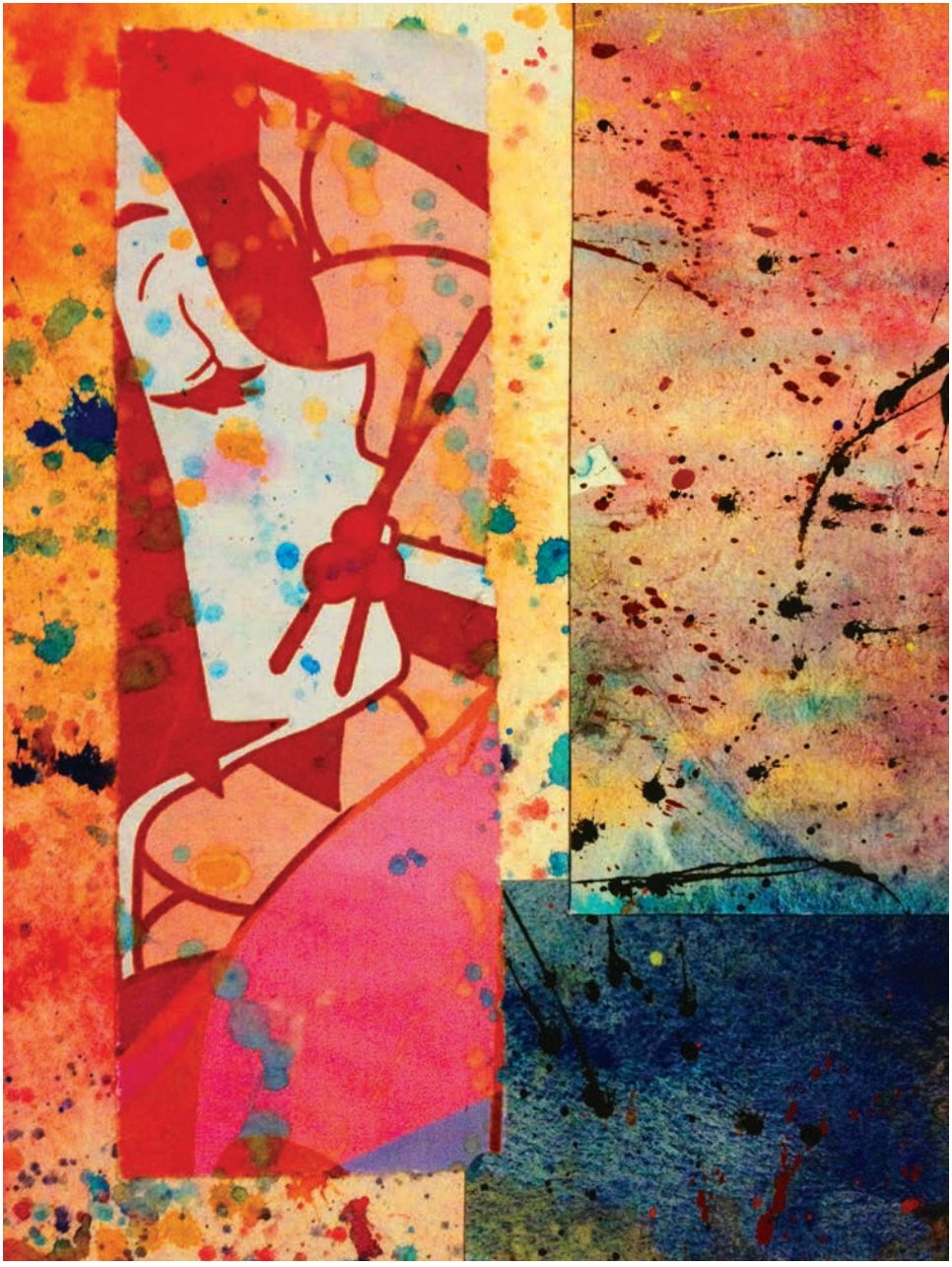
Contrast Vs. Color | *Samantha Fortenberry*
Photographs



Untitled | *Serena Wu*



Key News | *Monika Daniels*
Acrylic paint and newspaper | 16" x 12"



Tastes Like Candy | *Rahel Badee*
Acryla gouache | 6" x 8"



Seven Girls | *Mark Usmiani*
Graphite pencil on bristol board | 14” x 17”



Birds | *Sonja Daniels*
Acrylic paint and newsprint on canvas | 16" x 12"



Geisha | *Sonja Daniels*
Acrylic paint on canvas | 16" x 12"



Atlanta Cotton Warehouses | *Geoffrey Ellis Aronson*
Photograph



American Trailer | *Finn Schult*
Photograph



Poppies & Pomegranates | *Monika Daniels*
Acrylic paint | 12" x 16"



Caterpillar | *Monika Daniels*
Mixed Media | 12” x 16”



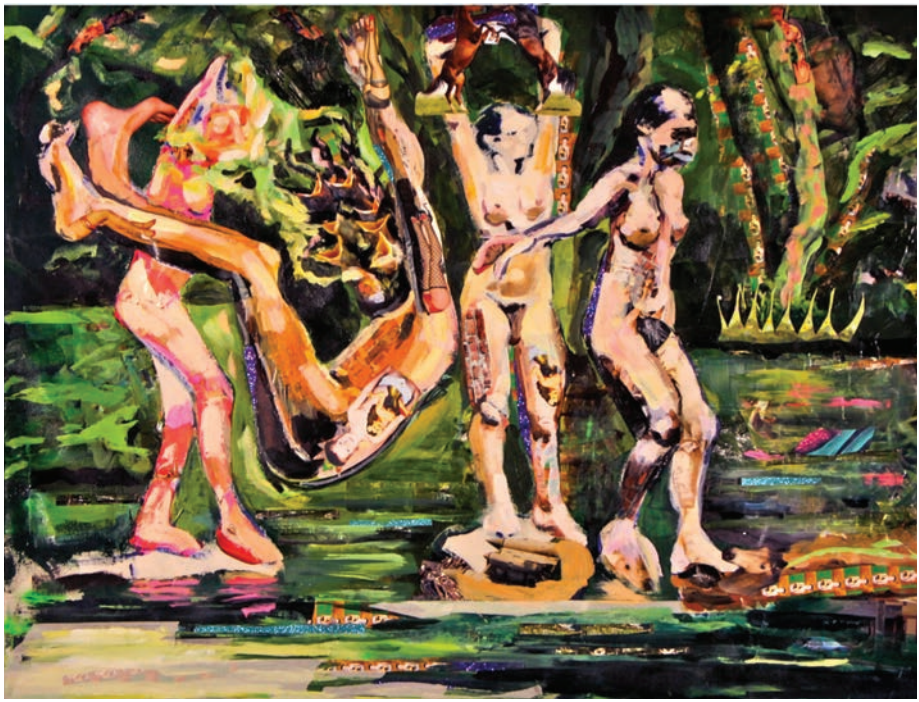




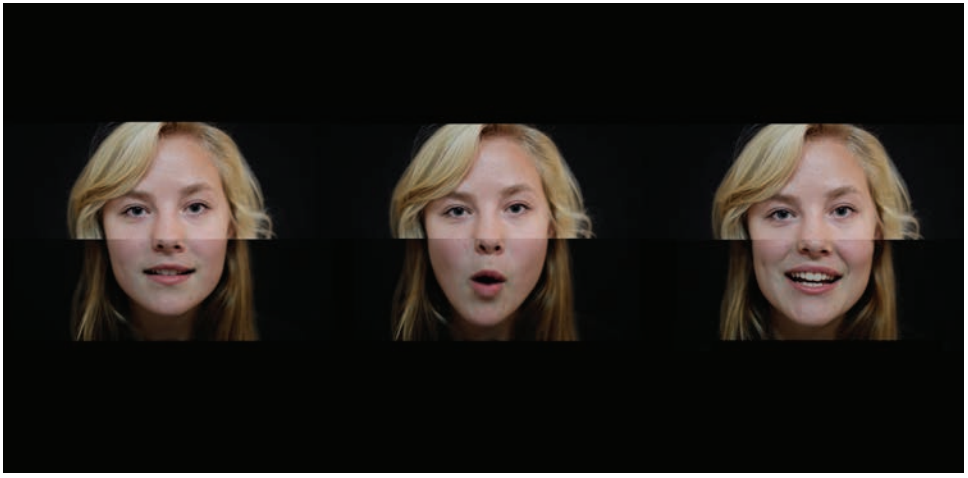


Selected Images from the Series "Nearly West" (II) | *Walker Pickering*
Photographs

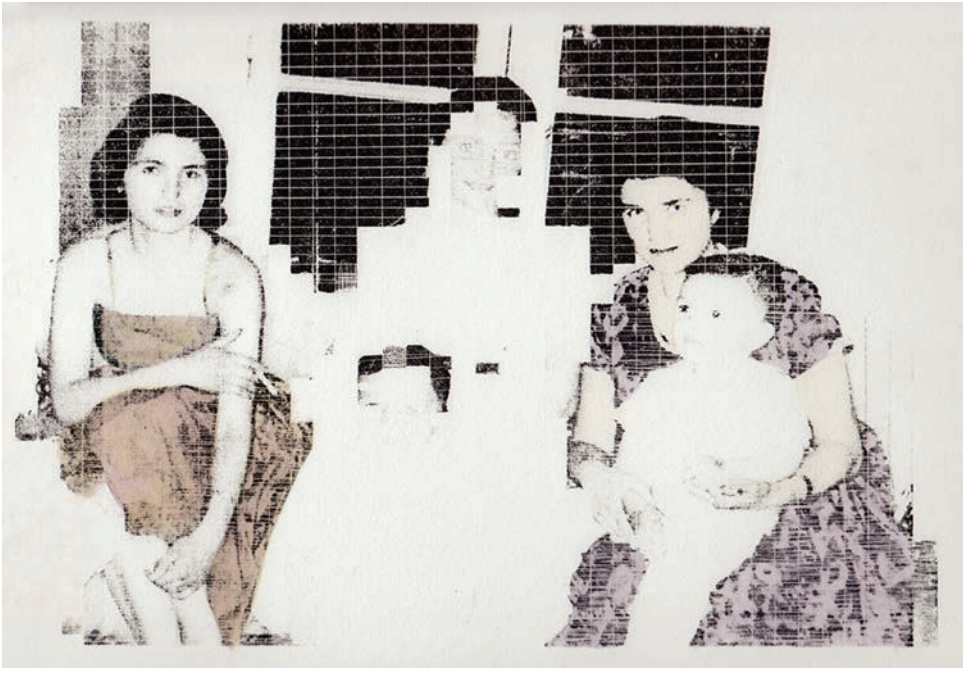




The Shrapnel of Time (II) | *Allison Zuckerman*
Mixed media collaged acrylic paintings



Pearl and Taran | *Edith W. Young*
Photograph



Family Genes | *Alexis Busuttil Blaudeau*
Photo-litho process on stone with hand coloring | 10.5" x 7.5"



Self Fragment #4 | *Xiwen Zhu*
Mixed media with photographs, staples, surgical tape, and sewing thread | 16" x 20"



Scolded | *Ellen Bley*
Illustration | 8” x 8”



Streaklights | *Colleen Loughlin*
Photograph



Filtered Urban Art 02 | *Jeremy S. Maloney*
Photograph







Nadaam: A Nomadic Experience | *Chelsea Warlick*
Photographs













Escape from Imbalance | *Jacob R. Reeves*
Digital Illustration | 8.5" x 12.5"



The Battle of Blenheim - Toile | *Alexis Busuttil Blaudeau*
Four Color Screenprint | 11” x 15”



Four Oranges | *Sam Crosby*
Acrylic on paper | 22.5" x 30"

Contributors

Geoffrey Ellis Aronson has lived in Boston, Savannah, Atlanta and finally, in perpetual search of warmer climes, sunnier days and better cuisine, is now an instructor of English at the University of Valladolid. He is a former professor of photography at the American Intercontinental University and continues his personal tradition of teaching at colleges with long names.

Peggy Aylsworth is a retired psychotherapist living in Santa Monica, CA with her poet/blogger husband, Norm Levine. Her poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals throughout the U.S. and abroad, including Beloit Poetry Journal, Poetry Salzburg Review, The MacGuffin. Her poem was nominated for the 2012 Pushcart Prize by The Medulla Review.

Rahel Badee-Thomas, a freshman at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), is an only child from a single parent household in Detroit, Michigan. Being far away from home for the first time was tough for Rahel, but she has worked very hard to maintain her 4.0 average and produce the best artwork she's ever done. Her goal is to graduate SCAD with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Animation and minor in Story Boarding.

Savanna Bailey is a freshman at Tulane. She is originally from Boulder, CO where she first started doing film photography in high school.

Ellen Bley is currently in her third year at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia where she is earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Animation. She has experience in various artistic mediums including writing, concept, illustration, graphic design, and performing arts. She is always look for freelance opportunities and enjoys collaborating with other artists.

Alexis Busuttil Blaudeau is a printmaker living in Atlanta, Georgia. Her work often addresses issues of race, sexuality, and colonization. Born in Kenner, Louisiana, Blaudeau later moved to Birmingham, AL. After having been exposed to printmaking in high school, Blaudeau decided to remain in the South and continue her print studies at the Savannah College of Art and Design, from which she will graduate this Spring with honors.

Stuart Chittenden is a British expat in the American Midwest. A branding consultant indulging clients often in existential discussions, he also has founded a conversation consultancy, Squishtalks, that produces conversation experiences. He believes that poetic, verbal and silent conversation will enable us to work brightly, and to live better and well

Michael Compton is a screenwriter and author who teaches writing and literature at The University of Memphis.

Sam Crosby is a New Orleans-born artist and graduating senior at Tulane University. He is receiving a BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in Painting/Printmaking. He has exhibited work throughout New Orleans at Barrister's Gallery, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, Carroll Gallery, Coup D'Oeil Art Consortium, and the Ken Kirschman Art Space.

Monika Daniels is from Alexandria, Louisiana and is a freshman at Tulane University. She plants to double major in Anthropology and English and hopes to explore her creative writing and art interests through Tulane's English department and Studio Art department.

Sonja Daniels is a freshman at Tulane University. She is studying English and Cognitive Science.

Ron Darian has spent the bulk of his professional career in the entertainment industry, having written and produced such classic television shows as Frasier, Mad About You, and 7th Heaven. His fiction work has been published extensively. He won the 2012 Kirkwood Prize, and is a recent nominee for the Pushcart Prize.

P.S. Dean is third year MFA candidate in poetry at the University of Mississippi. He is a Mississippi native living in New Orleans with his wife.

Josh DuBose is a writer/performer living in Los Angeles. Nominated for UCLA's Kirkwood Prize for Fiction in 2011 and winner of the Peter K. Hixson Memorial Scholarship in 2012, Josh's work has appeared in Zyzzyva, the upcoming spring 2013 issue of Bull: Men's Fiction, and will be showcased in Sally Shore's New Emerging Voices, L.A.'s longest running spoken word show.

Maija Ekey is a mixed media artist currently pursuing a BFA in Printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design from which she will graduate in June, 2013. She has exhibited work at various galleries throughout the US and internationally. She is interested in exploring conceptions of femininity in contemporary culture through video and print work.

Judith Ford is a retired psychotherapist whose fiction and poetry have appeared in many literary journals. She has been nominated twice for Pushcart Prizes, in

fiction and in poetry. She won the 2005 Willow Review Prose Award and was named "most highly commended" in the 2008 Margaret Reid Poetry Contest. She lives in rural Wisconsin where she divides her time between her husband, their two dogs, the Ozaukee County Humane Society, her grown children and grandchildren, and earning her MFA in writing.

Samantha Lashelle Fortenberry is 19 years old. She has been taking pictures for four years and still loves it. She is currently pursuing a BFA in photography. She photographs a wide variety of subjects from people to landscapes and everything in between. Samantha loves capturing bright, vibrant colors with her camera, and strives for this in her work.

Adriana Gallo is an Illustration major at the Rhode Island School of Design with interest in both fine art and commercial art, but in particular finding a way to successfully merge the two into a single genuine and poignant approach to illustration. In her work she seeks to articulate and cultivate in the viewer or reader an intense interest in the specificity of a space or moment while emphasizing a personal fascination with color and pattern and their resonance and ability to communicate the essence of an experience.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada. In addition to Tulane Review, her poems have appeared in American Literary Review, The Iowa Review, The New York Quarterly, Poetry International, Southern Humanities Review, and elsewhere. She's included in the anthologies Villanelles (Everyman's Library, 2012) and California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present (Santa Clara University, 2004). Her book The Downstairs Dance Floor was awarded the Robert Philips Poetry Chapbook Prize.

James Grinwis is the author of two books of poetry, the second of which was selected for the National Poetry Series and published by Coffee House Press in 2011. He lives in Northampton, MA, and co-founded Bateau Press with Ashley Schaffer in 2007.

Pamela Hammond was born in Chicago, grew up in Southern California, and now lives in Santa Monica. She earned a bachelor's degree in art education from UCLA and a master's degree in fine art from California State University (CSU) Northridge. She completed two chapbooks, Encounters (2011) and Clearing (2012), produced by Red Berry Editions, Fairfax, California. In 2013, her work appeared in journals Forge, Foliate Oak and the forthcoming Assisi.

Jude Harzer was born in New Jersey in 1963. She earned her Bachelors degree in 1987 from Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA. Jude is currently enrolled in the graduate painting program at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA. A recipient of both the Dana and Geraldine R. Dodge fellowships, Jude continues to paint, pursue her studies and prepare for upcoming

exhibitions.

Charles Herbert, originally from Richmond, Virginia, lives and writes in Charleston, South Carolina. His work is forthcoming in the Summer 2013 editions of Yemassee and Brevity Poetry Review.

Emily Hoffman is currently a sophomore at Rhode Island School of Design, studying illustration. She has recently taken an interest in the art of printmaking and has enjoyed integrating her printmaking and photography into her illustrations. Her work has been published before in Fire and Ice Arts and Literary Magazine, as well as displayed in the Clerestory Journal of the Arts's Pop-Up Show, RISD Foundation Studies Triennial: Process 2012, and The Bruce Museum Student Exhibition.

John Hughes is an artist from Atlanta, Georgia and is currently in his third year of studying illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Erik Iverson is a student at Tulane University.

Iva Kinnaird was born in Dallas, Texas in 1991. She will receive her BFA in Studio Art from the University of Texas in 2014.

Molly Knobloch is a senior at Tulane University to graduate in May 2013 with her Bachelor of Arts. She is a studio art major with a concentration in painting and has also completed minors in business and French. She grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, but has fallen in love with New Orleans and will be living and painting there after graduation.

Andrea Kott is a writer living in Sleepy Hollow, New York. Her essays have appeared in The New York Times, The Journal of the American Medical Association, Lilith and the North Dakota Quarterly.

Tori Lambert is from New Orleans. Her work has previously been published in Umbra magazine.

Ann Lee is originally from Chicago but currently residing in Providence. She is a senior at the Rhode Island School of Design, studying painting, and has experiences in graphic design, illustration, and printmaking. Her recent works revolve around the ideas of perfection, purity, femininity, and fragility. The process is very meditative and laborious. She deconstructs traditional raw canvases thread by thread, and stretches them on the canvas bars. She is intrigued by the properties of line and is currently using it to represent time, emotion, and fragments of her life.

Le'Andra LeSeur is a conceptual photographer based out of Atlanta, GA.

She has always believed in the fact that art is not about creation but more about expression. Le'Andra currently attends the Savannah College of Art & Design in Atlanta, GA where she will be receiving her BFA in Photography next March.

Noel'le Longhaul was born in 1990 and raised cradled among the Seven Sisters mountains in Amherst, Massachusetts. They have lived, worked, and squatted in New Orleans, Oregon, Washington, California, and New York, and have traveled most of the rest of the continental U.S. and Canada by freight train. They currently live and work with the rest of their friends in the Old World Artist's Collective in Providence, Rhode Island. They are genderqueer and prefer 'they', 'them', and 'theirs' pronouns.

Colleen Loughlin is a third year student in the Architecture program at Tulane. She has always loved black and white film photography because of the surprise in developing the pictures sometime after they were initially taken. Studying architecture in New Orleans, she has developed a curiosity about the cultures and traditions there and likes to make her pictures reflect an intimacy that is sometimes lost in the city.

Jeremy Maloney is a graduate student at Tulane University, where he is finishing his final semester of the Master of Architecture program. His academic foundation was formed while at the University of Virginia earning a Bachelor of Science in Architecture degree in 2004. Most recently, his interest in film photography was rekindled by Dean Jill Stoll during her "Modes of Representation" class and quickly has become an everyday means of expression.

Emma Mattesky is a senior at Tulane University studying philosophy and anthropology.

Michael Mendieta was born and raised in Lowell, Massachusetts. He now resides in New York City, completing his BS in communications at New York University. In addition to being a poet, Michael works as a copywriter for an advertising agency. He is currently working on his first collection of poems entitled Taming the Metropolitan.

Ricardo Nagaoka is a Japanese photographer, born in Paraguay and later moved to Toronto, Canada. He is currently a photography student at the Rhode Island School of Design, working mainly in the fine art realm. His work is centered around self realization and the discovery of oneself. Ricardo's work spans from staged scenes to candid moments, finding new ways to tell his story and expand the breadth of his artistic voice.

Erica Ndubueze is currently a junior in the University of Texas at Austin, double majoring in German and Studio Arts. Erica is from Houston, Texas and has been interested in photography since middle school. Many of her subjects

are animals, nature scenes, and still lifes. Along with photography, she also is interested in drawing and plans on continuing her arts in graduate school, possibly to pursue the field of Animation.

Walker Pickering is a photographer and educator based in Austin, Texas. A graduate of Savannah College of Art and Design (MFA 2008) and Texas State University (BFA 2004), he creates long-term art and documentary projects. Nearly West is a pilgrimage in pursuit of an expanded personal and familial history through the American South. He teaches photography at Texas State University.

Jacob R. Reeves is an artist who seeks to inspire and provoke his audience in the same moment. Each image is a struggle to create a language that operates and communicates with the world around it. This stems from the artist's desire to reach out to and form relationships with everyone around him. Everyday Jacob wakes up with a buttered toast and BAM there ya go, artist Bio.

Hannah Rugg is a sophomore at Tulane University, pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Theatre. She is an aspiring poet.

Daniel Sanzone is originally from the barrier islands on the east coast of Florida, where his artistic abilities were realized at a young age. Most of Daniel's art is centered around themes and ideas having to do with Ancient civilizations, contemporary issues, the human spirit, mathematics, and science. He is currently attending SCAD in Atlanta Georgia where he is studying fine arts in printmaking and sculpture.

Finn Schult is currently studying photography and graphic design at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Finn is secretly a fox disguised as a human and has an unconditional love for Taco Bell.

Marie-Claire Serou was born in New Orleans in 1991 and lived on Lowerline and Freret St. until she was twelve. She's since lived in Austin, TX and Miami, FL, but gladly returned to New Orleans to attend Tulane University. An economics major, she writes purely for pleasure. She enjoys spending time with her cat, drawing, winning board games and pushing herself athletically.

J.R. Stewart was born in Chicago and was raised in New York, New England, and Southern California. Finally, he grew up in Oregon where he has lived and worked for the last forty years. Like many writers, his working life has been eclectic. His stories and poems have appeared in several journals, including: The Alembic, The Licking River Review, Orange Willow Review, Orion Magazine, The Progenitor, and Rattapallax.

Derek Sugamosto is an editor from Metro Detroit Michigan. His work has appeared in Greatest Lakes Review, Apt, Sheepshead Review, and Dogwood.

Barbara Tramonte is a professor at SUNY Empire State College, where she teaches in the school for graduate studies. She worked as a poet-in-the-schools in New York City for ten years, and formerly owned a children's bookstore in Brooklyn Heights. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous literary and academic journals.

Mark Usmiani, a New Jersey native, grew up watching cartoons, playing video games and drawing. Now a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, Mark is still doing the same thing, and couldn't be happier.

Joanna C. Valente is a MFA candidate in poetry writing at Sarah Lawrence College, where she is also a part-time mermaid. She founded and currently edits Yes, Poetry.

Evan Wagner is a first year architecture student at Tulane University. He is 18 years old and is originally from New Jersey. Evan has been watercoloring casually for about a year.

Madeleine Peck Wagner was born in Cleveland, Ohio. Enrolled in the Savannah College of Art and Design's MFA program (2014), she is currently balancing the demands of school against a job as an Artist in Residence at Shands Jacksonville, the city's primary charity hospital. There, Peck Wagner works with a variety of patients and conducts specialized workshops for the psychiatric and long-term care uni*f*heberts.

Elizabeth Stainton Walker is completing her Master's in English at the University of Arkansas. Her work has appeared on the MonkeyBicycle site, among other places.

John Walser, an associate professor at Marian University in Wisconsin, holds a doctorate in English from the UW-Milwaukee. In 2004, he co-founded the Foot of the Lake Poetry Collective, an organization that sponsors monthly poetry readings, conducts workshops, and provides other opportunities to share poetry within his community. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in a number of journals, including Barrow Street, Nimrod, Evansville Review, Baltimore Review, Clackamas Literary Review and Fourth River.

Chelsea Warlick is a grad student at SCAD working towards a Masters in Photography, with a focus on photojournalism. Before attending SCAD, she traveled the world with National Geographic for a year and half, documenting people, wildlife and landscapes in China, Mongolia, Tanzania, Morocco, Brazil, Argentina, Nepal, Alaska and Ecuador. Her photographs included in this edition of The Tulane Review are of the Nadaam Festival in Mongolia. Nadaam is a traditional festival held for young boys to transition from child into manhood. This is achieved through wild horse back riding as well as wrestling.

Janine Wilkin, a Chicago native, has taken advantage of the liberal arts curriculum at Tulane University. Her diverse interests have steered her towards a Major in English and International Development as well as a minor in Art Studio. She can often be spotted walking in the vicinity of Whole Foods.

Serena Wu is a sophomore majoring in Illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Heather Hallberg Yanda teaches in the English Department at Alfred University, in the hills of upstate New York. She has work published or forthcoming most recently in Pea River Journal, Barely South Review, and the anthology Poetry in the Cathedral. Her first collection, Late Summer's Origami, is looking for a publisher.

Edith W. Young is a film major at the Rhode Island School of Design. The punchline to her favorite joke is: "not so fast, Abernathy."

Xiwen Zhu is a China-born fine arts photographer based in Savannah, GA, currently studying for her Masters Degree at Savannah College of Art and Design. She specializes in experimental portraits, fashion and travel stories. She used to enjoy chasing shadows and lights in alleys, documenting strangers and cities. Right now, she is having fun with those fragmented images.

Allison Zuckerman is a mixed media collage artist from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2012. Allison is currently a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a candidate for a MFA in Studio Painting and Drawing.

Submission Guidelines

The *Tulane Review* accepts poetry, prose, and art submissions. Poetry and prose submissions should be sent electronically to litsoc@tulane.edu and be included as attachments. Hard copy submissions will be accepted, and should be sent to *Tulane Review*, 122 Norman Mayer, New Orleans, LA, 70118, but will not be returned. Please submit no more than five poems and limit prose submissions to 4,000 words per piece. Hard copy submissions should include the artist's e-mail address. Art should be submitted electronically to tulane.review@gmail.com in high-resolution format. Please include dimensions and media form. Please include a cover letter with biography for all submissions.

The Tulane Literary Society normally acquires first North American serial rights but will consider second serial publication.

For more information, visit our website at review.tulane.edu.