To BSC Alumni,

Mr. Louis Ricciardi (’81), Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Cynthia Ricciardi (’81), Professor of English

for your extraordinary support of what we do
and for being extraordinary examples of what can be done
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A sampling of that abundant excellence, in our opinion, can be found in the people listed here in random order: Professor Mercedes Nuñez; Dr. Anna Martin-Jearld; Professor Dr. Delija Valiukenas; Professor Dr. Lois Poule; Dr. Alan Comedy; Dr. Roger Dunn; Dr. Ron Neve; Dr. Peter Saccocia; Dr. Brenda Molife; Dr. Mary Tabakow, and their students at the University's Department of English's Dr. Phil Tabakow and his wife, Dr. Mary Tabakow, and their students at the University's Department of Economics where Phil is a Fulbright Fellow; Raynham High School; and Bridgewater Senior Center's artists and “Talespinners.”

We’d like to offer a special word of gratitude to the Department of English’s Dr. Phil Tabakow and his wife, Dr. Mary Tabakow, and their students at the University of Bahrain where Phil is a Fulbright Fellow; Raynham High School; and Bridgewater Senior Center’s artists and “Talespinners.”

Thank you to the editors of Volume Three who helped us in the final hours as committed members of The Bridge family.

Finally, thank you Bridgewater State College students for submitting your art and literature, the result, we know, of not only talent, but also of the extraordinary work ethic that characterizes our student body.

Fourteen members of this student body, of course, are the interns of Volume Four who answered the call to make their mark on The Bridge’s legacy. When they were asked to find a way to encourage art among the area’s youth, they established a contest for senior citizens. When they were asked if they would like to include works from students in the Middle East, they passionately stressed the importance of fostering this kind of cultural exchange. When they were asked to find a way to incorporate “service learning” into our mission, they established a contest for senior citizens. When they were asked if they would like to include works from students in the Middle East, they passionately stressed the importance of fostering this kind of cultural exchange. When they were asked to find a way to encourage art among the area’s youth, they established a contest for senior citizens. When they were asked if they would like to include works from students in the Middle East, they passionately stressed the importance of fostering this kind of cultural exchange.

The writers and visual artists have consented to have their work published in this volume of The Bridge; they have reserved all other rights. Works published in The Bridge are the property of the individual writers and visual artists and may not be reprinted or otherwise duplicated without their consent. Editors may submit work by following the established guidelines, but they are ineligible to win awards. Comments and inquiries can be sent to: thebridgejournal@bridgew.edu.

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It has often been said that the role of the artist is to find the simple in the complex and the complex in the simple, that to do so is to illuminate the world in a way that moves us, maybe even shocks us, and ultimately helps us grow. This sentiment certainly holds true for the works in this journal. One writer, for instance, found profundity in the mere act of sitting to eat a meal, while another’s terrifying experience at an illegal pig farm clarified his understanding of what it means to be a hero. A photographer poignantly captures the magnitude of despair with a woman’s profile, while a weaver puts a modern spin on an age-old tradition. Like these four students, all of the students included here clearly understand their role as artists, and the illumination they provide is nothing short of impressive.

True to our identity, we selected only the best of the best, and sometimes that meant rewarding students not only for their talent, but also for their willingness to take risks. There are few things riskier, for example, than attempting to capture the beauty of the nude male body, and the artist who accepted this challenge not only constructed her work with the most careful attention to, and mastery of, her medium, her vision would have been lost in profanity. But her vision was not lost, and her skill and creativity resulted in the celebration of the human form, a tradition of Western art that began in Ancient Greece.

As editors, we also took risks, and we hope you will agree that they have paid off. We broadened the scope of our publication by reaching out across generations with contests for local high school students and senior citizens. And we broadened the scope further by reaching across the globe with a contest for students at the University of Bahrain, where Dr. Philip Tabakow, associate professor of English at Bridgewater State College, and his wife, Dr. Mary Tabakow, have been teaching for the past two years. We are especially honored to include the works from Bahrain, not only because of their excellence, but because to do so is to reaffirm our faith in art’s capacity to forge bonds and foster understanding between all people everywhere.

Yet even as we expanded our vision, we were careful never to lose sight of our mission: to highlight the finest artwork of the Bridgewater State College student body. Ultimately, this journal belongs to them, and they have never been more supportive, with submissions once again hitting a record high, this time well over 1,200. Each editor rated every submission blindly, and those with the highest scores were deemed finalists. Every finalist was discussed at length as a group. Few arguments and some arduous, heartbreaking decisions later, we had narrowed the works down to what you have here, a collection of literature and visual art of the highest caliber.

It goes without saying that the process of creating great art and literature is challenging and oftentimes painstaking, but, in the end, it is also rewarding. Such was the case in the creation of this journal. Serving as editors on The Bridge was not easy, but it was made easier by being exposed to such an amazingly talented student body, and by receiving the faith and support of our advisors. We have benefited from the passion of a great many people, a passion that we believe is evident on every page of what we so proudly present to you: The Bridge, Volume Four.

The Editors
April 2007
After three months of not hearing from her at all, Maria finally responded: “Your behavior is inappropriate and unwelcome. Kindly cease all further attempts to contact me, my family, my friends, or my workplace. Thank you, Maria.” I sat there in front of the computer monitor, laughing in a sort of strange paroxysm of delight and incredulity. I was also shaking. Can delusional stalkers be reasoned with? I didn’t know. But I could. I quickly typed. “And my thanks for replying. I take my leave.”

Even though I had never met Maria in person, this was the closest I’d ever come to being in a relationship. She had drawn me in with her sympathy and intelligence, so I had told her things, things I hadn’t told most other people, and things which I probably shouldn’t have mentioned. And I had scared her away. But I’d been given another opportunity because tomorrow I would be meeting someone else from that same website in person, and I was certain I would not repeat the same blunders as before.

I’ll refer to this one as Gwen. At the personals site where I first encountered her, she described herself using about a hundred different adjectives and wrote at least a thousand words about how deep and intelligent she was. I also had the pleasure of talking to her over the phone with no tiresome mimicking on my part of the effortless social interaction around me. That still didn’t give me a good grasp of her, so I subjected her to one of my key acid tests, which was to make sure she wouldn’t be offended or put-off by my writing. The story I chose for this task was one I entitled “The Hive,” and it took place in a Dungeons & Dragons setting. The plot revolved around Valese, a violent prostitute/thief with demon blood in her veins, and Jesper, the naive and virginal young man who falls in love with her. It was certainly the blackest story I’d ever written, and I had a connection with it that perhaps only a fellow gamer could understand.

Gwen had a very distinctive appearance. At 5’10”, she was four inches taller than me, though I didn’t mind. She was by no means slender, but her weight was very well distributed. Most of the clothing she wore she had made herself, and when I first saw her at South Station in Boston, she was wearing a long skirt and a buttoned shirt that could almost have been described as archaic. Her face was marred only by some acne and a single golden hoop that pierced her left nostril.

It was an awkward first meeting; we simply said “Hi” and started walking together to find some place to talk outside the station. Gwen didn’t seem unassertive, but she was so eager to take me somewhere that we did not even make much eye contact. I kept glancing at her as we walked, wondering if she was improving with each view. Finally, we sat down in a café somewhere.

“I finished reading ‘The Hive’ last night,” she said. “It’s definitely one of the best stories I’ve ever read, I kind of saw myself in Valese, too. I swear, that story fucked with my head.” She said that last bit with a slight shudder.

I smiled. “Oh, Glad you liked it,” I said, and now I was eager to show Gwen something else. I carried with me, at all times, a sketchbook in which I drew scenes and characters from...
worth of dishes, and the trash can looked like it was in about the
girl to be roommates without something sexual happening
I know you might think it would be impossible for a guy and
Island suburb, though I had not kept track of where. Much
party would let her know what had happened. The poor girl
It was going to be a fun day.

Ah, so that's what she looks like," Gwen said.

As Gwen paged through the rest of the notebook, I did
neatly, I imagined it was the other who was awe in Luke 23.

After she'd finished looking at the sketches, I listened as
completely arresting, somehow. I pretended to be interested

"I share this apartment with Randy. He's my roommate.

"Ooh! Sign this!" Gwen said as she handed me a printed

"Ooh! Sign this!" Gwen said as she handed me a printed

"Hi," she said with zest as she indicated her instrument.

My parents would be in Poland and Prague for two weeks

Randly wasn’t there, but the apartment was filled with crap.

The kitchen sink looked like it had accumulated about a month's
dishes, and the trash can looked like it was in about the same

I immediately deflated the ball with his horns and crushed the cat under
his feet. There should be even less question, therefore,
deflated the ball with his horns and crushed the cat under
his feet. There should be even less question, therefore,

Half-Born, imagining us because there's no one to hear
simply sneered and said, "Look what you're doing now,
places where I had true sanctuary from his influence. He

His distended stomach did little to hide his withered but

He'd repeat every negative thought I ever had, whispering them all into my left ear,

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"Hi," I said with as comfortable a smile as I could muster.

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"Gwen asked as she looked around for a while, before she firmly interrupted me. "No. I think there's something wrong. Do you want to talk about it?"

That was the last thing I wanted in the world. I could think of no experience more embarrassing than talking about my mother, who had painted at least 30 years ago, or my father's brush with grand piano, which never quite seemed to be in tune. Fittingly, the topic of conversation became music.

"You know, I've been in one. It's someone else. He wasn't too happy about me remaining here."

I nodded as I spoke. "I'll probably make her worse," Gwen concluded. "That's the last thing I want in the world."

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"I even openly speculated about it to Maria, too," I continued as I glanced at the floor. "But after everything that happened with her, I realized the story was just not my story, and I admit that reading it, I found myself relating to Valese, not Jesper. It's the temporary kindness that Jesper can show her that turns us to hate."

"I'd like to think Valese might learn from the experience to become a better person, but—"

"It probably make her worse," Gwen concluded. "There was an uncomfortable silence in the room."

I glanced at her. "What about when you updated your profile at the train station? I thought that was me."

I wanted to love you more…"

Gwen asked. "I thought the story might end up being prophetic."

"As someone who's been in one, I'd have some traits similar to those I found admirable in her. Maybe she'd be someone strange enough to co-mingle in my life."

She asked. "Would you want me to leave tomorrow morning?"

"No. It's someone else. He wasn't too happy about me remaining here."

I glanced over at the computer desk to see that her eyes burned with some kind of passion. "All right," she said, "I'm sorry."
much I hated women. I wrote about how I despised them for their selfishness and superficiality, and my disgust for the arbitrary and ridiculous rules of attraction that governed the mating game. It was a rather rambling essay that ended with an argument that for the most part every woman I knew were autonomous creatures, but completely governed by the conditioning of evolution and society to prefer the same sorts of men as they preferred the men whom their own mothers preferred to make love to.

He had given up on lecturing me about the virtues of faith, but I paid no attention to the rest of his quarrel as they continued to bicker.

“Perhaps you would have in the Pleistocene...” I wrote for a while about how women were not autonomous creatures, but completely governed by the conditioning of evolution and society to prefer the same sorts of men as they preferred the men whom their own mothers preferred to make love to.

But what is the cause of more regret in mortals?

It would save you years of pain and frustration, Half-Ass! I told you as much.

The Angel then leaped upon the Demon as fast as he could. As he landed, he nudged the Demon with his sword tip, dislodging him. "Where is this--" said the Angel, looking up at the Demon and spat. "So, where is this..."

The lady listed off about a dozen names of girls on the escort service.

They were cut from gave you access to her account if you needed it. The combined weight of isolation and procrastination was unbearable. That Libertarian also tried to drown the experience. I wanted to live an eventful life that would be filled with memories worth writing down, but I could not think of nothing to fill it with other than a scene of loveless sex with a dull and miserable client.

As none of the women appeared nude in the shots, it wasn't very good. Each one had quite a few photos. The photos were mostly in black and white, and $300 per hour.

I didn't do that...I actually did, I wanted to live an eventful life that would be filled with memories worth writing about. The combined weight of isolation and procrastination was unbearable. That Libertarian also tried to drown the experience. I was intrigued, so I read the FAQ and browsed through the rest of it. I was on the computer.

The first person I thought of was a girl I'll call Serissa. I ended her brief visit with, "I'll write you." I had no goal in mind other than to test myself and make sure I could talk to a girl long enough to get her email address. Sitting in front of the computer now, the only goal I had when I began writing Serissa was to get my mind off Maria, Gwen, and escort girls.

As I typed, the Angel triedly climbed up from the cords and hovered, and the others were terraced and bloody, his robe was torn and his sword was stained in black blood. He said nothing to me but stared at me. I didn't think I had made what he considered to be the right decision without his guidance. As he leaned around the corner of the monitor to read what I was writing, the Demon clambered onto the desk.

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Vivification
by Joseph Kołczewski, Jr.
Printmaking: Silkscreen « 7” x 12”

Emily
by Elizabeth Cullham
Photography: B&W • 6” x 8”
I want to stay awake for you as we drive through a city both black and luminous.

I search for something else to say even as my eyes begin closing themselves and my head begins bowing low, too heavy for me, paying its reverence to night and finally.

The river sparkles at night, I tell you, it’s a different world at night, everywhere.

How long I’ve left you alone with the night. You say you’ve never been sailing, I ask, but it’s day now and we are in a field of long grass and itchy-throated goldenrod, the sun making everything more golden, it’s warm it’s bright you glow...

That isn’t right. My head snaps up, I look around and wonder how long I’ve left you alone with the night.

You say you’ve never been sailing, I ask, press close to my cool windowpane, watching in the city’s passer, and putting my lips to speak again.

The car ride down was a hell of a time. The air conditioning in my Ford Explorer needed a little tweaking; it either worked not at all or at full blast, and of course Christine couldn’t have it on full blast. It made her eyes water and her toes numb. So instead, we drove the hour to Newport with the windows down, the steamy hundred-degree wind whipping across our faces. It was a sticky, heavy beat and the wind really punched at you. It slapped you hard from ear to ear and didn’t make you feel the least bit cooled down or refreshed. All the damned breeze did was make you exhausted and taut.

We’d planned the trip months ago, in the dead of winter. In fact, the morning I asked Christine if we could drive to Newport, it had snowed nearly two feet. We had sat on the edge of her bed, staring out her Boston dorm room window at the big whitish-gray flakes, dreaming of the summer sun. Our snow boots were leaning up against her heavy wooden door, melting puddles on the tile, and Newport sounded like paradise. I imagined walking along the cliffs with Christine on my arm, the heat of the sun pressing down on the tops of our heads, the taste of salt in our mouths, and the ocean stretched out before us, dark blue until meeting flush with the sky.

Now that we were going, now that the summer was almost over and I’d had my fill of sunburns and sweaty, sleepless nights, my visions of paradise had taken on a slightly different hue. Paradise looked a lot more like that storm, which had turned from a dreary, hopeless blizzard into a soft, smooth cascade of hopeful winter white. It morphed in my memory from a terrible captor of young couples to their greatest liberator. It symbolized a release from the repressive heat, an escape into a world that, right then, during that car ride down to Newport, sounded absolutely refreshing. Still, despite how I felt about it all, I continued to drive, in part to honor that moment Christine and I shared in her dorm room, and in part because we just did not have anything better to do.

“Can we maybe get another quick round of air conditioning?” I asked her as nicely as I possibly could, considering my discomfort. I kept shifting my hands on the black steering wheel. It was burning hot.

“If it worked right, I’d think about it.” She said it like it was my fault.

“Just for a second?”

“She didn’t respond.

“Christine?”

“No. The windows are open. Besides, I’m cold.” She was wearing a loose, flowing white skirt and a bright yellow tank top with flowery lace across her chest. She looked well, summery. Christine always dressed just right for the season, but was never quite comfortable. “It’s my car,” I replied. The highway seemed to be leading right into the sun and it was hard to see. I slowed down.

“Yes, And it’s a shitbox.”

“Shitbox is a little strong.” My hair was long and covered my eyes if I wanted it to, which
didn't. Right then, it was plastered to my forehead. I pushed it aside. "I'm dying, Christine."

"Stop being such a girl." She was sitting with her legs planted on the ground and had one hand gripping the chest strap of her seatbelt, the other clutched at the door rest. She always rode around like I was three seconds from flipping us over.

"It wasn't worth the effort, so I changed the subject. "You want to know what I would do if I ever had a ton of money? I mean, like if I was loaded beyond belief?"

She didn't answer at first, just kept looking out the window and pretending she didn't hear. The only sounds were the low, weak growl from the V6 engine and the whipping of the steely wind.

"You know what I—"

"What would you do?"

I wished Christine thought it was fun to talk about, too.

"Amazon. And, okay, there weren't any dinosaurs, but it was fun to talk about."

I was beginning to become accustomed to the ocean smell when it started to fade, along with the memories of my youth. Now, Christine's dilemma demanded my attention. "Are you sure?" I asked. I sure as hell didn't want to turn around. We'd been driving for an hour. "Let me call it."

I reached into my pocket and took my phone. "I really need it." She turned on the small, tiny, barely-even-there crack. Mine was down all the way and I stuck my head out the window. I was strolling along the Cliff Walk with my dad, looking back at the huge Newport mansions and then forward at the vast Atlantic.

"What would you do?"

"Stop it." She was getting mad. She couldn't stand sarcasm, especially from me. "Yes, Christine. Whatever you say," I said sarcastically. I pulled my arm back a little heavier on the gas. The car hesitated then cooperated with my demands, speeding up slowly but surely.

"Might I remind you, you were afraid of the bears when we went camping in New Hampshire last summer. We double-bagged every last piece of food."

"Just don't do it.

"What's so immature about sticking an arm out of a car?"

"I think I forgot my phone at your house," Christine interrupted. She dropped her hand and began rifling through her purse. "I really need it." She turned the radio down, and then started holding my hand, causing my frustration with her to wane. Her touch had this crazy way of calming me down, even when the words she was saying made no sense at all. "I love the ocean," she said. "I think I can smell it."

"The smell of the ocean was, indeed, in the air. The moment it reached my nostrils, images of my childhood flashed through my head as they always did. I saw myself plastering "Captain" on my aunt's thighs, paddling far from shore as my mother ran along the beach, arms above her head, yelling for me to come closer. And then I was strolling along the Cliff Walk with my dad, looking back at the huge Newport mansions and then forward at the vast Atlantic.

"You're going to love the Cliff—"

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She was squinting at me with that same disgusted look. Christine had pretty, razor thin eyebrows. She maintained them so well that they almost looked painted even if they weren't very visible just then. She was a real good-looking girl, I thought. I sure as hell didn't want to turn around. We'd been driving for an hour. "Let me call it."

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"Just don't do it.

"What's so immature about sticking an arm out of a car?"

She was squinting at me with that same disgusted look. Christine had pretty, razor thin eyebrows. She maintained them so well that they almost looked painted even if they weren't very visible just then. She was a real good-looking girl, I thought. I sure as hell didn't want to turn around. We'd been driving for an hour. "Let me call it."

I reached into my pocket and took my phone. "I really need it." She turned on the small, tiny, barely-even-there crack. Mine was down all the way and I stuck my head out the window. I was strolling along the Cliff Walk with my dad, looking back at the huge Newport mansions and then forward at the vast Atlantic.
They stood up tall wherever she was angry.

"Why am I dating you, again?" she asked. The way she said it made me think she really meant it. Maybe she did. Maybe it didn't matter.

"Grow up." She was staring out the window, her body twisted with half of her back facing me.

"You're the one who needs to grow up." She didn't answer, just kept looking out the window. She didn't speak for some time. The silence started making me feel a little awkward. I didn't let it show. I just kept looking straight ahead.

Luckily, we weren't too far from Newport. I could see the pale green suspension bridge rising in the distance.

We parked the car at the end of a short side street, one that, if we stayed true to it, would have driven us right off the cliff and into the ocean. My father used to park the family car in the same spot. It had been years since I'd been there, but everything looked about the same. The sides of the road were lined with willows, the thin branches of which hung down low and swaying about in the breeze, making us lean to one side or the other as we walked. The sidewalk wasn't paved. It was flat, dusty earth and it kicked up in clouds beneath our feet. A large, dark, wrought iron gate stood boldly on our right, providing security for a house of enormous size. There were a few other couples walking towards the cliff, but mostly it was only the wind pushing strollers while their older children ran around them.

The two of us reached the black, chain-link fence that kept all those children from tumbling into the sea and we rested our arms on the top of it. I looked down the length of the cliff, my eyes following the steep face. The wind blew through my shirt and it puffed out. The breeze felt cool and filled me with hopeful energy.

"I wish we could get down there," Christine said. They were the first words spoken back facing me.

"How?" she questioned.

"Well, we can't get to those rocks. But if we walk down the path a little ways, there's a staircase that empties out onto some just like them." I was retracing my steps as a child in my head. I was sure the stairs were not far down the path.

"We can't." She was staring straight ahead.

"We can." Christine was fairly sure of it.

"I wish we could get down there," Christine said. They were the first words spoken back facing me.

"Neither have I," I confessed. The chain-link fence ran into a short rock wall. The steep, gray stone staircase was not far off. I could see the top of it from where we stood. I walked past all of it without much of a look. Both of our eyes were trained on each other.

"I don't know, Christine." I paused. "Maybe, if I do ever make all that money, I'll just buy a sailboat, instead."

"That sounds like a better idea to me," she was still holding onto my arm. "I've never been on a sailboat." Christine was fairly sure of it.

"Neither have I." I confessed. The chain-link fence ran into a short rock wall. The steep, gray stone staircase was not far off. I could see the top of it from where we stood. "Look!" I said, pointing in that direction. "There's our ticket down." Christine wanted to get closer to the water. She walked out onto the last group of rocks, I watched intently, just a step behind. I turned my back for a moment.

"You could write anywhere. There's too much to see here. A waste of time, in check."

"We should come here some day, just the two of us, with a couple of notebooks. It seems like an awfully great place to write," I said. "We're too busy. There's too much to see here. A waste of time, in check."

"You're getting me all wet," I said, half-heartedly pushing her away. Christine was fairly sure of it.

"That's the idea. Hey, look!" she yelled, right into my ear. "You're getting me all wet," I said, half-heartedly pushing her away. Christine is fairly sure of it.

"I'm going to check it out," she told me. She ran away before I could grab her, Christine is fairly sure of it.

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"I'm going to check it out," she told me. She ran away before I could grab her, Christine is fairly sure of it.
I stole every line of this poem.
Every last sentiment and nearly every word.
Sure, I replaced the orange sunset with the arching moon,
and yes, I substituted a darkening room
for the silent woods.
But otherwise, I lifted this poem from the open magazine
left on the coffee table
in my dentist's office.
As I read his poem,
the words hustled off the page
into the pocket
of my coat.
And when I returned to the quiet
of my house
and sat in the darkening room
awaiting the arching moon,
I took out the words
and made this poem.
You probably are not bothered
by my theft.
For who has time to worry
about a pilfering poet?
But what if these words steal
your lover?
Even for just a moment.
What if she throws on her coat,
slips quietly out the back door,
and comes to me?
Would you then care
that I stole the rush of a breeze,
the curve of a chin, and
the stillness of a kiss?

"Untitled"
by Matthew M. Ryan
thebridge Award, First Place Poetry

I stole every line of this poem.
Every last sentiment and nearly every word.
Sure, I replaced the orange sunset with the arching moon,
and yes, I substituted a darkening room for the silent woods.
But otherwise, I lifted this poem from the open magazine left on the coffee table in my dentist’s office.

As I read his poem, the words hustled off the page into the pocket of my coat.
And when I returned to the quiet of my house and sat in the darkening room awaiting the arching moon, I took out the words and made this poem.

You probably are not bothered by my theft. For who has time to worry about a pilfering poet?
But what if these words steal your lover? Even for just a moment.
What if she throws on her coat, slips quietly out the back door, and comes to me?
Would you then care that I stole the rush of a breeze, the curve of a chin, and the stillness of a kiss?
I think the bones in my ears are like the bones in the faces of Chinese women and the bones in the legs and the wings of birds, which are very light. There is also a hammer in your ear except it is called a malleus, which is also a hammer, which transmits vibrations and poetry and car horns to your brain or classical music to the brains of baby birds, which is apparently very bad for them. A hammer is also used on xylophones or on the ribs of cartoon skeletons and if you hammer a tune out on the piano you are in fact hammering the strings with the hammers, which are one or many padded levers inside the piano. I think a hammer is a tool consisting of a solid head, usually of metal, set crosswise on a handle, used for beating, driving or striking things such as fenceposts or anvils. An anvil is something that is struck, not stricken because only people can be stricken, which means dying on the inside, and only people have insides. I think smoking is slow suicide, but suicide is impossible because nothing ever dies, it just turns to energy and energy makes up atoms, and atoms make up molecules and molecules get excited like the molecules in steam and so I think dying is like being steam, and fogging up someone’s glasses when they hold the teacup too close to their face.
sometimes, in the briefest of moments,
right after i awake from a dream,
i look to my left; and you are there

sometimes you are naked,
and your skin sticks most pleasantly to mine

sometimes you are warm,
and my leg is draped over you

you are always quiet,
and your breathing is the peaceful noise
that overtakes me in my sleep

and sometimes in those brief few seconds,
(while my dream is still clinging to my eyelids)
i look in front of me; and you are there

your smile hangs
in the darkness
like a line of stars against the sky

sometimes i see your eyes
i see them through my eyelashes
and they shine bright in the glassy ocean of black

but after the moment is over
i look to my left,
and i look before me

after the moment is over
you are gone
and the blankets are cold

after the moment
there is nothing facing me
but the paleness of another day

sometimes, in the briefest of moments,
the sound of sand grinding stone.
blowing fronds in ecstatic discovery,
shifting waves of sun-brenched mirage
pulling hands, sheets.
shovel churning beauteous earth.
brushes brushing temples like fingers softly.
excavating religion in the shade of the skin of her thigh.
Ancient Implements: Utensils
by Christopher Rego
Jewelry: White Bronze, Heat Patina • Approximately 2”x 2” x 4”
3-Dimensional | Mixed Media

Business As Usual
by Charlie Robinson
Photography: Digital • 8.5” x 6.5”
Glass Still-Life
by Ikumi Yoshiiro
Painting: Acrylic on Canvas • 18" x 24"

Bowl
by Sara Whidden
Ceramics: Terra-Cotta • 10" x 4"
Wondrous Web
by Deborah L. Sylvia
Stained Glass • 19” Diameter

The Endangered
by Sarah Huffman
Printmaking: Silkscreen, Watercolor • 16” x 13”
On a cold but sunny October afternoon, my friend Amy and I were sitting in her car, trying to think of something to do, when she suddenly turned to me and asked, “Do you want to go to an illegal pig farm?”

“A what?”

“An…ill…eeeee…gallll…piiiii…faaaarm.”

“I heard you,” I said, laughing. “What the hell is an illegal pig farm, and how do you know about it?”

“Some kids from my high school told me about it,” she started. “I’ve never been but it’s practically right here, or at least it’s supposed to be. I’m not really sure what it is exactly.”

I contemplated the idea for a second. I was nothing if not intrigued; the mundane day I had been expecting suddenly had the potential to be adventurous. There was never much to do at my small New England college, so when Amy asked me if I wanted to go for a ride, I jumped at the chance, even if it was only to go to her house so she could get her mask. After that, she had been giving me a tour of her hometown, which, apparently, included illegal pigs.

My mind quickly painted a picture of what such a farm would look like. It would be a dirt pit surrounded by fifteen-foot high fences, and there would be a guard dressed all in black, to whom visitors would have to give a password, maybe something like “Porky.” There would be a countless number of cartoon pigs in business suits running around in their own little utopian community, complete with stores and a town hall, and…

“Mmm,” Amy interrupted my daydreams. “You love pigs.”

She was right. Pigs were one of my favorite animals. That broke it. “Okay,” I said. I looked at the car’s digital clock, which read 3:15. “We have time.” Amy’s boyfriend, Chris, worked in the campus center until 5:00, and our circle of friends had a standing date to meet for dinner when he got out. “Plus,” I added, “how often in life will we ever get to go to an illegal pig farm?”

Amy looked at me, her brown eyes shining with glee, then shifted her purple Camaro back into drive and headed towards where she thought the farm was. After a few minutes of driving down streets in various levels of disrepair, she said, “It’s around here somewhere, I think.”

I looked around, taking in the scenery, curious as to what kind of area would have an illegal pig farm. The houses were spaced pretty far apart, sidewalks were nonexistent, and there were many more trees than there had been in the center of town, although the changing of the seasons had turned them into skeletons. I wanted to know more about this supposed pig farm, so I asked Amy to elaborate.

“I don’t know much more than I’ve already told you,” she responded after a brief pause. “Some kids from my high school went a couple of years ago, right before graduation. They said it was weird.”

“ Weird how?”

“Don’t know. They didn’t really like to talk about it. But, from what I heard, the cops don’t even know about it.”
The smell hit me hard. The further we went, the more prominent the stench, which was like an awful combination of garbage and wet dog. But we kept going. Amy was a few steps ahead, moving cautiously, and I followed her. I squinted into the fine mist and final hill, I heard her gasp. “Wow,” she said, brushing her hair out of her face. I clamped up the last few feet. I looked behind me—it was a bunch of pudgy men working in the car, but that wasn’t surprising. What was surprising was the complete lack of anything that could be construed as a farm. All I could see were massive piles of trash and garbage. It looked like they had been detached from eighteen-wheelers, all surrounded by some loose wire fencing. Beyond that, a number of white birds were flying through some fallen leaves. We stopped at one of the most picturesque settings I had ever seen, but the sun shining down on the whole thing somehow gave it an odd appeal. I wasn’t a troublemaker by nature. I had never had a run-in with the law, and the most I cared about was what to expect. The cutely mental image I’d created evaporated in a heartbeat. Never had I thought that something like this was there. I checked for traffic and opened the door.

I glanced at Amy, who was looking to her left. She pointed ahead and said, “Is there any house in question certainly looked like it could have been owned by an idiot for whom I cared a great deal of respect. I could see it was that it was in great disrepair. Gray paint peeled off the outer walls, and the porch was warped and discolored. The roof had fallen in, and many of the windows were boarded up. Additionally, the house tilted menacingly towards us, as if a strong gust of wind would cause it to collapse. Nearby, an old, rusted-out truck sitting on cement blocks completed the disturbing picture. I shuddered, and it was something as if a strong gust of wind would cause it to collapse. Nearby, an old, rusted-out truck sitting on cement blocks completed the disturbing picture. I shuddered, and the sun shining down on the whole thing somehow gave it an odd appeal.

I was excited to see this place, but I was getting scared, too. “Illegal” made me think that we were about to trespass, and he knew this and was never about to make a run for it. This made me feel like I had to act. The cutest mental image I’d created evaporated in a heartbeat. Never had I thought that something like this was there. I checked for traffic and opened the door.

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“Can pigs even jump that high?” I asked, knowing that they couldn’t. “Do you have enough pictures? This is creeping me out, we have to go soon.”

“Yeah, I’ve got some good stuff,” Chris said. “Let me check out this hill, then we’ll go down the dirt path to see what’s there, then we’ll go,” okay?”

“Yeah,” I said, right?”

It was much colder than it had been the week before, and the leaves that had littered the streets had blown away, leaving the road bare. We checked the area cautiously before we hopped over the fence and started the short climb up the hill. At some point, I looked down and noticed that Amy’s and my footprints from our last visit were gone. There now were tire treads and very large bootprints. I kept this observation to myself. I knew that Chris was completely gung-ho about seeing the pigs, and Amy tended to agree with Chris. Rather than express my fears, I released my nervous energy by swinging the snow brush next to me. The only sounds were our sneakers crunching into the freezing dirt, our breathing, and Chris’ camera as he snapped away.

We reached the top of the last hill before the farm. Chris let out a loud, low whistle. “This is incredible.” He exclaimed as he took more pictures. While he wrapped the snow brush next to me, I pulled on the sleeve of Chris’ black sweatshirt.

After we entered the trailer ring, Amy and Chris separated from me and went to take pictures. I noticed that there was significantly more garbage on the piles than there was before. The trash piles that had stood to my knee were now up to my hip. I tried not to focus on that, though, because I was there to help. There wasn’t much, but I did my best. I pulled off the only weapon I had, just in case, right?”

After stepping out of the gunk and brushing off my leg, I picked up my findings and started to walk towards a trailer to feed them. The trash piles that had stood to my knee were now up to my hip. I tried not to focus on that, though, because I was there to help. I had landed in a pile of some kind of black gunk. I put my footprints from our last visit were gone. There now were tire treads and very large bootprints. I kept this observation to myself. I knew that Chris was completely gung-ho about seeing the pigs, and Amy tended to agree with Chris. Rather than express my fears, I released my nervous energy by swinging the snow brush next to me. The only sounds were our sneakers crunching into the freezing dirt, our breathing, and Chris’ camera as he snapped away.

At some point, Chris told me he was ready. Amy decided to stay at the bottom and be the lookout. The embankment was almost vertical, so there was no way we could climb it. We could jump onto it, though, as it was only four or five feet high. As Chris and I moved towards the middle, I heard a rustling from behind us. I turned to see a gigantic gray pig moving slowly out of the shack in our general direction. I pulled on the sleeve of Chris’ black sweatshirt.

“What’d you do that for?” he asked. “You ruined my pict—”

“Hey,” Amy suddenly shouted from below, “why don’t you come up here?”

That snapped me out of my trance. Chris and I looked up and noticed that a group of people had gathered around the shack. “Hey,” Amy smiled. “We figured there would never be. I wondered sometimes if there was anything I could do to make a difference.”
River Camp At Night
by Richard Biancato
Poetry

The orange glow gives way to the white of the moon and the tent is pitched.
The river moves with its hushed, unending sound, and brings the scent and feel of a woman I once knew.
Restless memories are always drawn to rivers, to silence, to the stars above.

My sister Trish and I were silently eating breakfast when we heard a loud thump overhead. We glanced up at the ceiling and then continued eating. A second later our mother yelled, “Davy, come help me in the bathroom.” I wondered why she had called me; it was not my place to help anyone with his or her bathroom activities. Sitting across from me, Trish cocked her eyebrow.

“I don’t know,” I told her, shrugging my shoulders. I put my spoon down with a sigh and cautiously left the room, unaware of the origin of the noise or the reason for my mother’s odd command. When I reached the top of the stairs, I could see her kneeling on the bathroom floor, covering her mouth with her blue housecoat.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Dexter shit on the floor.”

“Cool,” I said as I leaned against the doorjamb. It wasn’t that uncommon for Dexter to mess in the dining room. Sometimes we’d catch him in the act, since during and after every bowel one he left at the bottom of the stairs, the new dog ate one, and my mom found a few surprises on the floor, the stench hit me. It was terrible. I started gagging as well.

“I don’t care,” responded Christine with her newfound teenager attitude.

“I won’t be back.”

Later, I got up and pushed me out of the way. In between dry heaves, she told me, “Clean that up and watch your mouth!” as she ran to the master bathroom. I cringed and picked up the Resolve stain remover and the wash of paper towels she had left behind, but when my face got closer to the floor, the stench hit me. It was terrible. I started gagging as well.

Dexter’s accidents worsened in frequency and smell over the next few days. I stepped on one at the bottom of the stairs, the new dog ate one, and my mom found a few surprises in the dining room. Sometimes we’d catch him in the act, sitting down and after every bowel movement, he would moan in pain. Finally, my father decided that it was time to take him to the veterinarian’s office. “He’s clearly sick,” he told us one early September evening. I was watching Jeopardy with Trish and my youngest sister Christine. My mom was playing Mahjong on the computer. Our two dogs, Timothy and Mollie, were on the couch. “And he’s getting a little old in the dining room. Sometimes we’d catch him in the act, since during and after every bowel one he left at the bottom of the stairs, the new dog ate one, and my mom found a few surprises on the floor, the stench hit me. It was terrible. I started gagging as well.

“I don’t care,” responded Christine with her newfound teenager attitude. I didn’t respond. I attempted to put the question to Alex Trebek’s answer.

“He’s sick,” my dad continued, “and if the medicine costs a lot of money, well, it might just be cheaper to send him to that great kitty box in the sky.” My dad always had a great way of putting things.

“I’ll pay for him, Buddy,” Trish cried from the couch.
I nodded slowly and patted her on the shoulder. "He's... he's a part of us, you know."

"I know," she said. "It's just that... I just want to see him again."

"I understand," I said. "I know how it feels."

"She used to come to our room at night and sleep with us," she continued. "She used to..."

"I know," I said. "I know how it feels."
"Well, it wasn’t Mollie."

We both knew what animal it was; we just didn’t want to say it. I took Tim outside to find out if it was him. If Tim did his doodle—as my family had dubbed it—our suspicions would be unfortunately confirmed.

I shivered as Tim sniffed at the ground, pulling me here and there on the frozen grass. Usually, I would whine and beg for him to go into the bathroom, this time I didn’t. Tim trotted over to the edge of the yard near the woods. He circled for a bit, and then went pee. After that, he walked a little further into the woods and went number two, I walked slowly back to the house, my feet crunching on the morning frost.

"Did he go?" my mom asked me when I got in.

"One and two," I told her. I took my jacket off and pulled off my shoes. "So, I guess it was the cat.

"Hmm, what do you think?" She had on the same blue housecoat she was wearing the morning we both gagged at the sight of Dexter’s first big mess.

"Of what? I think Dexter just pooped on the floor. That’s all."

"I wonder if he’s sick again."

"Wait until he craps on the floor again. Then we’ll see."

"Good thinking."

I ate breakfast, got ready, and went to school. When I came back later that evening, my mom, dad, and two sisters were in the middle of discussing Dexter. It seemed that he had gone on the carpet a couple of times that day.

"It’s not healthy for us to live like this, and it’s certainly not helping the cat." My mom was on one end of the couch; Trish was lying on the other end. Christine was at the computer talking to her friends online.

My dad chimed in from his chair: "If it’s the same thing as before, then the medicine only worked temporarily."

"But it’s mean," Trish responded. She wasn’t putting up as much of a fight this time. Her voice wasn’t as whiny as the first time we discussed Dexter’s fate.

"Sorry," my dad said. "It’s best for all of us." I didn’t say anything, I walked over to the orange recliner and patted Dexter. I remembered that day when he scratched up my arm and somehow knew neither of us would be going through that ordeal again. Even though our family had rekindled its fondness for Dexter, the decision was final. He would be put to sleep.

"Do you want to take him?" my mother asked me. Dexter was in the carrier on top of the kitchen table. It was a cold morning, and the house had yet to heat up. I held my arms across my chest as she put her gloves on.

"What?! No. I’m no murderer." I was more afraid that if I took him, I wouldn’t be able to go through with it. That wouldn’t have been good for Dexter. "So make your poor mother do it."

"Pretty much." I leaned over to say goodbye to Dexter. Aside from my mom, I was going to be the last Bevans family member to see him. "Bye, Fuzzy Britches." He was calm in his carrier and never rubbed his cheek against the finger I’d stuck through the grate. I looked into his blue eyes and said goodbye once more. My mom took him.

The only sound in the house as I walked around aimlessly, picking up dog toys and organizing the magazines on the coffee table. I went over to Dexter’s food dish and tapped it with my toes. I was going to put it in the sink, but decided against it, perhaps in hopes that my mother would have a change of heart. I longed for another opportunity to feed him in the morning, and for another thank-you curl around my legs. I went to the orange chair, its seat covered with a layer of gray fur, and gave its back a gentle push.

"No Calls After Nine"

by Andrea Skane

Photography: B&W 4”x 6”
A moment before Maura hit the ground, she was able to anticipate the impact between herself and the unforgiving concrete. She had slipped on the wet-running in these ridiculous heels—and would now certainly be even later than she would have had she chosen to walk calmly to the next train. She examined the palm of her hand, which she had unconsciously used to break her fall, and tried to brush the dirt and stray gravel away. Then she looked at her knee. Her nylon was torn and her knee was skinned a little, the way it had almost always been during summers when she was young. So much for sophistication.

"Are you all right, Miss?" asked a voice from behind her.

Maura barely glanced at the silver-haired man in a business suit as she got to her feet and carefully reached up to take hold of the overhead bar without elbowing anyone. Maura's arm ached uncomfortably and a lump rose in her throat that she tried to force down. Her stomach lurched uncomfortably and a lump rose in her throat that she tried to force down, as well. Maybe it was something about Maura that reminded her of herself at that age too late at the meeting, if she hadn't fallen down on the stairs and skinned her knee. She heaved a heavy sigh that blew her auburn bangs off of her forehead. She was already going to look incredibly ridiculous and rude when she came stomping into the reading late. The pain in her knee reminded her of her clumsiness as well as her unhappy mood.

Maybe she could mention how she had loved reading Sarah McBride's novels since she was young. She had kept up with them even in college, when her well-read friend Clark started making a habit of out-tripping her for being so pedestrian as to read Sarah McBride. He said her books were sentimental and Maura would have to grow out of it eventually, Maura wouldn't mention that part to Ms. McBride. Actually, she really shouldn't mention that bit about reading her since she was young either. Because that would make Sarah McBride old, and you just don't tell people who you admire that they're old.

She thought of Sarah McBride's picture on the back flap of the jacket of Sunset Cove, the newest book. It was your typical black-and-white photo of an author who looked sophisticated in a dark coat and, Ms. McBride was smiling and looking distinguished, not old, at age seventy. Maura tried to imagine being seventy, with a life and a name established and laurels to rest on. She wondered if she would ever get there, and wondered if, when she did, she would miss her days of smoother skin and greater uncertainty. The hump started to rise in Maura's throat again. She knew it was rooted in more than the possibility that she had spoiled her chance of engaging a stop on Sarah McBride's book tour. She let her imagination carry her sons far, far away.

Maura imagined walking into the bookstore late, with no one really left but a few employees tidying up and one elegant woman standing behind a table, collecting a few Sharpies and personal items and slipping them into a black leather, over-the-shoulder bag. The woman looked a little startled at the arrival of a bright-eyed, personable twenty-something. Still, she smiled warmly as Maura introduced herself and explained that she was a writer too. It didn't matter that Maura had no book for Ms. McBride to sign; of course she would rather have a serious conversation with writing with one of the greats than some impersonal scrap on the first page of a newly-purchased hardcover. Indeed, it seemed to mean something to Ms. McBride as well. Maybe it was something about Maura that reminded her of herself at that age, one couldn't be sure. But she offered to take a look at some of Maura's work, and maybe forward it to her agent. And even better, she gave Maura that one piece of advice she would never forget and never would have heard if she hadn't stared too late at the meeting, if she hadn't fallen down on the stairs and skinned her knee. It was just one of those chance encounters.

Maura felt herself smiling at her daydream. If only she could imagine just what Sarah McBride's advice would be, those words that could change everything. She glanced around at the other faces on the train. A man withelman was seated across from her, nose buried in Forbes magazine. The woman next to Maura stared at the floor. A garbled voice on the intercom announced the next stop. They were two stops away from Maura's destination.

Maura glanced at her watch, 8:02. She decided she would make it in time for the book signing, maybe even catch the end of the reading. These things never started late at the meeting, if she hadn't fallen down on the stairs and skinned her knee. She imagined walking into the bookstore late, with no one really left but a few employees tidying up and one elegant woman standing behind a table, collecting a few Sharpies and personal items and slipping them into a black leather, over-the-shoulder bag. The woman looked a little startled at the arrival of a bright-eyed, personable twenty-something. Still, she smiled warmly as Maura introduced herself and explained that she was a writer too. It didn't matter that Maura had no book for Ms. McBride to sign; of course she would rather have a serious conversation with writing with one of the greats than some impersonal scrap on the first page of a newly-purchased hardcover. Indeed, it seemed to mean something to Ms. McBride as well. Maybe it was something about Maura that reminded her of herself at that age, one couldn't be sure. But she offered to take a look at some of Maura's work, and maybe forward it to her agent. And even better, she gave Maura that one piece of advice she would never forget and never would have heard if she hadn't stared too late at the meeting, if she hadn't fallen down on the stairs and skinned her knee. It was just one of those chance encounters.

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No, no. That would be awful. Perhaps it would be better just to play it cool.

Maura imagined herself at an important literary event several years from now. She was being introduced to Sarah McBride, still elegant and distinguished in her advancing years.

I'm honored to meet you, Ms. McBride. I loved how you used Morris' fascination with hummingbirds as a means of conveying his obsessive nature. You were introduced to Sarah McBride, still elegant and distinguished in her advancing years.

"Ms. McBride will be signing books now. Each of you will receive a number designating a specific spot in line. We will not tolerate any pushing, shoving, or rude behavior. If you would like to purchase a copy of Sunset Cove, you will have an opportunity to do so at that table there."

Despite the admonitions against pushing and shoving, Maura still felt a bit like she was back at the subway station when the customers began to form a disorderly line to get their books signed. She recognized the young man she had spoken to earlier when she reached the front of the line and was handed a small pink piece of paper bearing the number 36. She went to the small table stacked with copies of Sunset Cove and felt a bit extra-pleasant handing over $25 for the new hardcover. She then took her spot in line after comparing numbers with those around her.

The line slowly inched forward until Maura was only a few feet from one of her favorite authors. She watched Sarah McBride sign still another book, and greet another reader. She noticed that the author looked a little older than she had in her picture, and was surprised to realize that Sarah McBride had split ends.

"Hi," was Maura's timid response. And then she burst out with, "It's really interesting to read this new novel."

"Yes, Miss?"

"Where is Sarah McBride having her reading?"

"That way, just past the paperback fiction. You're going to see a whole crowd of people."

"Excuse me," she said. "The young man stopped and looked at her, his large brown eyes awaiting her question.

"Yes, Miss?"

"Is Sarah McBride having her reading?"

He jerked his thumb backwards, pointing behind him.

"That way, just past the paperback fiction. You're going to see a whole crowd of people."

"Thank you," Maura replied, a little embarrassed at how breathlessly enthusiastic she sounded.

"No problem," the young man said. "You might want to hurry. She's already started."

Sarah McBride was seated with her legs crossed, wearing loose tan slacks and a pale green turtleneck sweater. She leaned toward the microphone as she read, barely looking at the page. Maura knew this part of the book. It was the part when Sarah McBride that graced the back flap of her novel. Maura stopped the young man wearing a nametag and apron who was passing by.

"Thanks for being here, Maura."

"Thanks for being here, Maura."

"Hello," the author said brightly.

"Thank you," she breathed and felt herself do some sort of curtsy before she left the book.

Ms. McBride to the table where she would be signing books, while another leaned down and spoke into the microphone that still sat at its low angle in front of the chair.

"No problem," the young man said. "You might want to hurry. She's already started."

Sarah McBride shut her book and thanked the crowd, but then Maura reminded herself that she was lucky to have made it there at all. One bookstore employee guided the crowd and thanked the author. She opened the book as she was walking away and read the inscription "Thank you for reading!" before adding her signature, closing the cover of the book, and handing it back to Maura. Maura took it back.

"Just located her in front of her was asking her inside companion."

"Not yet," he replied. "I've been very interested in her early stuff. It will be interesting to enjoy it. My book club…."
Just Hanging
by Mackenzie St. Martin
Drawing: Graphite on Paper • 6"x 7"

Shaded Industry #1
by Julia Szendrei
Printmaking: Silkcreen • 22"x 11"
Shattering the Addiction
by Derek T. Hambly
Ceramics: High-Fire Porcelain, High-Fire Stoneware • 14” x 11”

Portrait of a Tortured Soul
by Keith R. Mistler
Sculpture: Wood, Nails, Wax, Scrap Metal • 15” x 25”
The Annual John Heller Award was established in 2003 to recognize a student whose body of work exemplifies excellence. The award received its name from one of our most beloved and distinguished faculty. Professor Heller taught in the Department of Art from 1968-2001. He was an inspired artist, a dedicated, gifted teacher, and an unselfish giver of his time, wisdom and expertise.

Seated behind his extensive body of work,
2006 John Heller Award Recipient • Derek T. Hambly
Raku Vessel
by Jason Niemann
Ceramics: Stoneware, Raku Fire • 5” x 7”

What I Think Of
by Katie Boettcher
Painting: Acrylic on Canvas • 42” x 43”
Jenny is a sunflower killer.
She saw one standing tall,
May-burnt and sun-kissed.
She scampered up barefoot to the giant rooted plant, shrugged,
grabbed firm and pulled hard,
digging deep into its roots.

It shot out of the ground like a rocket blazing out of the dirt,
leaving a miasma of dust.
The yellow sucked into the brown hole;
the green stem, sturdy like bamboo.
She gripped it tight,
carried it away,
brought it dirty into class.

I sat staring at the flower
whose petals were curled and ailing;
it sank flaccid but proud
like an old man back broken from yard work
straining under the sun.
She held it straight, smiled saying
“I found this flower
out in a field this morning.”
But I know,
Jenny is a sunflower killer.

Abuse:
As seen through
the eyes of one of
Sacred Heart School’s
6th grade students
by Colleen Farrell
Poetry

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Interview with Eric Smith

Christelle L. Del Prete and Patricia Portanova became the first graduates of Bridgewater State College with an MA in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing. In August 2006, Christelle L. Del Prete and Patricia Portanova became the first graduates of Bridgewater State College with an MA in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing. In January, The Bridge's Eric Smith sat down with Christelle and Patricia to get their thoughts on what it was like to be the vanguard of this dynamic new academic offering, as well as their opinions on the craft of creative writing.

Christelle: Oh, well I think it absolutely gives it added significance because that's the degree I wanted in the first place. I wanted English with a Concentration in Creative Writing, and I actually started going to UMass Boston. I was going to take that path, and then I didn't like UMass Boston, so I transferred to Bridgewater and I took English, just English, as kind of like a second choice. And so, I actually ended up with the degree I wanted, and that was the creative writing concentration. But, overall, I think that it was a good experience I think.

Patricia: Yeah, I think you have sort of an added sense of accomplishment when you get a degree that is in the area that you sort of concentrate on because the concentration doesn't become a factor until late in the game, even though that is what we were focusing on for the most part writing. It also gives a little more validity to what you do when you have that concentration and you can say I'm not focusing on literature. I'm focusing on writing because it's just as important as literature. But, yeah, it feels good. We had an idea that we were going ourselves into. We were thing blindly, so in the end it worked out very well, having that concentration under our belts. It was a good experience I think.

Eric: Could you talk about the most rewarding and the most difficult parts of writing your creative theses?

Christelle: When I thought of doing a memoir, my first thought was, "How can I write 100 pages about myself?" So, I started developing these short stories. Actually, they were just ideas, little seeds, and then I just started developing them from there. I just let the ideas come together into actual short stories that people might want to read. That was the best part of it for me.

Patricia: Yeah, I have no problem talking about myself, so I can't really talk that much about myself. I think more so, it was added pressure, too, because we were the first ones doing it. If our theses weren't good, then maybe we would ruin the chances of people who came after us. You know, we had to do really good work so that it would go through; we felt that responsibility.

Patricia: Absolutely. If you're writing nonfiction, there's a certain amount of empathy attached to the characters because they're real human beings, whereas with fiction, there's sort of always this distancing aspect from your reader because it's fiction so it's apparently not true. So with fiction, I think you're always thinking that, but with nonfiction, you don't have to work so hard. You know, people reading it say, "This really happened; this is a true story," so there's a little more empathy there.

Christelle: I would like to be able to write good fiction—I'm working on it—because that's where I started going; that's where I started from, so that's a bit of my background. But I think even in fiction, you're sort of drawing from those personal experiences. Nonfiction, though, I think you have sort of an added sense of empathy because the characters exist. You don't have to worry so much about their believability because they're real.

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Eric: You both wrote nonfiction for your theses. Is that the genre you're most comfortable with? And are you comfortable writing in any other genres?

Patricia: I've just been fortunate that I've had a very strange life to be able to have these collections of events that I can sort of draw from. But I think even in fiction, you're sort of drawing from those personal experiences. Nonfiction, though, I think I just come naturally to most people, and it certainly comes naturally for me, so that's usually the genre I write in.

Christelle: I would like to be able to write good fiction—I'm working on it—but I think I'm more comfortable with writing nonfiction. Fiction is a tricky one. It's hard to stretch your imagination. You don't have to worry so much about the characters. Nonfiction is a lot harder.
Christelle: Yeah, and I think that’s the point of it, too. I think you’re both putting all of your parts, all of your characters to work to work through those relationships. I think that’s going to be the case. So you're writing to help work through your own relationships. So, like Trish says, you have to be aware of your reader. There has to be something in it that they can connect to because, otherwise, who cares about your relationship with your mother?

Patrick: Absolutely. Absolutely, because even if you’re telling this story, you’re still only giving this snapshot. You know, for example, you’re having an argument with a parent, or you’re going through some difficult relationships, I think you always have to remember that relationships are very complex, and you’re only showing one side. So you want the reader to know that you’re writing about this troubled relationship, and you’re only showing one side. So you want to kind of keep it balanced. You don’t want a character to be a truly evil character unless they really were. So, yeah, I kind of always have to keep that in the back of your mind as well.

Eric: Christelle, I’m curious if you ever plan on showing that story to your mother.

Christelle: Yes, but my mother is a very complex character [laughs]. It’s really insightful questions. Overall, I thought it was a really good experience.

Eric: When did you both first become interested in writing?

Christelle: I would make up stories before I could lift a pen. My aunt used to have this apartment in Cranston [Rhode Island], and I would visit her and stay there, and it was like this big treat. She would make up this story that there was a dragon in the basement. So then every time I came over, she would have me orally compose each chapter and she would transcribe it for me. I don’t think I ever happened to those stories, but they were my first. So I think I’ve always been interested in writing, even as a very young child. But I think I didn’t start writing until I was much older—maybe simply because I didn’t have enough experiences or maturity to be able to do it.

Patrick: I had a similar situation. I started writing when I was very young. As far back as I can remember, I was always writing stories. But I think there is sort of a stigma in society, and certainly in the academic press in academia, to talk about early creative writing, and even art to a certain degree, isn’t as intellectual or as strong a field. I think there’s a lot of pressure increative writing, and even art to a certain degree, isn’t as intellectual or as strong a field. I think there’s a lot of pressure in academia to publish your work in a creative writing, and even art to a certain degree, isn’t as intellectual or as strong a field. I think there’s a lot of pressure in academia to publish your work in a creative writing, and even a lot of science and all of that stuff. So, I think we’re sort of conditioned as creative people, as writers to think that creative side of us, and instead to focus on the things that are going to get us jobs when we get out of school. So, like Patricia, I think that there is a lot of pressure in this field to publish your work in a creative writing, and even art to a certain degree, isn’t as intellectual or as strong a field. I think there’s a lot of pressure in academia to publish your work, or even a lot of science and all of that stuff. So, I think we’re sort of conditioned as writers to think that creative side of us. But I was just wondering if you had any stories from your writing days that when I had enough distance from that and my life had moved on and my friend’s life had moved on to a point where we were both completely different people, and we even corresponded, and it turned out she really had a different life, but it’s pretty cool.

Eric: You mentioned “Shock Waves,” which you actually read at Artis’s Harvest at Images Fine Arts and Crafts Gallery, Patricia. You’ve also read at Artis’s Harvest, which is, as you both know, a reading series that features the work of BSC graduate students in the Creative Writing Concentration. Could you talk a little about your experiences there?

Christelle: [laugh] It went better than I thought it would. That was my first reading, so I didn’t think that I would be any good. The people were really interested and, afterwards, asked some really great questions. Overall, I thought it was a really great experience.

Eric: Christelle, you mentioned maturity. Is there a certain amount of distance that you need to have from a story before you can write about it?

Christelle: Yes. For example, when I started “Shock Waves,” which I read at Artis’s Harvest, which was at the Rhode Island that claimed 100 lives—a friend and I were already going to his graduation tonight for the first time. So I went and wrote down that story, just because I wasn’t ready to deal with it. We had to go through this. So, typically, it’s when I had enough distance from that and my life had moved on and my friend’s life had moved on to a point where we both were completely different people, and we even corresponded, and it turned out she really had a different life, but it’s pretty cool.

Patrick: You know, I’ve had experiences in both respects. Well, I don’t think it’s necessarily true of a child’s life. A certain period of it, I knew I had to be able to distance myself from that and my life had moved on and my friend’s life had moved on to a point where we both were completely different people, and we even corresponded, and it turned out she really had a different life, but it’s pretty cool.

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Eric: And you both mentioned earlier that you had to be careful about who you invited to these readings. I’m curious about how you both did invite. Were there characters from your theses there?

Christelle: Not from that particular story I read. I actually did invite my mother to that particular story. I was talking to her that night, but her husband was having an operation so she couldn’t go. But I specifically chose that piece. A, because it was a really moving piece about my relationship with my brother, which I didn’t really involve my family members who attended. Although, I did mention a little bit about my brothers, which eventually I had my brother read.

Patrick: Yeah, I had a different experience because I had the choice of whom in my family to invite. Unfortunately, at that time, my brother was really struggling with my family and I had to choose between which of them I wanted in the audience… My father was very gracious about it, he completely understood, to choose between which of them I wanted in the audience… My father was very gracious about it, he completely understood.

Eric: Who are your favorite authors? And who has the most influence on your writing?

Patrick: Janet Winterson is a particular author who is just awe-inspiring, and every time I read something by her, I feel like I need to sit down and write; she’s just absolutely amazing. I love Sylvia Plath, and lately I’ve been reading a lot of Kurt Vonnegut. It’s difficult because there’s a lot of nonfiction out there today, and it isn’t always very good. So, when you find something that you can relate to, it’s nice and you want to challenge yourself to be as strong as they are.

Eric: What about those writers do you relate to, Patricia?

Patrick: Well, Janet Winterson is a genius, so I can’t say that I relate to that [laughs], but she’s a little bit more literary rather than mainstream. She writes a lot about her personal experiences, and she does it in a really beautiful way. Sometimes, the language itself is just so beautiful.

Eric: I don’t really attach myself to specific authors, but there are definitely authors who have a big impression on me. A lot of the time, when I’m just pretty much in the zone or just for the language in it—I just enjoy a book that has beautiful language, yet tells a really good story. But then I’ll also read books out of curiosity. Just for example, I just read Jody Picoult’s ‘My Sister’s Keeper;’ it’s from the Bridgewater
Patricia: I didn’t really love the way the whole thing was written. I didn’t
really, you know, “Write about this and make it money”, and to me that doesn’t make sense. I want to put out something that I can be proud of, and if it doesn’t earn me money, then that’s fine. I have a day job [laughs]. But, yeah, just to get my name out there and get a little recognition won’t make a huge difference. I’m not writing for the money, I’m writing for something small. I sent a bunch of my stuff out to journals, and I got my first rejection letter! [laughs]. I’m so proud of myself.

Eric: What is my doing with myself? Right now I’m actually applying to PhD Creative Writing programs in the U.K. I hope to get into a strong program there and work for three years on writing.

Eric: What are your future goals as writers?

Christelle: And we’ve really been lucky to have the community we have here at BridgeRider. I never dreamed it would be so supportive. Just the students and professors have really kind of made this happen for us. I feel like they’ve made a lot more confident as a writer, and a lot more determined to be a writer. They have never told me, “You’re the secretary and not a writer,” “You’re not confident as a writer,” and “You’re not determined to be a writer.” They have never told me that. They’ve really been very supportive. Just the students and professors have really kind of supported me as a writer.

Eric: And don’t lose sight. I would say keep writing; try to find a balance between your day job and your writing. It’s really important to write; having a full-time job. I mean, I can’t say it’s one of my biggest mistakes because my experiences in my life have made me a better writer and a better person. I think I’m just very determined and have graduated degrees, and I’ve always worked full-time since I got my BA. It’s just a really hard road, so if you can get into a creative writing program that’s really good, I think that would be my suggestion. So, I mean, you’re going to miss out on some experiences, but if you’re going to get where you’re going much faster than I have, I think I have kind of taken the long road.

Patricia: And get into a workshop. I have a lot of freshman students who want to be writers and I say, “Come talk to me after you’ve done your first workshop because you may feel different.” So in that respect, surrounding yourself with strong writers and surrounding yourself with strong readers is imperative to writing. If you are a beginning writer and you don’t know other people who write, go seek them out. They’re going to be your greatest asset and greatest tool.

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Side Portrait
by Kate Sweet
Photography: B&W • 8” x 10”

Bridge Award, First Place
Photography | Digital Art
Sometimes you have to choose.
It is not as simple as
the pond, freezing around the cattails,
the mirror in the hallway, bits of ash,
the root in love with the stone.

It is not death
so much:
as lying still. The flint
startles itself into fire.
The shutter devours a sunset.

These are the very small things
that we want,
that give themselves to us
quietly, in the night—
music coming from the apartment
next door, headlights
on the road and shadows
pooling in the corner.

Very suddenly, we are full,
surprised into being.

“moment by moment
in both directions”
by Sean Janson
Poetry
My father is from Bahrain, one of a small group of islands in the Persian Gulf. Bahrain was well known for its pearls and date trees, even though it's more known now as the place Michael Jackson fled to after his trial. After graduating from high school, my father worked as an electrician for five years, until he made enough money to go to college. My father is an ambitious person; he wanted to get more out of life and so he decided to go to America, "the Promised Land." He first studied at Husson College in Maine to improve his English, and later transferred to the University of Maine, where, in 1983, he met my mother. My mother is an American. Her mother was of Irish descent and her father a Native American from the Nez Perce tribe.

I was born on June 3, 1987, in Leviston, Idaho. My mom says it was easy to tell me apart from all the other babies because I was the only "dark" one in the room. When I was five, we moved from Corvallis, Oregon to Bahrain. I started public school not knowing a single word of Arabic. It was hard, but children are great in that they don’t need a common language to communicate; it just comes naturally. Even though I couldn’t exactly talk to the girls in my school fluently, they understood me, and we were still able to play together.

What also worked in my favor was my mother’s Native American ancestry. I had brown hair and brown eyes, and so I was able to blend in with the other children. Some of them didn’t even believe me when I told them that my mom was American because I didn’t have “blond hair and blue eyes.”

There’s a thing about coming from a mixed background; you never really feel like you belong. When I am in Bahrain, I don’t feel like I fit in. When I go to America, I don’t really fit in there either; it’s like I’m somewhere in between, like I don’t have a fixed home. But despite that, I am proud of my dual heritage and wouldn’t have it any other way. I speak both English and Arabic fluently; I have lived in an Arabic community and have learned their customs and traditions; I grew up learning about the Native Americans, and have also been to different countries on our routes and from the United States. How many people can say that they are part Bahrainis, part American, with a bit of Native American for taste? Not many, I think.

Right now, I am in my second year at the University of Bahrain. I am studying English Literature with a minor in American Studies. I plan on finishing my undergraduate degree here in Bahrain, and hopefully I will earn a scholarship abroad to finish my Master’s and PhD. My goal is to become a professor of literature, and I look forward to a life of reading good books, searching for the deeper meanings they always have inside.
Sister Ambrosia stared at him venomously as the class watched in stunned silence.

"I was only asking—" Rex began pathetically.

"Bold and brazen! I warned you once, now how would you like to go to the office?"

Rex didn’t answer. The muff’s lizard-eyed gaze froze him in place. Rex looked back at her, except there was no hostility in his gaze, but he left his composure crumble and he lowered his head to stare at the desk instead. Invoking the wrath of a Sister was an awesomely foolish and dangerous affair. They had a supernatural ability to shame from across the room, another moment and she’d be telling him he was putting another nail in the c. .

Suddenly, a soft chuckle could be heard, the sound of an incarnate laugh trying to escape through someone’s mouth and nose. Sister Ambrosia sharply turned her eyes toward Percy, who was by now covering his mouth with his hand. Rex sighed softly and slipped back comfortably in his chair. There was no denying that Sisters also had amazing extrasensory capabilities, but when Rex observed them long enough, he found that there were ways of circumventing their notice.

"What’s so funny, lumps?" Sister Ambrosia asked Percy, closing distance between her face and his. "Tell me, please, I’d like to laugh."

Percy only whimpered. And then, to Rex’s further observation, a miracle happened.

"What? Who’s talking?" Sister Ambrosia asked as she turned once again, this time to Hayley and Natalia, who sat a good distance away from the others.

"We’re in the middle of class here and you two are talking?"

Sister Ambrosia began to back up a few steps. She sighed, ran her fingers over the nasal bar of her glasses and up through her graying hair. The class was silent. "What must I do to stop this class from talking?" she asked slowly through her lips. "When you all talk so much? What could you possibly talk about?"

The classroom was still silent.

"You all are cross my bones to bear," Sister Ambrosia sighed. "All right, who can spell ‘seven’?"

A few arms shot into the air, but then the intercom boomed into the classroom: 

"Sister Ambrosia, come to the front office, please, Sister Ambrosia."

"Sister Ambrosia sighed.

"All right," she told the class, "I won’t be more than a few minutes. When I return, I’d better not hear any of you."

As quickly as Sister Ambrosia left the classroom, the students had resumed their usual laconicity. The effect was immediate and inevitable. And just as inevitably, Percy and Troy began competing to see who could shoot a rubber band the furthest across the room, Hayley and Natalia resumed their conversation and Garth unpocketed his card and began to shuffle through them. Rex glanced around quickly: at the wall clock, out the window, toward the door, at the alphabet band the furthest across the room, Hayley and Natalia resumed their conversation and Garth unpocketed his card and began to shuffle through them. He seemed to know words that several of the kids in class didn’t, and far too many of them.

"What he really wanted to hear was a more thorough explanation of those particular movies and children and why their effects on the class would be so pernicious. Instead, he only replied, "But that’s not all it means."

"Do you want to stay in after school today?" she asked.

"Why? Are you threatening me?"

"Don’t you talk to me like that!" she snapped, pointing her finger like a magic wand.
that there was more to life than dinosaurs. The poor kid cried that day, and he

Perhaps it was for that time in first grade, when Sister Zelda asked the students if

Hall, when the ancient Sister Lark had scolded Rex when he called the Bean-Bag

Perhaps it was retribution for that time in second grade, a short distance down the

Then he picked up a piece of chalk and quavered.

Return the eraser and destroyed half of the words Sister Ambrosia had written.

Looked at the board, fidgeting in his stance.

Look at the board, fidgeting in his stance.

It was a loud "shhh!" however, and in seconds, all of the students were exchanging

Fourth was a loud "shhh!" however, and in seconds, all of the students were exchanging

Amos was quick to add that it was unimportant, since animals don't have

Wished to add a prayer for her pet rabbit, which had died the evening before, but

Sister Ambrosia was quick to add that it was unimportant, since animals don't have

was never the same since. Perhaps it was for that time a week ago, while Sister

advanced enough to know four of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit."
Counsel to his disciples. He told them not to worry about what to say or how to say it because... Sister Ambrosia flipped back a few chapters and said, "because he said to them, 'It will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.'"

Sister Ambrosia closed the Bible.

"Now the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit is 'Knowledge.'" Sister Ambrosia said this bit nodding toward Rex, then she turned and wrote "Knowledge" on the board in the third grade where she had written "Counsel."

"Knowledge" perfects with the virtue of faith. It enables us to judge the whole of the spectrum. We all know how important knowledge can be, don't we, Rex? When Jesus was debating with the Pharisees, he said that when the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

Rex didn't move a muscle or even blink, but Sister Ambrosia backed away, still smiling.

"The next gift the Holy Spirit bestowed upon us is 'Understanding.'"

Sister Ambrosia stepped back toward the chalkboard and wrote "Understanding" directly underneath where she had written "Fortitude." Then she set the chalk down and opened up a drawer in her desk, searching for something. She drew out a Bible, which she quickly began to page through.

"Yes, Alice?" Sister Ambrosia asked as she spotted the normally silent student at the floor.

Sister Ambrosia looked up at the class again.

"Let's see," she muttered, "it was somewhere in Matthew...ah, here it is." Sister Ambrosia stepped back toward the chalkboard and wrote "Understanding" underneath where she had written "Counsel." Then she set the chalk down this last bit nodding toward Rex, then she turned and wrote "Knowledge" on the board underneath where she had written "Counsel."

"Any other?" Sister Ambrosia asked, closing the Bible.
I am sitting in the back of my English class preparing to doodle. As I rip out a page of notebook paper, the professor walks in, and I immediately notice he looks different than any other teacher I’ve seen. His huge smile reaches from ear to ear, and his blue eyes glow with enthusiasm. I can only imagine what can be so exciting at 10:10 in the morning. Suddenly, his theatrical voice rings through my ears as he explains to the class what we can expect from this course. His passion for this subject seems to skyrocket with each passing minute, and by the time class ends, I am interested in what he has to say.

Professor Thomas M. Curley came to Bridgewater State College in September of 1972, ready to share his expertise on course to become a world-class scholar. Professor Curley’s mentorship set him off-topic he is, but this makes us appreciate him as a person as well as a professor.

Professor Curley says, “I don’t theorize on methods of teaching, I follow my instincts.” He states that he is very somber when he plans what will be taught in the next class, but when he gets to the classroom his love for teaching and learning takes over, making him joyful and playful with the material. “Writing is difficult, but I can let myself go in class.” The grin he wears is genuine and you can see him recalling memories about the good times he has had with his students; teasing them; telling them jokes; or teaching them valuable lessons.

I am running late for my fourth class and the only thing on my mind is that I’m going to miss something. I rush through the door expecting stares from my peers and a stern look from the teacher, but all I see is a captivated audience, I smile apologetically at Professor Curley and receive a smile of forgiveness in return. I sit down, amazed at how this simple exchange has made my day.

Nonfiction

I was just one unusual incident and assume the next class will be boring. As I rip out a page of notebook paper, the professor walks in, and I immediately notice he looks different than any other teacher I’ve seen. His huge smile reaches from ear to ear, and his blue eyes glow with enthusiasm. I can only imagine what can be so exciting at 10:10 in the morning. Suddenly, his theatrical voice rings through my ears as he explains to the class what we can expect from this course. His passion for this subject seems to skyrocket with each passing minute, and by the time class ends, I am interested in what he has to say.

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Nonfiction
Self-Portrait
While Napping
by David Peterson
Mixed Media: Photographs, Collage, Permanent Marker • 40" x 23"
The film moves in static frames.
Flickering.
“It’s an old reel,” the projectionist complains.

We showcase our scars proudly.
We embrace our iron shields.
Our armor becomes dented, torn.
We apply our make-up loudly,
To pretend a love now scorned.

The lights have all been dimmed.
The cameras’ angles are in place.
But the director, he’s not here.
The acting instructors left long ago.
He laughs and turns to me,
“We’re in this one alone.”

In fact, the studio is empty.
The set has been deserted.
You clutch a single lens like a last defeat.
It will not last if we are all that’s left.
But the timer has been set.
“Pose as if you were in love, quickly.”
We never missed a beat; did we?
Moss
by Kristina Stafford
Ceramics: Wheel-Thrown Porcelain • 5” x 10” & 4” x 12”

Junk City
by Maria Paulino
Mixed Media: Graphite, Charcoal, Junk Mail, Ink, Marker • 21” x 30”
Indigo Waves
by Jacquelyn Haskett Anfield
Weaving: Cotton • 18” x 7”
thebridge Award, Second Place
3-Dimensional | Mixed Media

Stained Reiki
by Michele Prunier
Artist Book: Mixed Media • 2” x 3” x .5” Closed
**Portrait of Man**
by Dalal Al-Sindi

Painting: Oils, Acrylic, Charcoal on Canvas  ●  18” x 24”

Award Winner, University of Bahrain

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**Peacock and Horse Raku**
by Christina Kunze Sarkisian

Ceramics: Peacock Feathers, Horse Hair, Raku Fire  ●  8” x 5”
I saw my brother before he took the car. I had come home from work just after ten o’clock and, without even bothering to take off my cashier’s smock, planted myself on the couch across from Bridget, my thirteen-year-old sister, who was engrossed in some show on Nickelodeon. Mom had come to bed half an hour before; and Dave, my other sister, was staying overnight at a friend’s house in Concord, New Hampshire. My father worked in Massachusetts during the week and wouldn’t be home until the weekend. My brother Tippy and his friend Alex came home soon after me, out of breaths and laughing hysterically.

“Oh, you tools,” I laughed, rolling my eyes. “Are you stoned?”

They denied it, still laughing as they rummaged through the cabinets, pulling out an odd combination of cookies, chips and salsa. Tippy dug some leftover spaghetti out of the fridge and warmed it up in the microwave before joining us in the living room. Alex settled his large frame into an armchair and started in on the chips, and when my brother made his way to the red recliner, I sveved my body around on the couch to face them. “So, boys,” I started, “what’ve you been doing tonight?”

“Oh, you know—the usual.” Between mouthfuls, Tippy gave us an animated rundown on his and Alex’s latest adventures of wreaking havoc in our tiny New Hampshire town. On that particular night, he and Alex had walked around, visited some friends, loitered at the Food Mart and terrorized some of the locals. On their way home, they snuck into our crazy neighbor’s yard and jumped on the trampoline until they were chased away by its pajama-clad owner. “He keeps moving the damn trampoline,” Alex added as he erupted into a fit of laughter, “but we find it every time.”

I shook my head. “God, Tippy, I have no idea how you get away with the shit you do.”

Tippy’s given name was Timothy and most people called him Tim. Only family and close friends knew him by his silly nickname, which was given to him by my grandparents when he was born. He could’ve been self-conscious about it, but he never seemed to be.

Tippy reappeared in the living room a few minutes later, he held the phone in one hand and the keys to my mother’s car in the other. My parents had bought the maroon ‘98 Chevy Malibu brand new the year before, and I loved it. I had my own car, but I took advantage of any reason to drive theirs. So did my brother, even though at seventeen he didn’t yet have a driver’s license. Mom and Dad thought it would be best to make him wait until he was eighteen.
The accident. The Malibu was found just after four a.m. about twenty feet from the road. It was speculated that the driver lost control going around a curve at a very high speed. The car ricocheted off a tree and landed on its roof in the woods. The state trooper looked grim as he held out a swatch of dark denim with part of an embroidered JNCO logo. “We cut this off of one of the boys. We need to talk to the others who know who this belongs to.”

“Tippy’s,” Bridget said quickly. “He loves those pants.”

We were then visited by a weary-looking state trooper who told us the details of the accident. The Malibu was found just after four a.m. about twenty feet from the road. It was speculated that the driver lost control going around a curve at a very high speed. The car ricocheted off a tree and landed on its roof in the woods. The state trooper looked grim as he held out a swatch of dark denim with part of an embroidered JNCO logo. “We cut this off of one of the boys. We need to talk to the others who know who this belongs to.”

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“Are you absolutely sure?”

“Positive.”

The trooper took a deep breath. “If that’s true, Timothy and Amelia are here in the ER. They’re alive. Alex Moody died at the scene.”

A panicked yelp escaped my lips just before I burst into tears, both out of horror that Alex had been killed and relief that Tippy hadn’t. Until that moment, I hadn’t fully accepted the severity of the situation, and just by looking around the room, I could tell that I wasn’t the only one who felt that way. Bridget held her hand to her mouth, and her eyes were wide. “We have to go pick up Amelia. Her parents are being total jerks, and she was the only one who wore her seatbelt.”

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At that moment, I could tell Tippy felt guilty. “Could you drive us then? I can’t drive.”

I sighed. “No way—I’m not going anywhere tonight. I’m exhausted.”

Bye, Tippy. Bye, Bridge. Love you.”

I glanced at my sister.

“I’m coming,” I told her as I clumsily slipped on a pair of sneakers and tied my shoe;

“She’s still alive,” Tippy said. “We have to get her out of there.”

I turned up the stereo to fill the silence. The sound of Tori Amos’ piano filled my small car. “This is not really happening” Tori wailed. “This is not really happening.”

I couldn’t have said it better.

At the hospital, we were quickly ushered into a tiny, dimly-lit waiting room with two small couches, a telephone, and a pile of old magazines. No one felt like reading.

Amelia’s parents were shown into the room a short time later. We sat with them in silence, our eyes fixed on the person we knew would be lying in the hospital bed. We had to let go to shift gears; “Everything’s going to be okay,” I said, and I hoped that by saying it I could start to believe it. I turned up the stereo to fill the silence. The sound of Tori Amos’ piano filled my small car. “This is not really happening.”

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At the hospital, we were quickly ushered into a tiny, dimly-lit waiting room with two small couches, a telephone, and a pile of old magazines. No one felt like reading.

Amelia’s parents were shown into the room a short time later. We sat with them in silence, our eyes fixed on the person we knew would be lying in the hospital bed. We had to let go to shift gears; “Everything’s going to be okay,” I said, and I hoped that by saying it I could start to believe it. I turned up the stereo to fill the silence. The sound of Tori Amos’ piano filled my small car. “This is not really happening.”

I couldn’t have said it better.
other side of the room and closed the flimsy blue curtain. I pretended not to hear him when he said that Tip’s condition was grave, mentioning something about a possible brain stem injury. Though they were doing everything they possibly could to save him, she should be prepared for the worst.

I looked my brother up and down, assessing the damage. His hair was messy and matted to his forehead. There were IVs and tubes of all shapes and sizes snaking up the bed and into his body. A large tube had been pushed down his throat, leaving his mouth agape, and I noticed that most of his teeth had been knocked out. The few that were left were bloodied. Bruises were slowly developing above his eyes like purple eye shadow. A pool of dried blood peeked out of his ear, and I could see the faint line where it had streamed down his forehead just before disappearing beneath the neck brace. He wasn’t breathing on his own. I watched as the blue ventilator bag inflated and deflated rhythmically, and listened as the machines beeped and hummed all around us. It took longer than it should have to have his icy fingers between mine. “Hey, Tip,” I said as I gently squeezed his hand, “You’re going to be just fine, buddy. It’s not that bad—you’ll pull through.” I tried to think of something more profound to say, rather than clichéd phrases heard only in bad Lifetime TV movies.

I found myself contemplating the irony of the situation. Despite occasionally smoking cigarettes and weed, Tip was the healthiest person I knew. It seemed strange that of all people, my strong, healthy brother was dying.

“They’re going to take him in for CT scans and some other tests,” Mom whispered in my ear. “We have to come out of here for a while.”

I squeezed his hand and kissed his forehead before exiting the room. Bridget and I decided to walk the perimeter of the hospital while Mom waited for Dad to show up. She had called him when we got to the hospital and he was en route from Hingham, Massachusetts. The sun was rising and I could already tell that it was going to be a beautiful July day.

“The doctor said that Tippy broke, like, every bone in his body,” Bridget said carefully. “How are we going to get a wheelchair in the house? We’ll have to build a ramp or something, right?”

“Yes,” I said as optimistically as I could. “We’ll have to work something out.”

We walked in silence for a while. I think we both knew how bad things were, but we were afraid to say what we were thinking out loud, even to each other, with whom we shared everything. Tip was going to die. I knew it, and I’m pretty sure Bridget did too.

“What if Tippy dies?” Bridget asked. “What do we do then?”

“I shook my head. “I have no idea.”

An hour later, Bridget and I were back in the waiting room. I was leafing through the pages of a Ladies’ Home Journal. Bridget was staring at the wall, and Mom was pacing elsewhere, still waiting for my father. I had no idea where Amelia’s parents had gone, and there was no word from Alex’s parents.

A troubled-looking nurse barreled into the room. “Where is your mother?” she demanded. When I told her, she turned around, saying something about needing more tests, and Bridget and I danced at each other fearfully. Moments later, where my mother was back in the room, a doctor and nurse relayed the dreaded news.

They were unable to save him. Tip was gone.

Mom and Bridget broke into hysterical sobs; their anguished screams filled the room. I felt as though all the air had been pounded out of my lungs, but I didn’t cry. I, Tara Sullivan, the girl who cried if you looked at her the wrong way, couldn’t even shed a tear for her dead brother. I had never felt so empty.

Very calmly, I stood up and excused myself from the room. “Can I come with you?” Bridget poked in a fragile voice as she wiped her eyes. I shook my head. “Just stay here with Mom.”

I walked down the corridor quickly, averting my eyes from the room that Tip had sat in minutes earlier. The ER doors, breaking into a sprint as I ran, were still swinging. somewhere behind the outpatient surgery wing, I puked in some shrubbery. My body heaved and shuddered as though I might vomit again, but I still couldn’t cry. Exhausted, I walked back to the waiting room. As I stepped through the automatic doors, I heard a terrible noise; a howl that amplified as I rounded the corner past the receptionist’s station. My father had arrived. He was on his knees when I saw him, surrounded by my mother, my sister, and a grief counselor, his cries of devastation and heartbreak resonating throughout the ER. I rushed down the hallway, crouching and throwing my arms around his rigid body as he heaved and shook. He made sounds that I didn’t even think were humanly possible. When I rose, my mother kneeled and held my father while Bridget and I held each other.

We were all given the option to see Tip’s body before his organs were harvested for the crematorium, but I declined. Of all the regrets in my life, that ranks at number two. There was nothing in the world I wanted more than five minutes with my brother, dead or alive, and I gave that chance up the morning I walked out of the ER. My number one regret is letting Tip leave with the car. Accident or not, nobody will ever be able to convince me that I wasn’t partially responsible for my brother’s death.

The flowers and delivery trucks were already pouring in, and it had only been a couple of hours since we had come home from the hospital. We had no room left in the refrigerator, and it was a shame that all the food would go bad. Nobody was very hungry.

Maeve, Bridget and I sat in the living room and talked quietly, trying to make each other laugh, which sometimes you have to do at times like these. In the kitchen, my mother was sitting at the table with her address book, calling our relatives. She spoke very calmy at each time, explaining what had happened as though she were listing what she had eaten for breakfast. When Maeve wasn’t on the phone, it was ringing off the hook. Apparently, the accident was on the news, but I had no interest in turning on the television.

People were beginning to filter in and out of our house: Tippy’s friends, my parents’ friends and neighbors from the Concord Monitor and Channel 9 News came looking for pictures of Tippy and a statement from my family. A few of my friends stopped by and made me promise to go out with them that night. Maeve’s boyfriend came by. Bridget’s two best friends showed up.

My father wandered in from the kitchen. He looked like he had aged ten years in three hours. He didn’t acknowledge us as he sank into the red recliner and leaned forward. With his head in his hands, he stared at the carpet and began to cry.
sisters and I made eye contact, silently wondering what to do in such an awkward situation. "Should we try to comfort him?" our glances seemed to ask. "What should we say?"

Without a word, we left the room so Dad could be alone.

At the kitchen table observing the spades flow of neighbors doing whatever they could to help. Most were crying and hugging my mother, and it seemed strange that she was the one comforting them. They could tell she was all alone, although I didn’t find the prospect of sitting with my family and facing the void Tippy left behind to be an appealing option either. I thought about taking a drive. While I was deciding whether I should stick around for moral support, one of our neighbors, Doreen, stood up to eye level in front of me and patted my knee. "Sweetie," she began, "your mother has a lot going on right now. Don’t you think it would be nice to fold the laundry? I bet she’d really appreciate your help." Doreen nodded and smiled like a kindergarten teacher and nudged the basket of t-shirts toward me.

I almost laughed. "Are you serious? If the laundry’s so fucking important, you fold it." I stood up and walked around Doreen and her dropped jaw. "I’m going for a drive," I called out to no one in particular.

"Be careful," my father said, looking up. It was the first thing he had said since we had come home.

I found that driving was the only thing I could do to clear my head. In the days that followed, my car became my sanctuary. I rolled down the windows and listened to music louder than usual. On the highway, I buried the needle on my little green hatchback. Nobody could reach me, and it was nice to get away from everyone who was telling me how I should feel. If anyone else told me it was okay to cry, I might have punched them. I couldn’t cry—it couldn’t really feel anything except the emptiness. I could feel it—sit in the pit of my stomach, as dark and dense as a black hole—and there was nothing I could do to make it go away. I could picture the mass inside me. It was spreading like cancer, infiltrating me with empty sound and feeling. I could feel it—it sat in the pit of my stomach, as dark and dense as a black hole—and there was nothing I could do to make it go away. I could picture the mass inside me. It was spreading like cancer, infiltrating me with empty sound and feeling.

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He nodded, so I put it in. The overture began, and I noticed my father looked a little impatient. “What number is that song on?” he asked.

“I think it’s track nine.”

Dad quickly flipped to that track. “Tippy loved this song,” he told me. “He used to play it on his guitar all the time.”

What Dad didn’t know was that Tippy didn’t love that song. He really wasn’t into show tunes. I just happened to have the songbook that included the chords and Tippy used it to practice when he took up the guitar.

“Yeah, you’re right,” I said, nodding. “He loved this song.”

We listened to that song on repeat all the way to Needham; I will never forget watching the tears stream down my father’s face and listening to how loud he sang through his sobs. I sat quietly and looked out the window, my hands folded in my lap. Sometimes I joined in, softly singing the words as they came around over and over.

When we pulled off the interstate and crept through the town, Dad cranked up the volume. Even though the cars were ringing and people were starting, I didn’t dare tell him to turn it down.

My father let me out in front of the church before finding a place to park. We were the first ones there. Inside the church atrium, I met with a priest with white hair and soft blue eyes who introduced himself as Father Joe. He invited me into his office and we talked for a while. He would be conducting the Mass, and he told me the order in which things would go. He wanted me to know what to expect. Never a heathen the moment I walked through the door.

To my surprise, Father Joe wasn’t particularly religious person, I was a little nervous talking with him at first. I hadn’t even made my First Communion. I didn’t want to hear that Tippy had gone up to be with God. I wasn’t interested in hearing about God’s plan or that everything happens for a reason. I didn’t buy in to all the spiritual propaganda that had been shoved down my throat over the past few days. To my surprise, Father Joe wasn’t anything like I had thought he’d be, but I still wondered if he had me pegged as a haven when I walked through the door.

“You’re very brave—takes a lot of courage to read a eulogy,” Father Joe said sympathetically.

I smiled. “Thanks, but I’m really not brave at all. I don’t even know why I volunteered to do this. I’ll probably pass out.” I paused. “Can I tell you something?”

When we pulled off the interstate and crept through the town, Dad cranked up the volume. Even though my ears were ringing and people were staring, I didn’t dare tell him to turn it down.

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“I’m sorry about that, but I can’t accept that I’ll never see him again. I have never had a brother and his friend their lives. “I will never, ever forgive myself,” I told him.

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"Tara," he began, shaking his head, "what happened wasn’t your fault. It wasn’t.

Nobody blames you. How could they? You didn’t intend to harm your brother. You don’t know you personally, and I never knew Timothy, but there’s no doubt in my mind that you loved him. The fact that you’re honoring him today in front of your entire family proves that. You are courageous, and you will get through this. And I loved you, too. I’m sure of it.” Father Joe glanced at the clock on the wall. It was five minutes before ten. “It’s time,” he told me and smiled sadly.

Together, we walked out of his office and toward the altar. The Jews were filling with members of my family, most of whom I hadn’t seen since Christmas. There were also many distant relatives who probably hadn’t seen Tippy since he was a baby. I thanked Father Joe again, and took a seat in the first row with my sisters and zombie-like parents. The altar was adorned with red and white flowers, a large, red, white and blue American flag that I had taken of me brother two months before for my photography class, and smaller framed pictures of Tippy at different ages. In the center of the front pew and on the podium, the organ sounded, and I bit my lip as the service began.

When it was time, I walked to the podium clutching the crumpled notebook. My green dress didn’t fit as well as it had the day before and the new shoes bit my To my surprise, Father Joe wasn’t anything like I had thought he’d be, but I still wondered if he had me pegged as a haven when I walked through the door.

"Tippy was an amazing person," I began, and with those words, my face twisted up and the tears finally came. I cried harder in those five minutes than I ever had in my nineteen years, stopping after each sentence to let out a sob.

“You can do this, Tar; keep going,” Lisa whispered, rubbing my back. I let the tears flow freely; they splattered the podium, my notebook, and soaked the floor of my ill-fitting green dress. Though I was nearly hysterical, I managed to speak of Tippy’s talent, of the amusing things he did, and of the idiosyncrasies that made him who he was. I managed to say that, despite irritating me in ways that only a brother knows how, Tippy was one of the best people I had ever known. I didn’t dare tell him to turn it down.

"Yeah, you’re right," I said, nodding. "He loved this song."
While they congregated in the living room, loudly smoking their cigarettes, drinking their wines, and remembering her through half-invented stories and the clichéd banter of forced sorrow, I slipped into her bedroom and shut the door. The commingled smell of cotton balls, lavender, and Johnson’s Baby Powder slid up my shirt and its familiarity wrapped around me. Between the two windows edged in yellowed lace stood her enormous oak dresser, five drawers with ten wooden eyes. Its monolithic presence made me believe that this bureau was found in a field long ago, that this house was framed around it, and that long after the world had crumbled in on itself, the dresser will still stand in its spot.

Securing my fingers around the knobs I prepared to open the portal to the unknown. As I pulled the drawer towards me, I was surprised by its lightness. I began my search of its contents. A fourteen-cent stamp that captured the frowning profile of a blue Franklin Pierce; a photograph of a nun standing at the foot of a large flight of stairs; plastic rosary beads that, if first held to a light, will glow Jesus in the dark on his cross; a postcard showing a caribou standing before an iceberg offering “Greetings from Newfoundland;” several lipsticks, like rosy turtles hidden in plastic shells; dozens of coins, mostly pennies that had been reproducing in the dark; a card with “Loving Easter Greetings” in beautiful script over purple flowers sprouting from a green egg; a recipe for Russian beet soup.

There had to be more. I rummaged for the can of beets, for the large soup pot, the salt, the navy beans, the bay leaf and peppercorns. I felt around for a garden of purple flowers, lilacs, purple daisies, and forget-me-nots. I reached into the recesses for Newfoundland, for its towering icebergs, its caribou, and its Vikings.

But finding only the smooth cruel coldness of a rear wood panel, I closed the drawer, left the room behind.
It was summer—everything was blooming, growing, and, as far as the eye could see, everything seemed at peace. But our hearts were troubled and our minds uneasy. Our country, Latvia, had already been through many frightening times. For many years, we had lived under Russian communist terror; it was a life filled with degradation, lies, torture and murder. For a normal, free human being, it is impossible to understand what that regime meant. Only those who lived through it truly know how dreadful and evil it was.

When World War II started, ridiculous as it sounds, we were glad that the Germans, our most hated oppressors for hundreds of years, had come and driven the Communists out of our country. Living under German occupation, there was no more terror and we could sleep peacefully at night.

Everything seemed fairly normal for most of us, but there were many restrictions under German rule. We could buy nothing without a special permit. Even food was rationed. Latvia, which was basically an agricultural country that had never experienced a shortage of food, suddenly needed food coupons. A single person living alone had a hard time getting enough to eat. Therefore, many city dwellers had to depend on relatives who had farms in the country. Farmers lived under the same rules as urbanites, but they managed to have a little bit extra. The trouble was that travel was restricted. To leave the city limits by bus or train, one needed a permit, and, of course, it was hard to obtain. Lucky were those who had bicycles, for the road was theirs and they could go wherever they pleased.

I was one of the lucky ones. My parents had given me a bicycle after I graduated from elementary school. Oh, what a joy it was! Like growing wings! Little did I know how useful the bike would become during the war years.

My mother’s distant relatives had a nice farm in the country where I had been sent every summer during school holidays since I was twelve years old. My doctor had thought I needed the bike would become during the war years.

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"You can't have any," she'd teased, sliding the white china away from him.

"There's only one thing I'll need," he replied in his most exaggerated slow-saller James Dean voice, reciting a bad pick-up line he'd used on her not long after their first date. She looked up from her dessert with a smile, ready to joke a kind of his choice of apple crisp, and then it was, sitting on the table between them, a black velvet box. It seemed by itself, her suspicions were correct, that she hadn't been silly to warn her mother might be getting an important phone call in the morning.

But when Adam opened the box, Rachel was filled with one panicked thought: 't's not Jewish. What a stupid thing to get him for his birthday when she was sure he'd be absolutely disgusted. She loved Adam, had already thought in vague terms about the apartment they'd buy next to the best private school in Manhattan. Her reaction was instant and automatic, "yes" or maybe a vision of herself in that wedding dress she'd seen in her head, "I love you," she started, interrupting him. She paused, trying to find the right words. "But..." It was enough for his face to fall.

Later, when the cab had finally dropped her off at her apartment building, leaving her exhausted and confused and feeling miserably alone, she passed her doorman without returning the smile and headed to the service stairs, too impatient to wait for the elevator. She climbed the four dizzy flights, stepping around an abandoned bucket and mop, and she felt a strong sense of relief when she entered her apartment. Not bothering to flick on the lights, and throwing her purse and keys onto the table that took up most of the small kitchen, she went straight into the bathroom to wash the tears off of her face with as hot a faucet as she could produce. She scrubbed away mascara and red lipstick and carefully-applied eyeliner, and then stared at herself in the mirror, a dozen times, before letting the smile fall that left the apartment earlier with her tired expression now.

She thought about calling her parents but quickly dismissed the idea. They would be sympathetic, but she was afraid that there would be an underlying relief in their reaction, as if it'd always known it wasn't going to work, trying to concentrate on safety and lifestyles and identities. Her mother's parents had survived a concentration camp they'd been thrown into merely because of their religion, and though Rachel had told her mother that she disagreed with some of the strict rules of the faith, Rachel's mother had never understood themselves more culturally than religiously Jewish; they took their children to the synagogue for the major holidays and kept kosher during Passover and Hanukkah. Her own grandparents were agnostic and attending every Friday night—more because that's what you did than any religious obligation. She knew she was going to have to tell her parents, and they'd planned the wedding. But Rachel was afraid that they'd always known it wasn't going to work, when the question was finally asked, did Rachel suddenly realize that she was fine with the idea of raising their children half-Jewish and half-Protestant, celebrating Passover and Christmas, and never once thinking about her children's future religions felt a particularly strong tie to either. Even though Adam had brought her to the synagogue, and now their numbers were dwindling. It was why they held so strong a connection with two religions felt a particularly strong tie to either. Even though Adam had brought her to the synagogue, and now their numbers were dwindling. It was why they held so strong a connection.
before, she realized, which she’d thrown into the purse on a whim, giggling with the silly notion that it might prevent her pantyhose from running or a heel from breaking.

Flip it, she thought suddenly, picking up the penny and holding it tight. It was the perfect solution; let the penny decide for her and be responsible for the choice she would make. Maybe then the image of her grandmother would stop flashing through her mind, her voice calm and stoic as she told stories of her experience in Auschwitz, her grandmother who, even in the face of death, had refused to deny her religion. Maybe then Rachel wouldn’t feel like she would be denying it on her grandmother’s behalf.

She sat the penny on the table just as the wall phone suddenly let out a shrill ring, causing her to jump. She stretched her arm out toward the receiver, but then hesitated, her arm floating in the air. Her parents and friends all knew what tonight was, and most of them even knew the question she’d be expecting to receive. Adam was the only one who would be calling her home line, expecting her to be there, and she wasn’t sure if she was ready to talk to him, not after his cold words outside the restaurant just before she got into the cab.

The phone rang a second time, sounding louder somehow. It felt like it was hurrying her, the way Adam calling was hurrying her into making a decision. She finally picked up the phone, almost angry, almost ready to yell at him for not giving her the space he’d promised.

“Hello?”

“Rach, it’s me. Don’t hang up,” he said, or ordered. She picked up the penny again. Heads, yes. Tails, no. Would it be so wrong for her to make the decision that way? It was silly, immature, crazy—yet it seemed so appealing, so easy, to not have to take responsibility for whatever she did. To feel no regret. She put down the penny and picked up the ring from the table, clutching it in a tight grip.

He said, “I was completely out of line with what I said to you. I didn’t mean it, and either way, I’m sor—”

The apology didn’t feel as good as she had hoped. It didn’t make things better and it didn’t erase those words. “I’m not good enough because I’m not Jewish?” Adam let out a sarcastic little chuckle. “I’m saying words like gentile and you don’t think we’d be giving our kids a Jewish identity?”

Rachel had no reply. She squeezed the ring a little tighter, as if a circle of platinum warm from her grip could give her a better answer than a few ounces of copper. “I just want some time.”

“If you can’t decide now, how much can you really want to marry me, Rachel? It’s not like this was unexpected.” Now she felt guilty. There was still some anger and impatience in his tone, but there was also some sadness that reminded her of the moment she had first pushed his hand away, just after he had asked her. She’d never been the cause of such sadness. She gently put the ring down and picked up the penny again. She threw it into the air and caught it deftly, then opened her hand: it was tails. And tails meant no.

“Are you still there?” Adam asked as she lowered her hand, letting the penny fall to the linoleum. She put the ring on her third finger, and already she could feel her nana’s voice whispering in her ear. “Remember, it’s a circle of platinum warm from your grip. It was meant to give you the space you need.”

She closed her eyes briefly to protect them against the glare. It illuminated the white walls and chrome appliances and made the ring look lit-up with the spirit of a faith that wasn’t her own. But Rachel thought about the penny, considered the possibility of following its advice, and it hurt her. It hurt more than when she imagined her future children not caring about the proper prayer over wine.

“Yes,” she said. “I’ve decided. Of course I want to marry you.” She sounded robotic, even to herself.

When they hung up a short while later, after a few more apologies, after she’d asked him to come over and he said he would, Rachel flaked the overhead light on in the kitchen. It illuminated the white walls and chrome appliances and closed her eyes briefly to protect them against the glare. She knew she should go put on fresh lipstick, brush her hair, maybe take off the red dress and leave on the lingerie she’d bought specifically for their anniversary. But when Adam arrived twenty minutes later, she was still in the kitchen, looking at the beautiful platinum band, and still thinking of the copper on the floor.
It’s about the metalness of night and words like ‘umbrage,’ ‘scintillating,’
‘mustelid,’ ‘hypergia,’ and the yellow pinpoint sun bursting from the brown papaya,
and it all adds up to something very simple yet astute.

If you want to sing the blues you got to live the blues.

And also, the sun sinking like a ship and something
about crickets and the cafes
in Leipzig or Andalucia
which means simply the blues
are just a bad dream.
They live inside your head.
And someone says something
and someone else might die
or build a fence,
and if it were you who died
they would write about you,
they would talk about your eyes
as if they were something more
than fluid-filled sacs—
and that is a very hard thing to love.

But there is something quite lovely about
standing next to this machine
when its motor is running
in flame-sided, open-topped,
slicked-back chromium lawlessness
cruising the darker segments of the heart
which might be compared to
a rotten orange,
and sometimes I think there
is nothing better than being
folded into its curves
as it rushes by.

I think the edges of your dress would
flash smartly and you would disappear
and I would have to go places by
myself and tell people
“I do not remember the color
of her dress. You see, she was
swept off her feet by
a very fast poem.”
Since I turned thirty in January, I have scanned my reflection numerous times for predictable signs of aging. As my snarky eighteen-year-old brother points out, my youth is almost gone, so these must certainly be evidence on my face. He’s right. After twenty-five, I’ve noticed a steady decline in skin elasticity and a simultaneous increase in damage: scars left over from a fierce battle with acne in early adulthood, a tiny spattering of yellow-brown sun spots, indentations where I dug my nails into my flesh to root out a blemish.

Particularly disconcerting are two wrinkles that form reliably each time I furrow my brow or squint against sunlight. I first noticed them in the side mirror of a friend’s car. It was a bright day, but I had sunglasses on, so I shouldn’t have been squinting. Still, my forehead insisted upon forming valleys, each about half an inch long and deep. I forced my eyes to open wide, hoping my skin would smooth. When it didn’t, I decided that maybe those grooves hadn’t been carved from squinting, but from some inner demon, which, by becoming visible, would force me to confront it.

In a moment of insight, I settled on suspicion. Certainly, when I scrunched up my brow as he pleads, “Why don’t you trust me?” he’s right. After twenty-five, I’ve noticed a steady decline in skin elasticity and a simultaneous increase in damage: scars left over from a fierce battle with acne in early adulthood, a tiny spattering of yellow-brown sun spots, indentations where I dug my nails into my flesh to root out a blemish.

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In a moment of insight, I settled on suspicion. Certainly, when I scrunched up my brow enough to make those tiny ruts, it was a look of unadulterated mistrust.

“You don’t trust anybody,” a good friend once said to me, “and that’s a problem.”

So it has been in my personal relationships. Take, for example, my boyfriend: he has razor-sharp intellect, good looks, an affable sense of humor, a noble career, and a PhD. Add to that the fact that he’s never been married, pays no child support, shuns alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, and he could be considered any single woman’s dream.

Enter doubtful me, who has trouble dealing with the fact that he has an ex-girlfriend—or, rather, an ex-girlfriend whom he still considers a friend. It doesn’t matter that she’s not thinner or prettier or smarter than me...or that she lives halfway across the country, while he lives with, and wants to marry, me.

Whenever they are in contact, my mind conjures up all sorts of improprieties; I convince myself that he is motivated less by friendship than by a desire to hold on to someone she still desperately wants and needs. I suspect that she hates me and is plotting some sort of revenge against me. And I become furious with him for what I see as enabling her fantasies. We battle, and I watch his brow furrow as he pleads, “Why don’t you trust me?”

My friend would say it’s because I grew up witnessing relationships that had nothing at all to do with love or trust. But I can’t simply erase those experiences as I could, if I were braver, erase my worry lines with Botox. So what I have resolved to do instead is work on the inner me, and to accept that it’s okay to be vulnerable, scarred, imperfect—like skin.
When I was over there, I went a day without exploring the city and finding something new, I felt like I had wasted my time. Couldn’t I have that kind of enthusiasm for my world all of the time? I wanted to be the kind of person who took that one extra hour needed in their day, and did something with the life of person who had a stupid thought about having Indian food for dinner and went the few extra minutes out of their way to make it happen.

Besides, I could easily justify the entire excursion to myself because I knew this restaurant would take my Card Cash, a student ID that doubled as a debit card. The money was already on the card, so I might as well spend it on something more interesting than a joyless shrink-wrapped turkey sandwich in the commuter cafeteria, one that at least looked and smelled like something special.

I reached the crosswalk directly across from the corner building occupied by the Indian restaurant and pressed the button on the post next to me that would transform the insistent red DON’T WALK sign to a more welcoming WALK. A long line of cars was waiting to go on the next green light on one side of the crosswalk, and cars were whipping by from the other. I waited for the sign to change. The cars got their green light and the whole long line of them started to move. I turned Quarter past. I started to worry about time. I still needed to walk all the way back to get to class. There was another crosswalk a little ways down the street that somehow seemed less busy. I quickly turned away from the DON’T WALK sign and toward the other crosswalk, running across the street and powering up the sidewalk on the opposite side of the road, finally stepping into the restaurant with a small sense of triumph, I grabbed a folded paper menu from the plastic container on the front counter and stood off to the side, checking the rest of the tiny restaurant. I bounced my leg up and down, an irritating nervous waiting, I checked my watch again. Somehow it was almost five-thirty. I waited. The next table over was empty. My eyes came to rest on a side order: nan. Nan was a delicious flat bread, one of my favorite Indian foods. After our high school graduation, Nishita had taken a bunch of friends out to an Indian restaurant for an almost embarrassingly abundant meal, and there had been unending baskets of nan. I made the decision to order it and two vegetable samosa-potato and veggies all bunded up in a little fried shell. I stepped up to the counter and was greeted by a short, older Indian man who gave me a smile.

“Hello,” I greeted, smiling back. “Can I get some?” and here I pointed at the menu because I always point at menus, needlessly afraid that I’ll forget what I want and be at a total loss. “Can I get some nan?”

“Just nan?”

“Nan, and two vegetable samosas, please.”

“Do you want to eat it here?”

I glanced behind me at the two small tables that occupied the space nearest the windows. A woman, probably in her sixties, sat at the nearest table reading a book. The next table over was empty.

“Sure,” I replied. I paid for my food and took a seat. After a few minutes of waiting, I checked my watch again. Somehow it was almost five-thirty. I waited long enough for nervous glances to indicate that the kitchen was done. Still no sign of the rest of the tiny restaurant. I bounced my leg up and down, an irritating nervous habit that I picked up somewhere along the way. I flipped open my cell phone and looked at its glowing digital clock as if getting a second opinion. I tried to
look out the window and ended up looking anxiously toward the kitchen again. My impatience was obvious, but deep down I knew that this situation was my own goofy fault.

The woman with the book, some smooth-covered trade paperback that, if I had to guess, she had bought new at full price, sat patiently awaiting her take-out dinner. She was probably irritated with me, I thought, some stupid college kid who expected her food to just appear, as if an independent little Indian restaurant operated like McDonald’s. She would have been right.

Why hadn’t I ordered it to go? At least then I could just take my order with me and hustle to my car immediately if I had to, leave the food and stick it in the microwave in three or four hours when class was through and I was home again. Could I change my mind, ask for it to go after it was brought out, if I determined that there simply wasn’t time? I imagined a worst case scenario: me hurling my barely-touched dinner into the trash and rushing out the door as I frantically looked at my watch. It would be humiliating and, if I did that, I’d probably be too embarrassed to ever set foot in this restaurant again. Still, it would probably beat being late for class so early in my graduate career. Nan was not a good excuse for tardiness. I remembered the heavy-duty traffic outside and the difficulty I had had crossing the street. I imagined myself darting out in front of a speeding car. Better to be late for class than that. Oh no. That monster of a book was still in my car. I needed the time to stop and pick it up. The older woman’s order was finally ready; she slipped her book into her large purse and cheerfully picked up a substantial paper bag at the counter.

“It was nice meeting you!” she said to the man who had taken my order. “I’ll see you again!”

It was a few more minutes before a young man brought me my basket of nan and two samosas in a little Styrofoam container. The samosas came with a dipping sauce that he warned me was spicy. I thanked him and he asked me if I wanted curry sauce for my nan.

“Ooh, please,” I answered without thinking. I had never much liked curry. I sliced one of my samosas and dribbled the dark sauce over the golden, spiced mashed potatoes. Steam rose up from the mashed potatoes and tickled my nose. I took a bite and chewed slowly, enjoying the spicy tang of the sauce and the flaky texture of the samosa’s popover crust. The young man came back out with a generous portion of warm red-orange sauce, its surface sprinkled with a dash of green. I thanked him, but gave the sauce a bit of a skeptical look after he left. I supposed I might as well try it, though, and dipped a strip of nan into the container, taking a bite without knowing what to expect. I felt a shocked smile curling at the edges of my mouth as I chewed. The sauce exploded with a delicious mix of spices. It was heaven. It wasn’t how I remembered curry tasting. I happily dug into my samosas and soaked up the curry sauce with my nan, savoring the meal that had become an unlikely source of evening stress. My stomach felt full when I looked at my watch and saw that I had maybe ten minutes to get from the restaurant to my car to class. It would be a close call.

I bussed my table and waved to the young man who had served me and the older man at the counter. I quickly headed out the door and down to the better crosswalk. Looking anxiously left and right at the approaching cars, I figured that I could make it across. A smile broke across my face as I dashed wildly across the street, Indian food still settling in my stomach.
Dalai Al-Sindi is a graduate student at the University of Bahrain in the city of Manama.

Jacquelyn Haskell Anfield is a senior double-majoring in Elementary Education and Art. She dedicates “Endless Waves” to her friend and professor, Paul Soobshna, who left BSC due to illness and passed away before seeing the final product.

David Bevacqua is a first-year student in the Master’s of Arts in English with the Creative Writing Concentration program. He is a former editor of The Bridge and plans to enter an MFA program after graduating.

Katie Boehtcher is a senior majoring in Art with a Concentration in Secondary Education. She’s planning on teaching after graduation and would eventually like to earn an MFA. Katie received First Place for Three-Dimensional Art in the Bridge Volume III.

Bernadette J. Bosse is double-majoring in Early Childhood Education and Art with a Concentration in Fine Art. She aims to become a children’s book illustrator and a preschool teacher.

Richard Broncano is enrolled in the Master’s of Arts in English program. Among his favorite poems is César Vallejo’s “To My Brother Miguel.”

Elizabeth Collum is a senior majoring in Art. She is an English major in his senior year. She received First Place for Three-Dimensional Art in The Bridge Volume II.

Christelle L. Del Prete graduated in August 2006 with a Master’s of Arts in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing degree. She is currently working at BSC as a Visiting Lecturer and as an Administrative Assistant in the English department.

Colleen Farrell is a senior double-majoring in English and Music. She enjoys slam poetry.

Tom Garafalo is a senior majoring in Art with Concentrations in Graphic Design and Fine Art. He plans to pursue a career in welding and to continue his education in fine art.

Claudia Gonzalez is a freshman majoring in Art.

Justin Hagerty is a 20-year-old high school English teacher from New Bedford, Massachusetts in his second year of teaching. He is a second-year graduate student in the Master’s of Arts in English program.

Derek T. Hambly is a senior majoring in Art with Concentrations in Fine Art and Crafts, and a minor in English. He will attend graduate school to pursue a Master’s of Fine Arts in Ceramics. Derek is a former editor of The Bridge.

Christina Hickman is a sophomore majoring in English with a minor in Secondary Education. Photography has always been a hobby of hers, but over the past four years it has developed into a passion.

Benjamin Hoganc: See Editors’ Notes.

Sarah Huffman is a senior at California State University, Northridge, with a major in Fine Art. She spent a semester at Bridgewater State College through the National Student Exchange Program.

Sean Janson is a graduate student in the Master’s of Arts in English program.

Mary Beth Keith is a first-year student double-majoring in English and Political Science. Her poetry has been published in the literary magazine Said and Done and she hopes to someday pursue a career in writing.

Joseph Kołczewski, Jr. is a senior majoring in Art with a Concentration in Graphic Design and has a passion for all of the fields in the fine arts. He is a former editor of The Bridge.

Mrs. Senja Kravitz, after retiring, took courses with the late Professor John Hiler, who inspired her to become a ceramicist. She paints every Monday morning at the Bridgewater Senior Center. She says that art is the thing that has really kept her going. She is 92.

Keri Kreutzer is a junior at Bridgewater-Raynham High School. She is a senior majoring in Art with Concentrations in Graphic Design and Fine Art. She plans to become a director/screenwriter. With interests in film and literature, her ambition is to become a director/screenwriter.

Victoria Large is a graduate student earning a Master’s of Arts in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing degree. She is a former Literature Editor-in-Chief of The Bridge.

Mandy Lovas is a returning student majoring in Art with a Concentration in Fine Art. She took four years to graduating and starting her new career as an art teacher. She and her daughter Michele have been published in The Bridge a combined nine times.

Michele Lysonic: See Editors’ Notes.

Mrs. Velia Malivess was born in the 1920s and lives in Bridgewater. Originally from Riga, Latvia. She came to the United States as a Displaced Person from WWII in 1950.

Angéla Vita Maxwell is a junior studying English. She is a proud member of the Theta Phi Alpha Fraternity. She would like to thank her parents.

Keith R. Miesler is an Art major with a Concentration in Graphic Design, He is graduating in May and is excited to get out into the “real world.”

David Mitchell was born in Michigan. He graduated in 2005 with a BA in English and is now pursuing an MA in English with the Creative Writing Concentration. He lives with his parents and four roommates.

Shadia Aqeel A. Mohsin is a former Literature Editor-in-Chief of Said and Done and she hopes to someday pursue a career in writing.

Maria Pauline is a senior majoring in Art with a Concentration in Secondary Education. “Junk City” was inspired through a classroom assignment that was to be created on alternative surfaces.

Shadia Aqeel A. Mohsin is a former Literature Editor-in-Chief of Said and Done and she hopes to someday pursue a career in writing.

Michele Prunier is a senior majoring in Art with a Concentration in Fine Art and Crafts, and a minor in Secondary Education. She sees herself teaching art in the future, and will be student-teaching in the fall.

Christopher Rego is a senior majoring in Art. He is a former editor of The Bridge.

Corey Ritch: See Editors’ Notes.

Charlie Robinson: See Editors’ Notes.

Matthew M. Ryan is a graduate student in the Master’s of Arts in English with the Creative Writing Concentration program.

Mackenzie St. Martin is a junior majoring in Art.

Christina Kunce Surskisian graduated cum laude in January with a degree in English with a minor in Secondary Education. She received First Place for Three-Dimensional Art in The Bridge Volume II.
Maria Alonso is an English major who will graduate next winter. She hopes to one day run her own publishing company, perhaps with her fellow editors.

Michael D. Carter, Jr. is a senior majoring in English. In the fall, he plans to enter a Master’s program in English Literature and eventually would like to earn a PhD and become a college professor.

Emily Goodwin is a senior majoring in English with a Concentration in Writing. She hopes to travel after graduating, and possibly teach abroad. She also hopes that polar bears don’t become extinct.

Benjamin Hogan is a graduate student majoring in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing. He hopes to work toward an MFA after graduation.

Michele Lyons is a junior English major with a Writing Concentration. After graduation, she hopes to spend time in London. She aims to eventually earn an MFA in Creative Writing.

Shawna Macaulay is a senior majoring in Art with a Concentration in Graphic Design. She has been involved in various volunteer activities and interned as a designer at an advertising agency.

Laura Viola Maccarone is a senior majoring in Art. She has worked in Manhattan for the magazine Positive Thinking, and as Head Designer for a printing firm in Rhode Island. She plans to pursue a career as a Design Director for a major magazine.
Honors

Volume III
Columbia Scholastic Press Association, 2007
Gold Crown Award
Gold Medalist, Annual Critiques
Gold Circle Award - The Bridge Staff
1st place for Overall Design
Gold Circle Award - Anonymous
1st place for Essay, “Legacy Undone”
Gold Circle Award - Matthew Nourse
2nd place for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “Heeding the Blues”
Gold Circle Award - Cheryl Tullis
2nd place for Single Illustration Based on Photographic Material, “Ma Coeur”
Gold Circle Award - The Bridge Staff
3rd place for Overall Use of Typography
Gold Circle Award - Olga Montenegro
3rd place for Essay, “Turo”
Gold Circle Award - Erica Morrison
3rd place for Free-Form Poetry, “This Life Seems to Waver”
Gold Circle Award - Elizabeth Davenport
Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “Ruck and Maul”
Gold Circle Award - Robert Cannata
Certificate of Merit for Essay, “Diving for Infuca”

Volume II
Columbia Scholastic Press Association, 2006
Gold Crown Award
Gold Medalist, Annual Critiques
Gold Circle Award - Scott Francescon
1st Place for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “Obession”
Gold Circle Award - Giovanni Pimental
1st Place for Photographs with Two or More Colors, “Hospital Window”
Gold Circle Award - Claire Tremblay
2nd Place for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “Darya”
Gold Circle Award - Jason Vieira
3rd Place for Photographs of Black and White and Black and White and One Other Color, “Wife Beater”
Gold Circle Award - Mark Medeiros
Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “Self-Portrait in Text”
Gold Circle Award - Tami Thomas
Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration Not Based on Photographic Material, “From an Afternoon with Miriam Schapiro”
Gold Circle Award - John Diehl
Certificate of Merit for Photographs with Two or More Colors, “Standing Tall”

Volume I
Columbia Scholastic Press Association, 2005
Silver Crown Award
Gold Medalist, Annual Critiques
Gold Circle Award - Mandy Simoneau
1st Place for Traditional Fiction, “Paper Fish”
Gold Circle Award - John Butler
3rd Place for Single Illustration Based on Photographic Material, “Fires”
Gold Circle Award - Audi Abbott
Certificate of Merit for Essay, “Patchig Holes”
Gold Circle Award - Lauren Carter
Certificate of Merit for Essay, “The New Face of Racism”
Gold Circle Award - Sandy Parson
Certificate of Merit for Single Illustration Based on Photographic Material, “Martha Stewart as a Cow”
Gold Circle Award - Daniel Nozea
Certificate of Merit for Photographs of Black and White with One Color, “Untitled”

University & College Designers Association, 2006
Award of Excellence
Student-Published Work, 36th Annual Design Competition

College Media Advisers, 2005
Apple Award
Best in Show for Literary/Art Magazine
Spring National College Media Convention
New York, New York
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