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Bridgewater State University

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THE BRIDGE

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Volume XI © 2014  
Cover: Spine / Elizabeth McDonough

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**THE BRIDGE**  
a journal of fine arts and literature

THE

BRAND



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

IN ASSEMBLING THIS COLLECTION, we as editors were invited into unexpected private spaces in the work of our contributors, and what we saw there was often haunting and beautiful. We invite you to explore this work and are confident that you will find resonance in the worlds of our artists.

This journal has undergone great changes in the past decade, but in no year were there as many changes as this past one. We inaugurated a new staff structure and made process changes that have cemented the journal’s place in the culture of the community for the decade to come.

As editors, we are committed to a journal that presents the most compelling work and is inclusive of the rich tapestry of creative voices found in our community here at Bridgewater. In order to achieve this goal we designed an interactive outreach campaign, unprecedented in our history, which attracted our most diverse field of artists yet. The results were incredibly positive. We are fortunate that our blind submission process has brought to us work from current and former students. The extremely high quality of work we received meant that cutting pieces became the most difficult part of our task.

Initially, we found the work we had curated to have content concerned with universal themes. However, as we grew as editors we were increasingly struck by the intrepidness and daring of our artists. We are proud to present work that is unafraid to be blunt, provocative, and unyielding. This book will provide you with a challenging experience, unexpected encounters, and the strangely familiar.

We would like to give a special thank you to Debbie Rogers, Lisa Sullivan, and Jess Mueller who, alongside our full-time editing team, helped develop the early concepts for the journal’s design, theme, and outreach.

Although hearing our new art advisor, Andy Chen, over the vents in the art studio was always a challenge,

we were always rewarded by listening closely. John Mulrooney is in his fourth year as literature advisor, and his advice on everything except pizza toppings has been invaluable. It is because of John’s commitment to creating a dynamic experience for the editors of *The Bridge* and for continuing this journal that we have chosen to dedicate this volume to him.

As we thank our advisors, we cannot forget the help of the people in the administration that made this book possible. We are forever indebted to two outgoing stalwarts of our campus. We wish President Dana Mohler-Faria and Provost Howard London well in the next phases of their lives. *The Bridge* and our whole campus will miss them. Dean Paula Krebs and Associate Dean Rita Miller have continued to be our champions and strongest supporters. The students and faculty of the English and Art Departments offered us encouragement in obvious and sometimes not so obvious ways. James Ferguson and Paul Auger of the Tilly mailroom, along with Arthur Nash and all of Tilly’s maintainers showed us enormous generosity. The space they provided us was essential to this year’s *Bridge*. We owe Lori LeComte of the English department an entire case of Good n’ Plentys.

Finally, we hope you enjoy *The Bridge* Volume XI.

MEAGHAN CASEY & JOHN CONDRY  
*Editors-in-Chief*

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BETHANY MATERN, TIFFANY PEÑA  
*Art Editors*

SEAN CLIFFORD, BRETT FRENCH, CHRIS LINDSTRÖM,  
BRIANA MCDONALD, ELIZABETH TOBIN  
*Literature Editors*

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UNTITLED, 2013 / ERICA ADAMS    NEXT PAGE: SUNDAY WALK / LEYLA NAOME KAISER







DAD / FALLON KEENAN

## THE ONE WHO CONTROLS THE SONG HOME

JESSICA MELENDY

The highway feels like an accordion and I am trapped  
inside one of the folds

waiting for the man in charge to spread his arms and set me free  
so I can go home.

I turn the radio on, spark a joint and fall into the mindless rhythm  
of the cluster of cars that I have come to accept as my crevice.

The various lumps of garbage mangled against jersey barriers  
start to look like dead bodies and I feel like I'm back in the Middle East

avoiding cows because of the bombs sewn in their bellies.  
I ignore the rapidly forming carcasses over my shoulder

and take another drag off my joint, trying to forget how I woke up,  
wanting to return to giant Arabian horses trampling LAX.

All I need is Dunkin' Donuts and the chance to kiss my daughter,  
so I tell myself there's progress in not being hunted anymore.

I question my meds, knowing that the graveyard road I weave  
blackens in the rearview.

# A L O N E



# T O G E T H E R

STORY / SARAH CORREIA  
IMAGES / RUSHELL KWONG & CASSANDRA SANTOS

IT WAS OUR FIRST YEAR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY and I had had too much to drink. We decided to leave the bar just as the snow began to fall. Six beers went down and you had only seen me drink two. Outside, the cold felt good against my burning cheeks. As I put my hood up you pulled it down and playfully bit my cheek, moving past me and lighting a cigarette. I watched you walk ahead toward the car, something inside said, tell him. I hadn't had one drink since we lost the baby. The risk of uninhibited conversation was too great for the demons. When I quickly finished the two beers I had allowed, I knew that I was going to tell you tonight. Stragglers loitered in the parking lot and inebriated shrieks of laughter echoed. You turned back, hands shoved in your pockets against the biting cold. Cigarette hanging from your lips, you saw me frozen there by the door.

"Kate, what are you doing?" you shouted from the car.

I didn't answer but made my way toward you. I shouldn't have, but I said I would drive. I fumbled around my bag, trying to find the damn keys. You stood with your hand on the car door impatiently.

"You couldn't find your keys when we were leaving. You have the spare in your back pocket," you said.

I reached to retrieve the key and my wedding ring caught on the lip of my pocket. I pulled it close to my face to examine it for damage.

"Are we really still here? Should I build a fire?" you said.

"Adam..." My mouth was dry and I couldn't distract myself with your shitty one-liners.

I unlocked the door and we both slid into the cold car. I flicked on the windshield wipers and the thin sheet of snow that had settled flew violently off to the sides. I threw the car into reverse and bolted out of the parking lot.

"Jesus, are you all right to drive?" you asked.

You were playing with the heat controls, your

cigarette out the window.

"I only had two beers," I said.

"I'm probably fine to drive. Could you believe how young some of those kids looked?"

My eyes lay fixed on the road, the falling snow like cold stars whizzing past us as we made our way through outer space. You chattered on about how you weren't sure you left a good enough tip for the bartender. Or how it was bullshit you couldn't smoke on the patio but had to go out front to the parking lot. I looked over to you playing on your cell phone and the glow from the screen was harsh against the darkness. Your face was smooth from a shave earlier that night and suddenly my throat was sore from an onset of tears pushing to break free. I might never feel the familiar stubble from your beard, stiff and painful against my face again. The anticipation of this moment had haunted me for weeks. I couldn't spend one more night with you thinking we were victims. I felt an eruption of nerves wash over me like thousands of tiny spiders crawling over my skin.

I could barely breathe.

"I had an abortion."

I looked back at the road. Stars falling in space.

...

I hadn't even finished sending out thank you notes from our wedding. We had been married three months and you were still at UMASS studying for your Master's Degree and I was working at Brock Bros. Insurance forty hours a week, struggling to get out of bed every morning. You were always so driven and focused. I wanted you to finish your degree because you had goals. You were going to finish school and become a teacher. It was true I wasn't anything special. I had you and I had my job. When we were married, I thought, I can't believe somebody would actually want to put up with me for the rest of their life.

After we got married, we stopped using condoms.



One night, soon after the wedding, we had shared a bottle of wine while watching shitty movies. I could tell you were kind of drunk and wanted to do it because you pulled me over to sit close to you on the couch. Up against you, I could smell cigarettes and soap and I liked it. I spun around and sat facing you on your lap, kissing you, taking in slow, deep breaths. I felt you on my thigh and you slid your hands up my shirt and I could feel your wedding band cold against my bare skin. When I realized we weren't just fooling around I stopped you.

“No condom?” I asked.

“Why would we need to?”

I leaned back and stared at you. My mouth was parted in disbelief and the pulsing between my legs became dull and uninterested.

“Jesus, Adam. Isn't that something we should discuss when I'm not sitting on top of you?”

“Do you know how long it takes for couples to get pregnant? I'm not saying I want it to be tonight, but...”

You kissed me softly, taking my hair in fistfuls close to my scalp. I closed my eyes and swore at you under my breath for knowing me so well. I couldn't believe that you already wanted children. I moved away from you and lifted my dress over my head as you began unbuttoning your pants.

...

Three pregnancy test wrappers were crumpled on the bathroom vanity. You were supposed to be going to the library after you were done student teaching for the day, but I called you to come home. I called out of work sick because it had been four weeks to the day that I had missed my period. I knew what today would mean. I wanted to call my sister and tell her first, but I knew how selfish it would be for her to find out before you. I sat waiting for you, in disbelief of the tiny life that sat growing inside of me. I thought for a moment about how I had always imagined being

pregnant to feel different and it really didn't. My boobs felt sore, that's all. I started to envision faces of you and I combined together like a sort of terrifying science experiment, imagining what our child would look like. I couldn't seem to create anything that didn't look exactly like me with your brown eyes. Every little boy and little girl that I imagined had my dirty blonde hair sweeping over against pale, porcelain skin, with your playful brown eyes. I was frustrated that was all I could seem to come up with. I couldn't wait to tell you about our baby, Adam. I was too nervous to do anything but wait for you. Every sound could have been you – the boiler kicking on in the basement, someone walking by outside, a car door slamming in another driveway. I couldn't wait to see your reaction, not because I knew what it would be but because I had no idea what to expect. I looked at the clock, realizing you were going to be home any moment. I glanced at a few pieces of mail that had toppled to the floor. I looked up as I heard the car door shut and reached down to pick up the mail: overdue notices for the car insurance. You walked through the door, concern on your face. I sat there frozen.

“Kate, what's going on?” you said.

I couldn't help but grin. I couldn't even claim any of my reactions as my own because they were so out of my control. I felt I was having an out of body experience. Was I really this happy? How could I not be? We were having a baby.

“What if I were to tell you I'm pregnant?” I said.

A smile like I had never seen stretched across your face.

“Are you pregnant?” you asked.

“We're having a baby,” I said, holding back tears.

You pulled me up toward you and held on to me like you would never let go.

“We're going to have a baby...” you said.

I choked out laughter and let the tears fall. Your hug



pushed me into the table, knocking over the rest of the bills.

...

It was a Monday morning and you insisted on driving me to work because of the baby. We had worked out a plan where you would drop me off at the office at seven thirty so you could get to school by eight. I had told you it wasn't necessary since I was only ten weeks along. Not to mention I was at work an hour and a half early. This way, though, when you were done teaching at three you were able to do what you needed until I was out of work at five. I still didn't really feel the baby. You were always touching my belly and laying on it when we were watching television, speaking to it in a sing-song language. I wondered if you would rather me just go away so you could have some alone time. I had tried reading Mommy books and only could see awful haircuts and horror stories about leaky nipples and stretched out body parts. You kept bringing home more books and going to work and to the library and talking about how by this time next year you'll have graduated. I would be our baby's mother. My boobs were swollen and sore and they didn't feel sexy they felt full. I spent my days hating my boobs and treating insurance claims.

“Adam?”

You had books and papers sprawled out over the kitchen table. More research.

“What's up,” you said.

“Don't you think it would be a good idea for me to go to school? Get certified in something?”

You looked at me and threw up your hands.

“Don't you think this is something you should have mentioned before we got pregnant? Jesus, Kate, why don't you ever talk to me about anything like this? I had no idea you wanted to go to school or I would have never even brought up having a baby.”

“It was just a question. I'm not trying to stress you out. I meant when the baby was older, anyway. I'm just—I'm just trying to figure out how I can provide for this family, too.”

“You do provide for this family. Pretty soon you won't even have to work so you can be home with the baby,” you said.

“I know, I know. It was just a question,” I said.

Our eyes lingered on one another for just a moment, and I swore you were going to say something when you pulled a cigarette from your pack, lighting it as you went out the kitchen door.

That night I had a dream. The baby was born and



we were at your graduation. The baby wouldn't stop crying so I had to step outside of the ceremony to quiet it. When I stepped out, I was suddenly standing with you and I had the baby and everyone was congratulating you and you looked so handsome in your suit and tie. I looked down and was horrified that I was wearing an oversized t-shirt and sweatpants. The baby wouldn't stop crying. Nobody looked at me and you took the baby out of my arms and disappeared into the crowd. When I woke, I was sprawled out on your side of the bed. I could hear the high-pitched hissing of the faucet as you showered and I groaned because you said you would fix it two weeks ago. I jumped out of bed and scribbled a note about walking to work and left the house without brushing my teeth. I walked until I reached my office, glad I had remembered my keys. No one had arrived yet and I didn't even turn the lights on. I picked up the phone and called my sister. She didn't answer and my eyes flashed to the clock. It wasn't even seven in the morning. I called her two more times until she finally answered.

"Kate, is everything all right?" asked Jane.

"Hey... I'm sorry to bother you...if I woke you up. It's just—I need you to help me. I need you to help me."

"What's going on? What do you need?"

"I'm pregnant. We're not keeping the baby."

Jane was silent. I could tell she didn't know what to say.

"Okay. Let me get dressed, I'll be there in fifteen."

...

Jane pulled up to Brock Bros. Almost a half hour later and I was waiting on the side of the building in case anyone came to the office early to get work done. She unlocked the passenger side door and cut the engine. When I slid into the car and faced her, she pulled me close to her and for the first time in weeks, I felt like myself. I had finally accepted the fact that I couldn't

have our baby and Jane was the only person who knew the truth.

"Why am I here, and not Adam?" she asked.

"I don't know."

I could see sadness in Jane's eyes and she put her head on the steering wheel.

"Kate, you need to tell—"

"Jane, please!"

She brought me to a place she had brought a friend of hers years ago. The building was unmarked and as we pulled into the parking lot my body quivered and my palms grew cold and clammy. We sat there for a moment in silence and I jumped as my cell phone blared as your call come through. Did you know?

"Let's get this over with," I told Jane.

When we walked through the doors, I braced myself for some looks. In the waiting room sat a young couple that couldn't be more than eighteen years old, both playing on their phones. I made my way to the counter and wasn't sure what to say. Jane seated herself and I realized I was on my own. A middle aged woman who looked as though she could have worked at a dentist's office slid open the window separating the patients from the staff.

"Do you have an appointment?" She had a kind smile and her dark, purple lipstick was too young for her age.

"No...I— I didn't know I would need one."

"That's okay...we aren't too busy today. Are you eighteen?"

I nodded. She handed me a clipboard with several pages of medical paperwork and I made my way over to the pepto-bismol pink couch where Jane was sitting. I looked over the forms and saw there was nothing about the father. As I filled out the paperwork line by line, the room felt still and I could hear the clock on the wall taunting me with each click of the second hand. These were the last moments I would have with our baby and I felt nothing. I wished the baby would give







a kick to convince me to change my mind. Nothing happened. Close to another hour later, they called my name. Three hours later, it was over. I told you a lie that my sister wanted to see me after work for dinner. By the time I returned home late that night and crept into bed, it was just you and I, alone together.

...

When I told you we had lost the baby the next day you held me so close I thought you would never let go.

“Hey, we’ll get through this,” you said, your arms wrapped around me.

“I don’t know if I can...” I said. You held on tighter.

“Couples go through this all the time. We’ll try again.”

“I love you so much,” I cried.

“I love you too, I’m so sorry.”

The guilt stung and I let it.

You tucked me into bed and held me and cried with me though we mourned separate losses. I couldn’t even look at you and for a moment I started to believe that I had actually lost the baby. You didn’t even question the fact that I went to the hospital alone and took a cab home; I told you it all happened so fast. I was at work when I saw the blood. They called an ambulance and when I arrived at the hospital that’s when they told me. I didn’t call you because by the time it was over I didn’t want to upset you with a phone call. I said I would tell you face to face when I got home. You were so sorry and so sympathetic to our loss. I wanted to stay wrapped up in your warmth forever.

...

I almost drove into that tree when you said how much you fucking hated me. The stench of cigarette smoke laced with my perfume was sickening. Stripes of golden streetlights flashed one after the other across your face, revealing alarming bits of rage against the contrasting darkness. I was screaming so loud that my

throat was raw and I didn’t recognize my own voice. The pin that held unruly hair from my face had come undone and my eyes were stinging from the shitty eyeliner job I had performed hours earlier. I swerved to the side of the road and threw the car into park, nauseous and shaking from the close encounter between us and the tree. I swung the driver’s side door open and lunged out of the car, afraid of your rage. You were slamming your fist on the dashboard and I tried to run but I couldn’t run from you. I collapsed on the side of the road just a few feet from the car, sobbing and choking on salty wetness and mucus. You didn’t come after me.



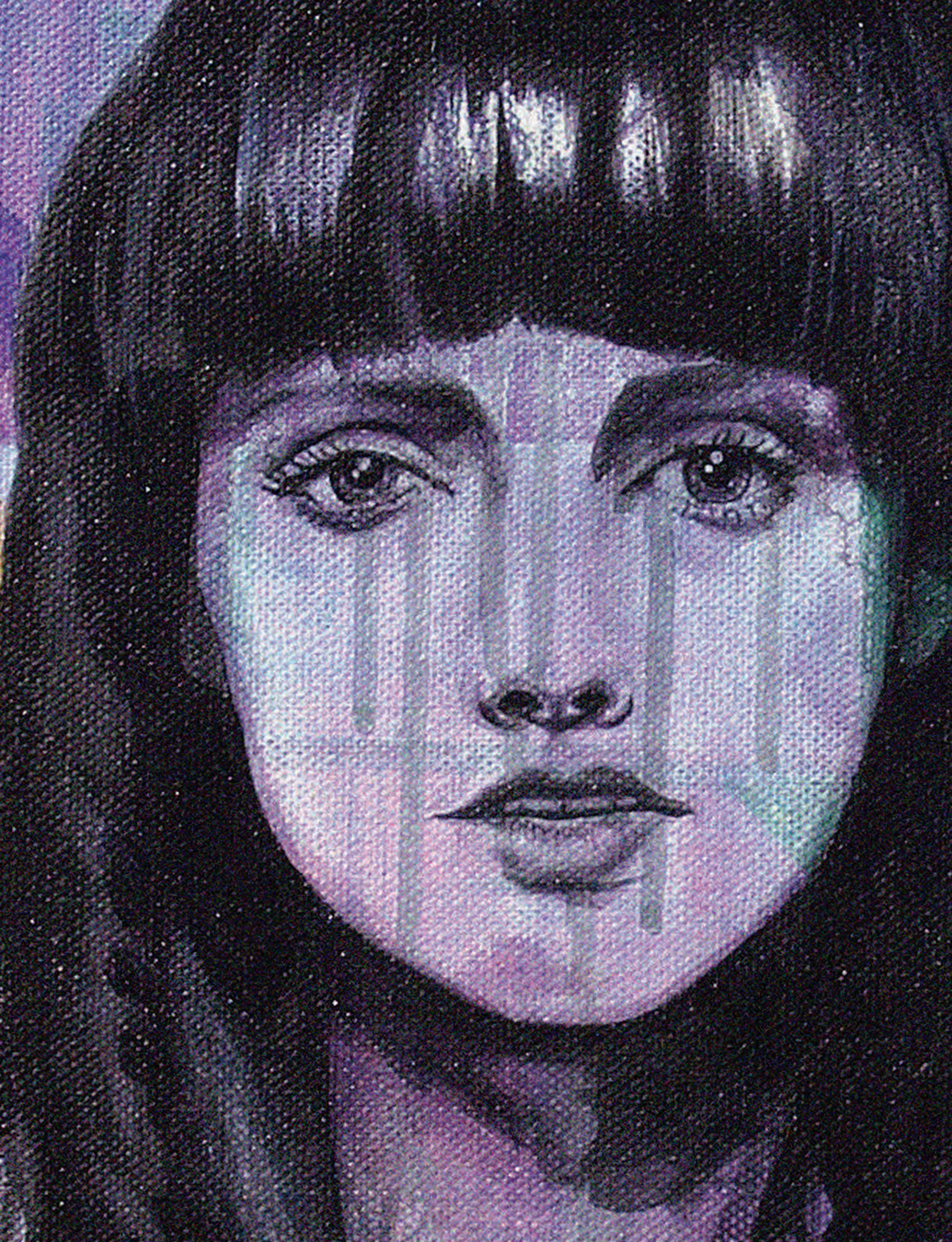


## BRA(S/Z)IL

TOM WITCHER

I'll go to Brazil someday.  
I'll spend some time there.  
I assume they'll love me,  
Because I already know  
That they speak Portuguese,  
Not Spanish.  
Eventually,  
I'll start to spell it with an "s". Brasil.  
I'll be able to point out major cities on unmarked maps.  
My father was born there. Sao Paulo.  
He's a white American though.  
From Brasil, I'll be able to see some other place.  
Maybe Uruguay.  
I'll journey to Uruguay,  
unsatisfied,  
With only an "s" where I used to have a "z"  
and a basic knowledge of Brazilian geography.









THE GALLOWS / CASSANDRA SANTOS

SPACE DOUBT / RYAN NICHOLSON



# SLICE OF LIFE



STORY / CORY ROTHWELL  
IMAGES / JAMES SMITH

---

THESE ARE THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN’S SOULS. And by “times” I mean “boobs.” I have really, really great boobs. My boobs have made me a lot of money, as an actress and a dancer, and given untold hours of pleasure to men and women alike. They are big, but not too big. Natural, but still firm and relatively in place. The right one is just the smallest bit larger than the left, but it’s an exquisite asymmetry. Divine in design and in function, I have often been in awe of them. They conjure the best and the worst out of those who bask in their presence. Muses. My breasts are muses. But now I have to lose one or lose my life and I find myself wondering: what’s the difference?

My life is worth more than my tits; I get that. But they, along with my face and my butt and my charm, are essential ingredients in the making of Lucy Hunter. Some women are afraid of their sexuality, the power it brings. I am the opposite of that. That power fuels me; I thrive on it. People fall over themselves to get to me. I leave them dumbfounded. When I envision losing half of that power I keep thinking of this lopsided, Picasso woman walking down the street and I cannot stand to be that. Anything but that. And what the fuck is cancer, anyway? Sometimes it’s genetic, sometimes it’s environmental, sometimes it’s neither. It’s always unexpected and completely out of the victims’ control. Like deer to the wolf pack, it stalks us, tracks us wherever we may go. We are fated, destined to succumb.

I am prey to nothing. Top of the food chain. I control my own fate. And that is why I have decided to order three large pizzas, my favorite toppings, and if they aren’t delivered in twenty-eight minutes I will blow my brains across my laminate floors. That’s called a ticking clock. Works great in the movies.

If there is such a thing as fate, and I am fated to die of cancer, then the delivery guy will beat the clock. I will not die as a shriveled, one breasted ghoul.

Perhaps the gun is too blunt, though there is



something appealing about demolition. I will be my own sledgehammer. I read about this Russian street-drug the other day, some kind of homemade heroin that has the pleasant side effect of rotting the flesh from your bones. I could rot away all the parts I don't like: my wide hips, the hair on my lip, cellulite above my knees. But of course, the tits stay. I wonder if they make that drug in a cold cream.

Or I could drop out of this robe when the pizza boy arrives, two-breasted and whole, my body and all my charms laid out before him, waiting to be unearthed like a vein of gold in a mountainside. The art of seduction is more than mere visual sensation. The key to sensuality, after all, is an engagement of the senses. Candles, for ambiance. The flames dance, as I have danced, a glimmer in the dark. Generating enough light to be seen by, enough shadow to hide certain sights. Perfume next, nothing too flowery in case he's allergic. Something smooth, but alluring. A heavy mix of spices and amber. Hints of jasmine, a touch of sandal wood.

In the dim candle light my robe looks red and indigo, swirls of color like moonlight passing through clouds and glistening on the surface of the Pacific. Heaven on Earth exists in the folds of this robe, in my folds. When he enters, I should stand to the left, face him with the right side. That's my good side. Do I let the robe open or present tightly wrapped? Wrapped, I think. Show him a sample, to tempt. I will reach for the knob, further from the door than I would normally stand. Elongate the body, curve the spine. Silken folds lax, sliding over me. I will have him, all of him, and he will have none of me. Not the real me. Perhaps I go for the classic, "Oh dear, it appears I don't have enough cash. Perhaps we can come to some—dramatic pause—other arrangement?" The lighting is just so. A box cutter waits on the nightstand, the key. This is the final scene. I will lure him into my home and teach

him the ways of the huntress. He is my prey. I am the top of the food chain. I will let him think he is in control. A conquering hero. He will have me, in his mind, and I will fan the flames. Then, at his height, his *arc de triomphe*, I will find the blade. Rip the cord, let loose the wine that flushes my cheeks. Paint him, my masterpiece. My money shot. My close-up. My ascension. The bella trumpeting call to arms.



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# VAGUELY RECALLED

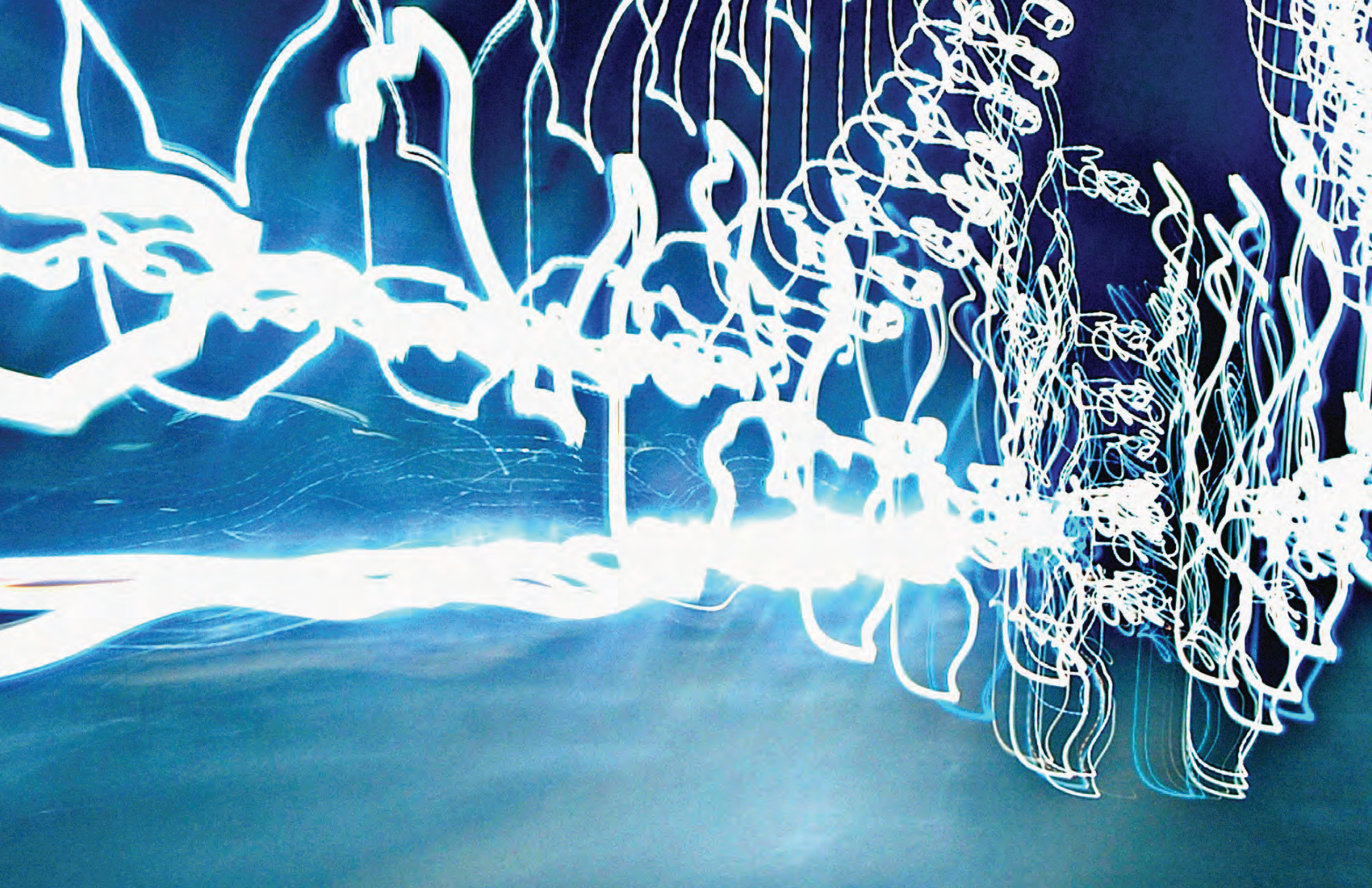
JIM BROSAN

With sadness lurking  
in my heart, I trudge  
the boulder strewn beach,  
tug the nautical rope,  
drag the dory’s bottom  
over glistening garnet—  
the grainy surface just  
feet from the satin sheen  
of a blue-green ocean.  
Ripples of an incoming  
tide approach the shoreline  
an hour before the sun,  
the hue of a grain of sand  
slides into the western sky,  
its presence obscured  
by gathering cumulus.  
The afternoon gossip  
of gulls unwinds  
like time. Lost in memory  
I try to recall her fading  
image in a gunmetal sky  
while watching a pair  
of billowing sails  
in cloud light moments  
before twilight is forgotten.



AUTUMN LEAVES BROOK / JACKIE LOCANTORE  
NEXT SPREAD: LIGHT AND ENERGY I / CAITLIN MARSHALL









CONTEMPLATION / BETSY SCARBOROUGH

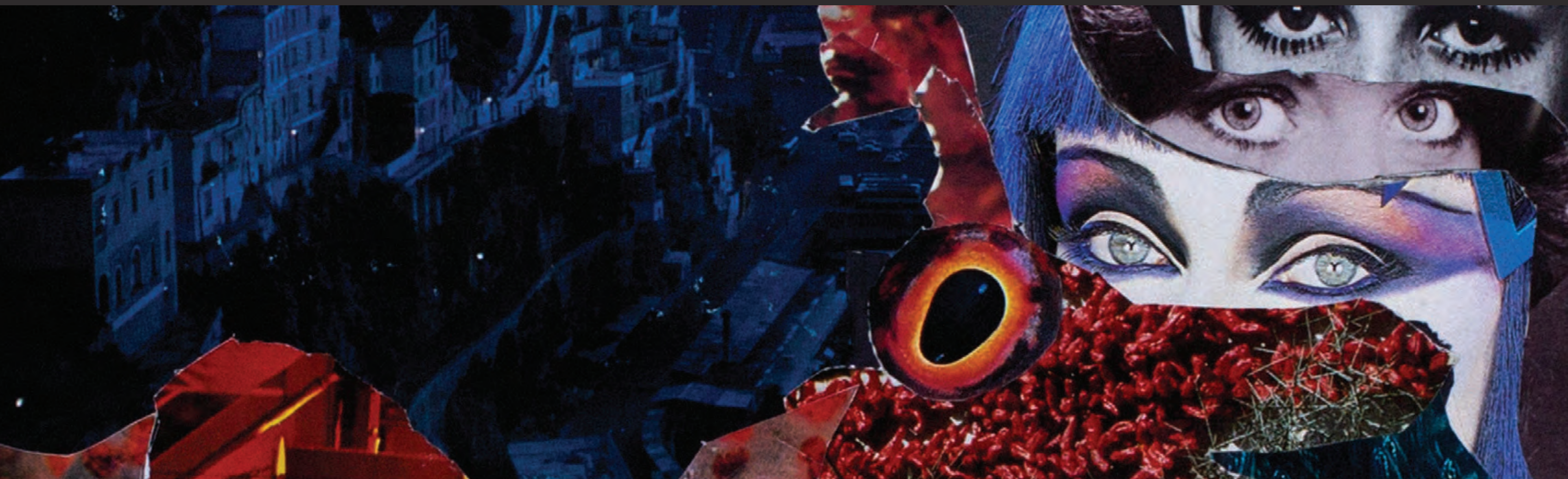
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## THREE THINGS TO REMIND A MERMAID

KATHERINE NAZZARO

- I. How did they mistake you  
for a Disney princess  
when your scales fit together  
like plate armour?
- II. You were always closer  
to your cousin, the siren.
- III. When you brought men to their knees  
there was never  
a marriage proposal on their  
lips.





AQUABABES / RYAN NICHOLSON





PRAY FOR ME / JAMES SMITH



AZTEC WARRIOR / ALANNA MEHRTENS

# CARPET



STORY / MATT RIMER  
IMAGES / HEATHER MCNAMARA  
& ZACHARY GUENARD

# BUR

THE CARPET FEELS WARM on my ears. The lamp is flickering. I can't see it directly, but its pale yellow light flashes on and off against the ceiling. I knocked it over when I fell down. I can hear the television but can't see it—only its purple glow against the ceiling. I notice the pale yellow and purple overlap that meet to form a patch of brown. The brown runs along the ridges of the swirling plaster—the type of pattern that hasn't been used by carpenters since the forties. I try to think about my family, my friends, but I can't. My eyes are like the iris of a camera sliding tighter and tighter until it's the size of a sand dollar, then a pinhole, then nothing. And as I let this warm void wrap its tender arms around me—I see something. It gently comes into focus and I try to make out what it is. Its long legs dance through the snow near a rolling brook—antlers bowing in the morning sunlight. A caribou. He looks at me with glassy black eyes.

...

"Sterling."

"Are you even listening to us?"

Maybe if I keep my eyes closed long enough—these people will be gone when I open them.

"For god's sake Sterling, can you please take this seriously?"

They sit around me in a folding chair semi-circle a dozen of them or so, all in their best Connecticut casual. They make our enormous parlor look small.

"Honey, we're here because we all love you and we're worried," she says.

"And disappointed," he says.

"Worried and disappointed."

"But mostly disappointed."

"I mean—an overdose? For god's sake, what if you had died? Imagine how that would have looked for this family—for your father's career."

"Those vultures with their cameras and their sound





bytes would jump on me about this in a heartbeat.”

“Sometimes I think the only person you care about is yourself.”

“Thanks Mom and Dad, it’s refreshing to know that you’re looking out for my best interest,” I say.

One by one the people in the chairs stand up and read from their little pieces of paper, telling me how my ‘problem’ is affecting them negatively. I might have an easier time listening to them if it weren’t for the fact that my family and friends had much bigger problems than me. Each one of them has their own unique and special addiction. For instance, my mother takes a small handful of Prozac with her coffee every morning. Our neighbor, Mrs. Prescott, reads trashy romance novels, and her Maltese, Don Giancarlo, seems to have a peculiar affinity towards peanut butter for some reason. Oh, and let’s not forget Uncle Drew, who had a few too many mint juleps at the 1992 Kentucky Derby and crashed his car into the Ohio River. Luckily everyone was fine—except the seventeen-year-old girl that was giving him a blowjob from the passenger seat. She died on impact. If it weren’t for my father’s connections, he’d be in jail. But that’s right—I’m the one who has the problem. It’s only been two weeks since my overdose, but with all the shit I’ve had to go through with my family, it feels like a year. Maybe it would have been easier if I’d just died. A tragedy is easier to deal than an ongoing problem.

About halfway into Drew’s speech, I hear someone behind me quietly laugh and head for the exit. I turn to see who it is, but he’s gone.

During a short intermission, while everyone else is refilling their coffee and using the bathroom, I sneak out the back door myself. On the deck, I see him leaning against a black metal railing smoking a cigarette—my old friend, Liam. I haven’t seen him since high school, but he’s barely aged. He’s still got those thick black eyebrows, those gangly legs, that sly grin.

He turns to me and says, “You look like shit. Then again, you’ve always looked like shit, so I guess that’s about right.”

“I like your sweater. Did it come with balls on your face, or did you have to pay extra?”

We share a laugh and a bear hug.

“So what are you doing here?” I ask, “I feel like a wholesome, open-arms intervention isn’t your type of thing.”

“It’s not. Believe me, I’m just as surprised as you that I’m here.”

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“Well why are you here then?”

He runs his hands through his hair. “Hey, I’m not here to tell you how to live your life. You do whatever you feel is right and don’t let anyone else tell you any different.”

“But?”

“But—I was thinking about heading up north for a hunting trip next weekend—taking a few days to clear my mind or whatever, maybe you could do the same.

“At the Big Tree?”

“Yeah, at the Big Tree. Like old times, you know? Listen, I’m not gonna make you do anything you don’t want to do. If you want to get clean, that’s great. If you don’t, I’m fine with that too. Do whatever feels right, man.”

I knew someone was going to make me an offer like this today, I had been prepared to unconditionally refuse. But the Big Tree?

...

My nose is bleeding. We’re lost somewhere among the pines and the ponderosas. I’m not sure what time it is—what day it is. I don’t even know what forest we’re in. But Liam does. I’d always ask him where this place was but he refused to tell us. It had been his family’s secret, ever since his great grandfather built it in the twenties.





We met in Connecticut and drove north for a few hours on paved roads, and then for a few more on a series of old dirt roads, to this very clandestine location. Are we in Maine? Vermont? For all I know we're in Quebec. The endless wood we're in doesn't have a name anyway, or so says Liam. It's like a vacuum between forests.

I can't find any tissues, so I rip off the edge of the thin fabric of my button-up and plug my nose with it. I look at my reflection in the window and the cloth soaks through with red. There's a big mass in the distance. The tires crunch over the snow until the car comes to a stop. We are here.

It's only one floor, but the cathedral ceiling makes it a good twenty feet tall. Rows of Douglas firs run along each face of the house, crossing at the corners, and a porch stretches across the front. A brown-bricked chimney spouts up from the back. I hadn't been to the Big Tree since high school, but it looks just the same as it always had.

We get out of the car and admire our old, enormous clubhouse for a few moments, until I let myself fall backward into the snow. I roll around onto my stomach and burrow my head into the white stuff. I run my tongue along my teeth and I want to breathe it in through my nose—but I know it's not the same. It's harsh and real and cold.

...

Liam insists we use the heat of the roaring fireplace instead of the electric heating system added to the house in the fifties. The fireplace is enormous, about ten feet across. I put my raw hands down my pants for warmth and look around the lodge.

The open floor plan is comprised of a kitchen and a living room, as well as a small mudroom by the door. Along the three walls of the living room are bookshelves filled with countless hardcovers.

The desk and two side tables are lined with gin glasses from different decades. Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room is a massive chandelier made of antlers. There are three layers to the monstrosity, each larger than the next like a wedding cake flipped ass-over-teakettle.

The fireplace commands the whole room. Most striking is a caribou above the fireplace. About four feet long from neck to nose, extruding out at me. It's dead black eyes look at mine. They're not its real eyes—they're made of glass—but they seem real. I pull my hands out of my pants and let them thaw out over the warm fireplace.

Liam returns from his SUV with a large bundle wrapped in an army blanket. He releases the bungee cords holding it together and unrolls the package over the dark hardwood, revealing two bolt-action Winchesters. It's too dark to go out now—we'll have to wait until the morning. I guess it's like an early Christmas present. He picks up one of the guns and lifts it above his head with one hand like it's weightless. His grip is confident and firm. He hands me mine. Each rifle had a name etched in the stock:  
LIAM and STERLING.

...

I don't think my balls had even dropped yet the first time his dad took us out to the Big Tree. We must have been, hell barely ten at the time. I remember marching out into the woods, snow up to my waist—small-bodied but big-headed. I put the butt of the rifle up to my shoulder, trying to keep the barrel from bobbing. I fired off the thing hoping to hit a squirrel. I saw a few first downs away, but sent a poor rhododendron straight to hell instead. Liam's father put his hand on my shoulder and laughed. He was different from my father—he was there when I needed him. My father spoke a thousand gilded words, but he was nothing more than a smile and a fifty-dollar haircut







suited for a bumper sticker.

If my parents had known Liam’s old man was letting me shoot a gun, they’d have killed the both of us. They didn’t trust me with anything. The Big Tree and its surrounding woods was our safe haven – an oasis where we could be grown men and do what we wanted. After hunting, Liam and I would peel off our wet socks and sing songs and yell at the top of our lungs. I was Spartacus and so was Liam, and nobody could tell us any different. Liam would strut out as John Wayne, stumbling foot over foot, while I, as the head-scalping Injun, would jump down from the loft in the form of a sneak attack. But Liam would always win.

Life away from the Big Tree was different. I remember returning from boarding school to my parent’s home one December day. I called for my Great Dane, Rosemary, but she didn’t come.

“The dog’s dead, Sterling – there was an accident.” My parents forgot to feed her when they were off campaigning. They were more upset that they had to get the scratched door replaced.

I escaped to the Big Tree that weekend. Angus and

Liam killed their share of game: a half dozen quail, a couple of grouse, and even a rabbit. I didn’t kill anything.

“Shooting like shit today, huh?” Angus said to me, “That’s alright. One of these days you’re gonna’ get a big one—one of those Caribou.”

When Liam and I were in high school, Angus died. That winter, we went to the Big Tree once again—but this time without the old man. We paced around the woods, shooting at everything in sight and missing until we ran out of ammo. We didn’t talk much that night, we just sat on the floor, basking in the therapeutic warmth of the fireplace. Then he pulled out a little baggie full of white stuff. He sprinkled some of it on his bowie knife and evened out a little line, before running it by his nose in a quick snort.

“Your turn” he said. He made another line and held the knife against my peach fuzzed upper lip. Before I knew what happened it was tingling and burning my nostrils. It scared the hell out of me but I felt like I’d never felt before. Liam belted out a savage yell while I stormed around the room full of energy. There was something pent up inside me bubbling and ready to

escape. My eyes found the caribou hanging above the fireplace.

“Some day I’m gonna’ get you, you bastard!” I howled at the top of my lungs, staring into his glassy black eyes.

I’m drenched in sweat, I’ve had the chills for a while, I think. I open my eyes. Was I dreaming? I want a bump. It’s been a little over a day. I want a bump. I’ve been using a sheepskin coat as a blanket. I check the inside breast pocket for an emergency stash that I know isn’t there. I need a bump. But I can’t have a bump. I left the rest of the white stuff back in the real world somewhere. Now I’m nowhere. I can hear Liam wheezing in the great chair and think, *Fuck you and your gentle slumber. I should wake you up. How would you like that?* I crack my knuckles. They ache. I bury my face in the pillow. If I close my eyes, I’ll be able to fall asleep. I put the pillow between my legs. *Am I asleep now?* I think to myself. How long has it been? I’m exhausted, so this shouldn’t be taking this long. Fuck, I’ve got a headache. Fuck this hunting trip. As soon as I get home I’m

going make a neat, pretty little line. Maybe I’ll even tell Liam we need to leave tomorrow. Definitely will. How many hours would that be from now? We’ll wake up at seven, get to New Haven by two and pull into Penn Station at three - thirty. Then it’s just a hop, skip, and a jump before I’m swan diving into a sea of Chelsea cocaine like Scrooge McDuck. That’s about twenty-four hours from now. I can do that. Fuck it’s hot. I throw my coat across the room and curl up into a little ball. Now I’m cold again. I try to crack my knuckles but they’re already spoken for. I lift the pillow out from under me and cover my head with it. Maybe I’ll suffocate and die. That would be nice.

Beans. He’s marching around in those goddamn boots back and forth with no regard for human life. He walks toward me and I pretend that I’m in a deep sleep. “Beans, Sterling?” He practically whispers it, but to me he’s screaming.

In my head I respond, *This is my pillow! There are many like it but this one is mine!* He shakes me. I have to respond. But I don’t. *Fuck him, I’m sleeping.*

“Come on, slick. Eat some. They’ll warm your insides.” I lift my head and, for a moment, I consider eating them. I take a big whiff of them. Jesus God. I throw up on my shirt.

My socks are soaked. These are two hundred dollar boots and my goddamn socks are soaked. I can barely see with the sunlight bouncing off the snow. It’s fucking blinding. Fuck this trip. Fuck Liam. I just need to find something to shoot.

I shouldn’t say fuck Liam. He was just trying to help. It’s not his fault I’m a fiend or chill the fuck out and do blow in moderation like a normal human being—like him. I’ve got a fucking headache and I need to find something to shoot.

“I’m tired of this bullshit, use your deer caller or something.”

“It’s broken,” he says, tucking it into his crewneck. “Gonna’ have to do this the old fashioned way.”

My nose starts to bleed again from the raw cold. I tear off another strip from my shirt and seal up the red leak again.





I stake the butt of my rifle in the snow and lean it against a spruce. I unzip my fly and sneak over to Liam to piss on his boots. He always used to do it to me as a kid so I figure it's high time I get him back. I creep up behind him but I stop. He's sniffing and rubbing his nose. He notices me.

"Oh, shit man," he says as he wipes the white stuff out from under his rosy nose. "You weren't supposed to see that."

He hides his deer call back under his jacket. He explains how he'd hollowed it out and turned it into a nifty little cocaine snuff bullet. I'm not even mad—I'm actually kind of impressed. I lick my gums.

"I feel like an asshole man. I know you're trying to get over this stuff and all, maybe we shouldn't."

"Can I have some?" I bite my lip like a teenaged girl on her first date.

"I mean—are you sure?"

"Yeah I'm sure."

He thinks about it, but only for a moment, before pulling the deer call back from out of his jacket. Maybe he wanted me to catch him sneaking a bump. Maybe he wants me to fall off the wagon again. But he stops.

"You hear that?"

I see it's legs jump by in my peripherals, but when I turn around he's lost again in the woods. Liam grabs his gun and I follow him.

...

It's getting dark, but the two of us are set on finding this thing. We've been following its tracks for hours but it's faster than we are. Liam's running through the woods like a goddamn Apache, and I'm having trouble keeping up with him. The snow is coming down heavy and the wind is blowing it right in my ugly mug. I can

barely keep my eyes open. I can't see more than ten feet in front of me. Liam is the only tangible thing that I can see against the milky white canvas all around me. The falling snow covers the beast's tracks and so we can't follow it any longer. He stops for a moment and lets me catch up to him. I pull up next to him as he stares into the distance. He drapes the strap of his rifle over his shoulder and pulls a cigar from his coat pocket. The metal lighter clicks open and he twists the cigar around the flame.

He stands there, meditating intensely and I know better than to bother him. After a while his cigar is just a little smoldering nub between his lips.

Looking at me he says, "I think we're close."

The nub finds its way into his mouth and he chews on it for a bit. When I see him swallow, I know it's time to start walking again.

Then he sees something in the distance. I squint but I can't find it. He aims his rifle but never pulls the trigger. It must be too far away. He runs after it and I chase him. I have to high-leg it through what must be almost a foot of snow. My boot gets swallowed and I fall flat on my face. Liam doesn't stop for a second. When I finally knock it clear of snow and get it back on my foot, he's gone.

"Hey!" I scream out into the night, but my voice gets lost in the sheets of wind and white.

...

I can't find Liam or the Big Tree. It's pitch-goddamn-black. I'm fucked. I crack my knuckles. I'm probably going to fucking die because Liam had to run off like that. The edges of my ears are raw. I wish I had a bump. I wish I had one last bump before I freeze to death. Maybe I could start a fire? Maybe that would get me through the night?

My fingers find a matchbox deep in my coat pocket. I shovel the snow away with my hands until I hit leaves.



Once the clearing is about at arms length across, I head into the woods.

I dump a pile of wood next to the clearing. Quickly, I get to work making a small lean-to out of birch bark. Liam's old man taught me that — that birch burns when wet. The snow's coming down fast and I need to get this lit before it's completely covered. I take off my gloves and pluck a match out from the matchbox. I can barely feel it in my fingers. Those gloves didn't do anything. I press it against the strike pad with my thumb but it snaps in half. I slide open the matchbox again but knock it into the snow with my hand. Fuck, I need to slow down. I take a deep breath. The snow ruined all of the matches, except for one. I strike it with my thumb and it flares. Shielding the lit match from the wind with my other hand, I carefully guide it toward the birch. It's a few inches away but then it goes out.

"No." The thin wisp of smoke rises up into my face — teasing me. "No, no, no, no."

My runny nose has hardened around my nostrils. I fall onto my back.

The snow is cold around my ears. I look up at the moon. It reflects that bright light that teases me. It's saying to me, it's daytime on the other side of the earth. It's all nice and sunny over there and you're stuck over here with your tiny shriveled penis, slowly dying.

...

I stare the moon and my eyes glaze over. Something about it seems strange. I'm not sure exactly what it is. It's something faint. It seems a little darker. No not darker, just a little bit green. No, no, it's in my head. It's still bright white. But it's tinted green. This time I'm sure of it. And it's getting greener. I stare into it for a while until the guy behind me leans on his horn. I quickly step on the gas. I'm so stupid. I was just sitting at that green light for god knows how long. I accelerate down the road. It's

so dark I can hardly see the yellow lines on the pavement.

"My dad's gonna' be so mad at me!" says a nine-year-old sitting in the passengers seat. He looks like me.

"Buckle your seatbelt, kid."

But he's gone.

I'm not pressing down on the pedal but the speed is increasing. I hold onto the steering wheel for dear life as I roll up and down the hills and around the bends. There's something in the road looking at me. I slam on the brakes and lean on the horn.

...

The light starts to pour through my eyelids. Who took my blankets? She stole my blankets again. So cold. I need to break up with her. I brush the snow off my face with my hand. Snow? I try to open my eyes again. The bright light shines through the canopy. I'm still in the forest. I pull my coat's hood back over my head and try to go back to sleep. My eyes start to close and blink open, one final time before I doze off again. But no — there's something standing in front of me. A deer. A big deer. His long legs dance through the snow near a rolling brook — antlers bowing in the morning sunlight. He's eating berries from a bush about fifty feet away. I'm still on my side, unflinching. I'm just looking at him. Admiring him. I gently lift my head up.

My rifle is still sleeping under my arm. I quietly sit up and lift the butt of the gun to the pocket of my shoulder. I use my teeth to tear off the glove on my right hand, exposing my trigger finger. I've seen him somewhere before. Safety off. He's not a deer. He's a caribou. I press the butt firmly against my shoulder. I look down the sight. I take a deep breath and hold it. His ears perk up and my finger tightens.

I hear a thud instead of the crack of a tree. The mighty beast falls to the ground. I swing my gun over my shoulder and high-knee through the snow — I can't get there fast enough.





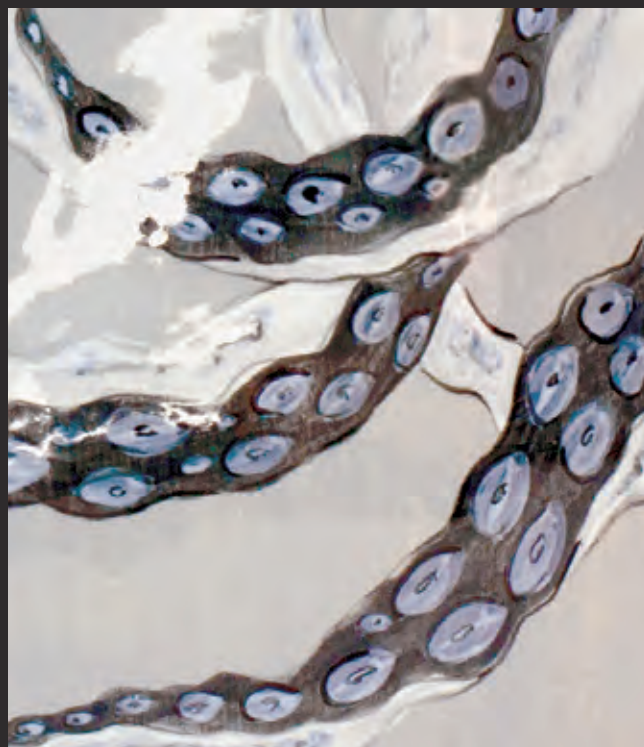
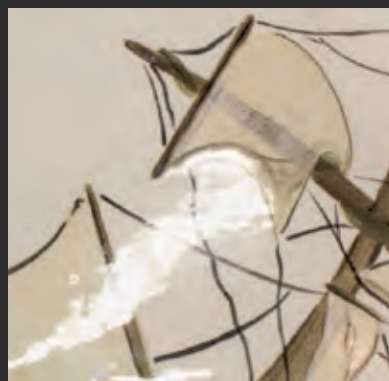


VASE SERIES / ASHLEIGH VANEK





VASE SERIES / ASHLEIGH VANEK











## GASOLINE

TOM WITCHER

life's a lot like pumping gas  
because the first fifteen dollars fly by  
and you're too preoccupied with the cute girl at pump 4  
or with the minefield of gum and cigarette butts  
and losing lottery tickets,  
trying desperately to avoid them with your shoes  
that aren't even nice.  
when the girl leaves  
you look up and say,  
"damn, only a dollar to go."  
you see every cent.  
you feel every cent.  
it crawls.









LEMONS IN STONE MORTAR / LEYLA NAOME KAISER







HALDOL  
JOHN BONANNI

Mom & Dad

never talk about

St. Luke's.



---

## SUNDAY MORNING

LIZZ WILSON

My mother spent ten years in bed  
catatonic from Xanax and Klonopin  
before she was ‘manic’  
she was so funny.

She would shut off all the lights  
and pretend to be Papaloogo,  
chasing us around the dingy third floor apartment  
’till my stomach formed a six pack  
from incessant laughter.

She let us watch Goosebumps  
on the weekends,  
only to try and scare us after tucking us in.

She would always blast 95.5  
on Sunday mornings and  
I would wake up to the smell of sizzling bacon  
and the sound of her singing gospel music.  
Though she was never religious.

She would have her friends over  
and get drunk off one coffee brandy and milk,  
and do a weird dance that looked like  
she was drying her ass with a towel.

She always made Shepherd’s Pie for dinner  
when there was a special occasion.

My mother spent ten years in bed.  
Catatonic from Xanax and Klonopin,  
smoking grams of weed  
and packs of Marlboro Reds.

I never invited any of my friends over.  
All we had in the pantry was a box of macaroni  
and a lonely stick butter in the fridge.

I’d slip notes under the door sometimes,  
when I didn’t feel like talking,  
just wanted to tell her  
I hated her Doctors.

She never wrote me back.

DRAFT / DJ NELSON   NEXT SPREAD: MY EDGES / SARAH NEWTON











# GUST

JOHN BONANNI

There are times when the wind sags,  
Removes from its tumult and gusts, a ghost  
Full of urge but waning,  
I run my fingers along its edges, its hair  
Allows the slip of wet spaghetti. Allows apparition  
The beat it needs to falter through  
Me. The rain which falls in flakes against my windshield,  
Evaporates into a white maze.  
Dad. We never thought to hunt for you.  
We found you in our careless gaits,  
A step toward our storm,  
A step which grazes into stumble,  
We found you there, as our faces scraped  
The pavement, and we rose  
Bloodied, abandoned, faking  
Our roadside tin can smiles,  
Faking the whole fall.









LOST AND FOUND / BRITTANY FONTAINE

# THE POEM DOES NOT WANT

JOSH SAVORY

(for Ryan)

to be written because if it is, it can no longer run free. When its caught, it will try to struggle & escape but the wordsmiths of now must force it to stay with the paper, breaking its legs, Misery-style, if absolutely necessary. A shotgun marriage of letters & white space. The poem will try to plead, beg wholly to unapologetic gods & non-gods alike, eventually resorting to cheap tactics like breaking lead & blue screens

but

there are methods to bring it around to particular schools of thought. The poem does not want to be written because afterward, it is trapped, forced to toil under the thumb & work off its debt which can never be paid, no matter who is listening. After this is explained, thoroughly, the poem may weep or get angry. Ignore it; it's the best way to shorten this part. When the poem finally comes around, it may realize that this existence could be beneficial to its longevity

but

if it doesn't think that, it may think evil, of everything. IT mAY attemt, sabatage, or something worse, but within the confines of Four Chamber & Four Wall, it can come to terms with its new life. It may start to sing of colors, vibrant hues only visible within this fictional eye, or color spectrums blacked out in a shot. It can become one with the heavens, or darken its eyes with shadow, lessening pop.

Then

find another unwritten word medley. Hopefully, it will be treated better than the last cluster of letters, symbols, and ideas that wandered onto the page.



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## CACKLING

TOM WITCHER

my hat slipped into the sink one morning  
and i wandered out into the world  
with a saturated mind.  
funny enough,  
as I stepped out my door,  
the rain all stopped.  
my celebration shook the water from my brim.  
i stepped on in my public and jubilant stride,  
cackling life into grass-people,  
and i swear i felt the cobblestones shift,  
like all at once the whole planet sighed,  
as if to say,  
“he’ll have to do.”

BETWEEN THE LINES / ZACHARY GUENARD





# EMPTY CUPS

DOUG TOOK A BREATH that felt like he had swallowed sand leaving a gritty burning on the side of his mouth. He was circling back from his second lap past the WalMart at the far end of the mall, walking up the long rectangle that formed the shopping center, his eyes locked on the Victoria's Secret. There was no other choice but to go in. Buying a second soft pretzel this soon would arouse suspicion. He'd been looking forward to this ever since he got his license. Finally, after months of idle daydreams, he'd finally have a bra in his hands. And, if all went well, on his chest.

He walked past the store, breaking eye contact with the poster of the scantily clad supermodel that he had been envious of all day, and made a beeline for the nearest vending machine. *Shit!*

A table in front of the fountain gave him a perfect vantage point to look at the store and sip his third bottled soda, having the same discussion he'd had with himself a hundred times before. *Nothing's weird about wanting to try on a bra. Boobs are awesome, right? What's wrong with wanting to put one on?* He tried to stop thinking before "*the fact it makes you pop a stiffy*" came up. No luck. Doug rubbed his temple, shivering from the cold sweat in his palm.



C'mon, you gotta do this eventually. It's either this or steal a pair of Mom's, and that's way too weird. Just tell them it's for your girlfriend. No one's going to ask. No one needs to know these are for you. They're for your girlfriend. The couple at the table next to Doug cast a glance at him. He averted his gaze to the table, picking at a crusted-on remnant of a Happy Meal with his finger. When the couple left some ten minutes later, he did too. You've got this.

With his gaze facing away from the store and over the railing into the food court below, he nearly bowled over a pair of small children whose parents were paying the same amount of attention he was. After mumbling an apology he looked back at the glowing purple letters. The light was as soft as the products inside. *It's for your girlfriend. Her name is...Ashley. She goes to school—God, no one's going to ask you that. University of Ohio.*

The only thing sharper than Doug's alibi was his turn into the store. He almost walked past again, but with a surge of confidence he immediately regretted, he was inside. The promised land! After forty days of wandering (or just two endless hours) he had reached it!

*Jesus Christ, I have no idea where to go.* He didn't break stride, walking past the counter and avoiding the stare from the clerk he assumed was judgmental. It smelled like girl. *How many boys come in here to gawk? She probably thinks I'm no better. I'm a paying customer; show me some respect!* He bowed his head and stepped around another shopper, looking to a display on the back wall as if he knew exactly what he was looking for. He wished the racks and shelves were higher so he could hide his head instead of inspecting yoga pants as if he wanted to buy them.

He found himself lost in rows of regular shirts and pants, reading the word "pink" so much it lost all original meaning. Over his shoulder he could see the racks full of bras: lace, and ribbon. The stuff wet dreams were made of, the real promised land.

In the sea of stretch pants and t-shirts that would only fit a wine glass, Doug went over his facts again. He was shopping for a gift for what's-her-name. No one could call him a pervert. *Amanda? Close enough.* The soft pop music in the air made his head feel airy and the lights felt like someone had turned the dimmer all the way up and snapped off the handle. Looking into them made Doug's eyes feel hotter than the models on the posters outside. *Well, they're not that attractive...*

"Can I help you?"

Doug felt his entire body snap away from the voice, daydreams interrupted by his head jerking as if electrocuted. He had been advanced upon by a young woman, a head shorter than he was, but obviously much older. After a second's eye contact Doug tried to look at her name tag, but she was wearing it on the bottomside of her breast, below the nipple and out of clear view. He stared, simultaneously trying to make out the name and admiring a chest so large that it could actually have a bottom side, before realizing what he was doing and looked back at the yoga pants.

"No thanks."

His voice was hoarse, and his mouth felt like he hadn't had anything to drink in days, contrary to how badly he felt like he was going to piss himself. The salesperson lingered a minute longer but noticing Doug's determination to stare a hole through the leg of a pair of grey shorts, moved on. He cleared his throat as quietly as he could as she left, so she didn't hear him and try to come back.

Doug stood at the wall rack, letting frozen beads of sweat roll down his neck and then burn up in the supernova that was the indoor lighting. He was able to memorize the price of every one of the different kinds of pants on display and knew that they desperately needed to restock the light grey size small ones. According to his watch, he'd been browsing yoga pants for fifteen minutes. Thirteen more than he'd need to



know none of them would fit him. One of the saleswomen laughed behind the checkout counter, slamming her hand down loudly in conversation with a coworker and another customer. Doug watched the spectacle out of reflex, his eyes taken from the allure of pants and once again heard the siren song the bras were singing.

Doug tore himself away from his home base with all the excitement of a baby sparrow with a broken wing learning how to fly. He would have appreciated a high place to jump from nearby. The hard carpet of the work-out clothes section ended, giving way to harder black plastic flooring. His hand knocked over a box of the same fruity perfume he had smelled before off a display in the middle of the aisle, and the clatter that sounded caught the attention of the three women at the front of the store. Doug nearly fell over when he went to pick it up, missed the first two grabs and, upon placing it back on the table, knocked two more boxes onto their side. Abort! Abort! He slipped into the aisle of bras, coated in sweat and shame.

*Oh my God, there are so many of these things.* Doug puffed a short breath. How could he know so little about the thing he thought about constantly? He'd never

picked up a magazine or looked at many pictures online. He wasn't a pervert, for Christ's sake. There were numbers besides the alphabetical sizes? *Are boobs metric? What the hell?*

Doug crouched to hide his head, taking an interest in the lowest rack. He pulled his phone from his pocket, opening old text messages in hopes that it would look like he was trying to find a list from... Allison. *God dammit, any name is fine so long as you don't say something like your sister.* He slipped a solid black bra off the shelf, looking it over casually like an assembly line worker checking for quality. The label said "34C" but might as well have read "Big Enough for You, No-Tits." A stumbling forward he thought was nonchalant got Doug back to his feet.

"Will this be all, sir?" The clerk smiled at him. Doug was too busy looking at the bra to notice.

"Yeah."

"That comes to \$38.57. Cash or credit?"

Doug placed a pair of twenties on the counter with a quivering hand. *Holy shit, do they charge by the cup?* He wanted to drop the garment there and forget the whole thing. But he couldn't do that with so many



people watching and victory at hand.

“There you are, sir. Have a nice day.”

“You too. And next time I’ll tell my sister to do her own shopping.”

*Girlfriend, you idiot! Girlfriend! Oh my God!*

As he dashed out of the store, he made eye contact with a middle-aged balding man who, even without looking at the bright pink bag Doug was carrying, seemed to know every thought running through the little weirdo’s head. Doug was sure of it. Said weirdo wound the bag into a tight sausage shape, shoved it into his jacket, and broke eye contact with the clairvoyant shopper before he was completely exposed. Doug’s excitement made him speed all the way home.

Once he was in the safety of his own room he laid the bra on his bed. The gaming systems below the large TV and the Bengals poster he bought at their last game told him he was no less of a man. But the bra claimed otherwise. Placed openly on the bed, like he always imagined the girlfriend he’d never had would throw it, the garment wanted to be worn. Doug knew this. Ignoring the preference the bra had for an actual female, Doug knew it had to be him. He wanted to do this, and he was going to do this.

He had no idea how to do this. He had the bra over his chest and his arms in the straps, but, with all the dexterity he could muster, couldn’t reach the clasp in the back. He took it off, observed the pair of hooks, and tried again to no avail. He took the bra off, hooked them together, and then shoved himself into the garment head-first. After some grunting and struggling he stood there, looking down at the empty cups, running his thumb under the barbed wire the bottom must have been made of.

Five minutes after sitting in front of the computer the bra came off. The attempt to watch highlights from last night’s game online had been foiled by constant adjustment. His chest was turning red from the rubbing

of the underwire and could have very well been bleeding for the level of grief it was giving him. He shoved the bra into the back of his underwear drawer, putting his shirt back on and flipping on the TV.

*Come on, it wasn’t that bad. Just try and put something soft on the wire to make it more comfortable. There’s no way they’d sell those things being so uncomfortable.*

Doug repeated the process, this time stuffing the cups full of tissues and then toilet paper when the tissues ran out. It looked like someone had overturned the contents of a shredder on him and some of the confetti had stuck. It only took two minutes for the bra to be thrown back in the drawer again, this time covered with a stack of white undershirts.

“Those commercials lied. Form-fitting, my ass.” He rubbed his chest again, scratching his head.





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## STATE POLICE BARRACKS, MEDIA, PA

JOHN BONANNI

Dad showed me the red  
rings around his wrists

I want to tell him  
Fight.

But the handcuffs  
were pressed in

as fast as a baton.

And even then,  
his voice went hiding.

The fight left with the silence

that follows thunder,

the way a body  
casts a shadow

that fades each day  
at noon. Dad cooperated.

He told the police

about the medications  
from the night before, they ordered him out.

He stepped silent on each cell  
of earth before him,

And said each letter  
Backward.









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## AFTER A BLUE-RASPBERRY ITALIAN ICE

JESSICA MELENDY

Inside the toilet, there will be headless goldfish lassoed together by turquoise slime, beef chunks, bubbles and bloody mucus stretching up to her nose. Spaghetti coils replace her reflection in a garbage collage, and hollow her out with every perfect purge; splashing back her face in sludge piles, smacking her lips in throaty debris. She puffs and swells with each pumping dry heave, panicking because of a jingling doorknob. Wiping drool with her soiled sleeve, she waits for her brain to stop tingling, and pops a Tic Tac as she makes her way to the mirror- swearing, "I'm ok. I'm ok."

LATEX ON PLEXI / LAWRENCE COLALUCA







POWER OF FRIENDSHIP / MEI FUNG ELIZABETH CHAN    NEXT SPREAD: TILLY / CAMERON ALEXANDER



## CITY GIRLS

TAYLOR ALMEIDA

I want to write poetry at three in the morning,  
rivers that flow from the mouths of gods  
and into littered city pools.  
I want my poetry to smell like black asphalt under summer sun  
I want you to worry it will get stuck inside you  
just like that girl from the tenth grade  
who's hair belonged to the paint  
that a starving artist swirled onto his canvas.  
I want my poetry to give hope  
maybe this one will be it, maybe  
this clementine will be much more ripe  
ripe like the fruits of summer that dangle  
on tree limbs that are as weak as I,  
not entirely so but definitely so.  
I want my poetry to do nothing at all,  
blank stares at a word filled page  
and I want to be the only one who understands  
that pain is a specific feeling a classroom full of  
sweating teenagers cannot feel  
all they can feel is the smell of rain on their necks.  
I want poetry that sounds like you,  
passionate, like I believe in my words wholly,  
as though I did not pull them out of my ass at three in the morning.

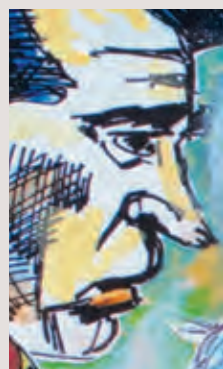






# TO AN

# APPOINTMENT



STORY / JAMES HOLBERT  
IMAGES / BETSY SCARBOROUGH

ON THE TOP FLOOR of the building, Roger had just appeared in front of his door and turned around to lock it with his only apartment key. As he approached the railing that sailed down alongside the stairs all the way to the bottom, he felt in his pockets. He shook his head, removed his wallet, put it in the right pocket and turned around toward the stairs.

He began again.

The stairwell was tight and the stair steps snaked around each of the four walls. The only places where there were no steps were the platform landings where all the other apartment doors stood, one for each landing.

As he descended the stairs, he bumped into a young man ascending toward him. He smiled as soon as he saw Roger and quickened to meet him.

"Rog, man," he said with a hand extended, which Roger took firmly before embracing the man there on the steps. "Haven't seen ya since Friday. Recoverin'?"

"What, from the party? No, I've just been around."

"Sure, sure. Maybe you're just gettin' old, Rog, can't handle it anymore," he said

A laugh escaped from Roger.

"I'm not old. I'm not even thirty, for Christ's sake."

A hand fell on Roger, pushing him up the stairs.

"Lemme show ya somethin', Rog."

"Alright, let's see it."

They went up to the next platform and the young man opened the door there without unlocking it. Roger followed him inside.





The young man's voice traveled out to the stairwell. "That there's a toilet Rog, try to get the vomit in there next time will ya?"

Laughter from within.

Roger appeared in the doorway and looked back. "And shut that door on the way out, it's cold as death on that stairwell out there," a voice called from inside the apartment.

"Yeah, yeah," Roger said in reply and shut the door.

He began again.

The walls of the stairwell were eggshell white. Everyone in the complex complained of the color before—a sickening green that appeared even worse in the sunlight that peered through the windows aligned on the east wall. As Roger descended the stairs, he could make out all the scratches and scuffs and all of the other irregularities on the surface.

Continuing down several flights of stairs, Roger registered the sound of music. He smiled to himself and mumbled a name.

When he arrived on the platform where the music was the loudest, the door there peeled back. Roger bumped into a hurried young woman She was wearing some lose fitting pajama pants and a tank top.

She halted before him, slightly frightened and almost dropped the bundle in her hands.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Oh, hello, Roger!"

She smiled up at him.

"It's okay, small stairwell."

"You bet, it's hard for two people to even squeeze by each other," she said. "But hey, are you on your way out?"

"Yeah."

She gestured with her bundle.

"Well, I was just heading up to return the blender you let me borrow. Do you want me to just leave it by your door since you're leaving?"

"You could just hang onto it for now."

"No, I don't need it anymore." She began to go up the

stairs and then stopped. "Oh, since you're here anyway, maybe you should come and bring it in your apartment. Unless you left your door unlocked?"

She was already up another flight.

"I didn't."

"Well come on then. What's the use of losing another minute?"

Roger chuckled and followed the girl up the stairs, catching up with her only when they got to the top. He unlocked the door and took the blender from her, disappearing into the apartment for a moment. The girl waited for him outside.

"Thanks," he said on his return, closing the door and locking it.

"Yup," she said.

They began again down the stairs, Roger a little behind because they both couldn't fit on the same step.

"So where are you off to?" she said.

"Got somewhere to be, that's all."

"Oh, Mr. Mysterious, huh?" she joked.

"If I told you, I'd have to kill you," Roger said. She giggled.

"That's cliché. I thought you'd say something different, Roger."

"Well, it's not anything. Nothing important, I mean," he said. "What about you? Going nowhere today?"

"Nope. Just kind of hanging around.

Late morning, you know."

They arrived at the platform to her door. It was silent.

"Well, I'll see you around, Roger," she said, hanging on the threshold of the door after she had opened it.

"Sure thing," he said.

She left him with a lingering smile even after she closed the door.

He began again.

The light spilled out from the windows above, staining the floor in the shape of four squared panes.







Betsy Scarborough 2013



In the light, dust floated in the air between the ground and the sill of the window. Roger could not see out of it. The window was too high up, nearly touching the platform that rested above it. It was like this on every floor.

Roger, who was nearing the end of the stairwell, heard the sound of rustling plastic bags and someone mounting the steps. He glanced over the railing to see an old woman with her hands full of groceries. By the time he reached her she had barely gone up five steps.

“Oh, Roger, darling,” she said when he stood there before her. “Pardon me. I’ll be getting in your way.”

Roger tried to find space between them, but the woman and the groceries occupied the entire space between the railing and the wall. He looked up the stairs.

“Do you want any help?” he said after a moment.

“Oh, darling, that would be wonderful,” she said. “These stairs aren’t any good for an old woman like me.”

He leaned down and took the bundle of bags from the woman who, having been relieved, gripped the railing and began to slowly follow Roger up the stairs.

“It’s very nice of you,” the old woman said.

“Don’t mind it,” Roger replied.

“The supermarket had such good bargains today, I couldn’t pass it up.”

“Yeah.” The bags were heavier than Roger expected.

Fortunately, the old woman did not live too many flights up from the bottom. Unlocking the door, she stepped aside and allowed Roger to pass. “Just right over on the counter there, sweetie.” She followed after him.

“Here?” he said from inside.

“Yes, there is fine,” a voice replied.

After a moment, Roger’s figure emerged on the stairwell, closing the door carefully behind him.

He began again.

The railing was worn near the bottom, on the verge of crumbling. Roger avoided it the rest of this descent,

but looked back up to the platform he had just left, remembering the old woman that lived up there.

Nearing the final step of the stairway, Roger could faintly hear his name being called. He stopped, in search of the source.

“Roger, are you there?” the voice echoed.

“Roger?”

He sighed briefly and swiveled on his feet to face the stairs. He went up.

Intermittently, Roger was met with the call of his name. It was when he reached the top that he saw a man standing before his door, scratching his head.

“Boss?”

The man turned around, frightened.

“Dear lord, boy! I thought you had to be on the other side of this thing,” he said, slapping the door.

“I see now,” he pondered, “just got back from somewhere, did you?”

“Well, no,” Roger said, entirely confused.

“Is something the matter?”

“No, no,” he said. “I was just in the neighborhood and decided to pop up.”

“But how could you have not passed me? I’ve been on—”

“Listen, Roger, I just wanted to go ahead and give you some documents that just came in the other day. I know you’re on vacation, but it would really help me out if you looked them over.” He eyed Roger sympathetically.

“I’d have done them myself, but I’ve been rather busy lately. And today I’ve had a particularly late morning. You know how it goes.” The man tucked in his shirt. “Anyway, I’ll leave you to it.” He handed Roger a folder, heavy with paper.

“Have a nice rest of your vacation,” he called as he went down the stairs.

Roger flipped the folder open, scanning the sheets briefly while he closed the distance between where

he stood and his door. He inserted his key and went in, returning a moment later with nothing in his hands.

He began again.

Down he went, briskly passing by the door of the young man before, taking note of the walls, noticing now for the first time an obscene word scrawled just above the baseboard. He gave a quick look in the direction of the door of the girl, smiling as he went by, but didn’t slow down as passed. Reaching the old woman’s platform, he glanced at her door and quickly kept moving.

He reached the final step, his foot hovering just above the solid, bottom level of the complex. His cellphone beeped in his pocket and he replanted his stance on that final, that first, step.

“Not today?” Roger said into the phone.

There was a brief pause.

“Okay, then. Not today.” He closed his phone.

He turned around and climbed the stairs.

He began again.





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## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

BETSY SCARBROUGH graduated from BSU in the Spring of 2012 with a degree in English with a writing concentration and a minor in art. She enjoys writing poetry and has a passion for mixed media.

JOSH SAVORY is working toward his masters in English with a concentration in creative writing. He plans on releasing a collection of poetry before he turns to ash and returns to the earth.

BRITTANY FONTAINE is an art major, with a concentration in photography. She will graduate in the spring of 2015 and wishes to travel this world and continue to find moments in time to photograph.

TOM WITCHER is an English major in his first year at Bridgewater. In the future, he hopes to have composed a body of work that is large enough to be representative of his life.

LEYLA NAOME KAISER is graduating in 2015 with a BA in new media art. Leyla enjoys creating mythological and science fiction pieces. She plans to open a studio, expanding into gaming and movies.

CAITLIN MARSHALL is a senior photography student planning to graduate spring 2015. Through her dedicated love of photography she hopes to continue gaining experience and knowledge to polish her skills.

ALYSSA MCCARTHY is a social work major graduating in 2014. She aspires to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.

RYAN NICHOLSON is an English major graduating in 2015. His efforts are to shine light on the more abstract and cerebral images within the world of visual art. Ryan believes these images, although they may be overlooked by many, create a new and unique artistic perspective.

MATT RIMER is an English-writing major graduating this May. In the future, he wishes to continue his career as a freelance writer.

SARAH NEWTON is a freshman considering a double major in art and communication studies. She aspires to create beautiful things that bring happiness to others.

GABRIELLA DINIZ is an art major concentrating in graphic design with minors in art history and management. She is graduating in January 2015 and hopes to obtain a position in design or continue her studies at the graduate level.

HEATHER MCNAMARA, is a twenty year old junior who will be graduating in the spring of 2015 with a degree in graphic design and a minor in art history.

LIZ MCDONOUGH is a photography major graduating in 2015. She hopes to have recognized photographs that make an emotional difference in people's lives.

ERICA ADAMS is a graphic designer based out of the south shore of Massachusetts. She enjoys exploring the relationship between inner self and external media through her artwork. Erica graduated from Bridgewater State University in January of 2013 receiving her Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in graphic design.

JESSICA MELENDY graduated from BSU in 2013 as a double major in English and communication studies. She is now a grad student at UMass Boston and is concentrating on creative writing and composition. Before all that, she is a proud mother to her four-year-old daughter, Natalie.



KATHERINE NAZZARO is an English major, due to graduate in 2017. She hopes to go on to become a teacher after graduating.

FALLON KEENAN is an art major with a photography concentration graduating in 2015. Fallon likes to document the unique people she meets. Her goal is to share these interesting lifestyles with the world and to inspire others to get out there and adventure.

TIM CONCANNON is graduating in 2015 as a double major in English and economics. His future goals include getting out of the house more.

SARAH CORREIA is a graduating English major from Bridgewater, MA who has had the urge to write since she learned how & hopes she always will.

DR. JIM BROSINAN, a full professor at Johnson & Wales University, is a 1973 M.ED. (English) graduate. His poetry will be published in his forthcoming fifth book of poetry.

TAYLOR ALMEIDA is planning to graduate in 2016 with a double major in elementary education. In the future, she'd love to publish both a dystopian novel and a children's book.

LIZZ WILSON is graduating in May 2014 with a degree in communications. When writing, she tends to draw on past experiences for inspiration. "So, cheers to creating more memories."

RUSHELL KWONG is an aspiring art educator from Plymouth, MA. Currently in her senior year, she is working towards building mastery in drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, ceramics, and digital art.

JAMES HOLBERT will graduate in 2015 as an English major. In the future, he will continue to write fiction and hopes to grow as an author.

JOHN BONANNI is editor of the Cape Cod Poetry Review. His poetry has appeared in monkey bicycle, assaracus, and Hayden's Ferry Review. He's working on an M.ED. in special education and he's not sure if he's ever graduating. He hopes to finish writing a full-length manuscript of poetry this year.

MEI FUNG CHAN is going to graduate in the spring of 2014. Her major is art with concentration on fine arts-printmaking. She was born in Hong Kong and she is very interested in the social problems facing Hong Kong.

LAWRENCE BRUNO COLALUCA III graduated January 2014 double concentrating in graphic design and fine arts. He aspires to create art that will be remembered.

JACKIE LOCANTORE attended Bridgewater State in her 40's from 1993 to 1997. She graduated Summa Cum Laude, Presidential Scholar, All-College Honors and Honors in Fine Arts (the first to do so) and Senior Art Award. She now runs an open art studio, and art will always be a major part of her life.

CORY ROTHWELL graduated from BSU in December of 2013. He is currently in the process of researching graduate programs, and composing a graphic novel in collaboration with his wife, Tracie.

TORY SANTILLI is a senior art major with a concentration in fine arts. Her strong points have been drawing and abstract printmaking. After graduating she hopes to continue making printed pieces and one day own her own studio, to teach and learn new techniques.

ASHLEIGH VANEK is an art/crafts major graduating in 2014, with a concentration in ceramics. She aspires to one day open her own shop where she can make all types of craft media pieces. She'd also like to continue exploring the relationship between painting and ceramics.

DJ NELSON is a fifth-year art major. He is concentrating in graphic design and new media arts. As for the future, he has no plan.

JAMES SMITH produced the pieces of art titled *Pray for Me* and *Dessert*. We wish we knew more about him but alas, we do not.

CASSANDRA SANTOS is a junior double majoring in early childhood education and art education.

ZACHARY GUENARD is an art major with a concentration in fine arts.



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## EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES

BRIANA MCDONALD is a junior English major set to graduate in the spring of 2015. She loves oversized sweaters and dreams of owning a Persian cat named Hashbrown.

SEAN CLIFFORD is a graduating senior and English Major. He will be attending graduate school at Boston College in the fall. His hobbies are car surfing and wheelbarrow collecting. He invented the dance now popularly referred to as the “Charleston.”

MAGGIE TOBIN is a junior majoring in marketing with a minor in English who found her start in writing through spoken word poetry. In her first year as editor she’s learned the importance of projection and living your word.

BRETT FRENCH is a junior English major who focuses on twentieth century American comics and poetry. He doesn't like the term graphic novel.

CHRISTOPHER LINDSTROM is a graduating senior hoping to pursue an MFA in creative writing. He has a recurring nightmare where his friends turn into pretzels and then he wakes up covered in salt.

JOHN CONDRY is a graduating English major with a writing concentration. He writes short stories, plays, and has begun work on a novel. He hopes to enter an MFA program soon. Through his tenure as editor-in-chief, John has learned several lessons including his serious lack of knowledge about flowers.

JENNIFER MASTERSON is receiving her BA in art in the fall, with a focus in graphic design. An important passion of hers is environmental awareness. She aspires to teach and to launch her own design company.

BETHANY MATERN is a junior majoring in art with a concentration in graphic design. Bethany’s goal is to obtain a design job near home so she can stay close to her little sister, Jessica, who is a constant inspiration.

TIFFANY PEÑA is a senior seeking her bachelor’s in art, concentrating in graphic design. She is aiming to influence children to express themselves with art and creativity.

MATHILDA BURKE is a senior, who will be graduating this May, finally. She will graduate with bachelors in art with a concentration in graphic design.

MEAGHAN CASEY is a class-less English major at Bridgewater State. Her many passions include writing, traveling, photography, guitar, and pizza. This is her second year on *The Bridge*, first year on the Art Team, and first year as editor-in-chief. She hopes to become ridiculously successful and write for a living.



