

genesis

Fall 2010



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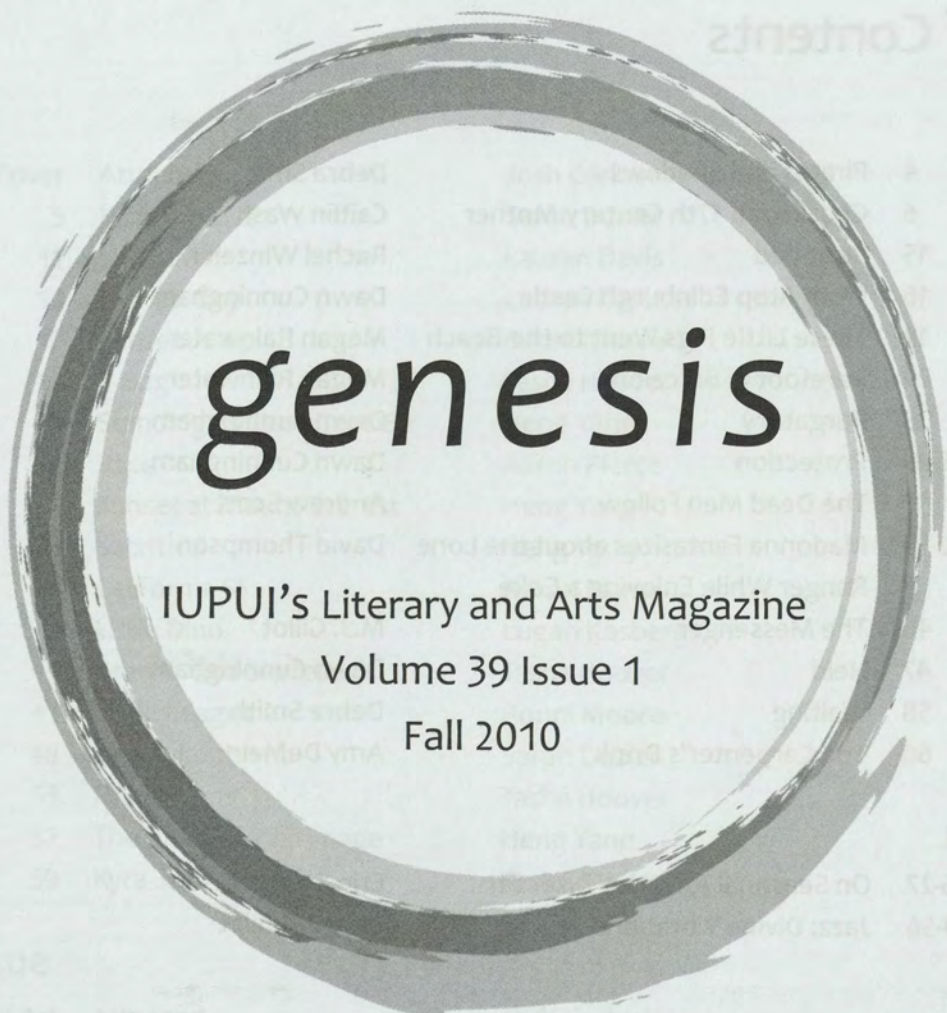
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## Editor's Note

In my three years with *genesis*, I've seen the magazine reborn through the energy of each new crop of editors. This semester, our diverse tastes resulted in selecting many fresh voices and visions. Our contributors are consumed by wanderlust—whether they sought New York's Comic Con or the breathtaking peak of Mount Everest. These pieces stand in awe of the power of place and explore the individual's place in the world. We invite you to explore this issue and experience the gusto of our contributors.

Tanya Smith  
Editor-in-Chief

Cover by:  
Josh Corken  
Attached



# genesis

IUPUI's Literary and Arts Magazine

Volume 39 Issue 1

Fall 2010

We would like to thank the following:

Indiana University School of Liberal Arts,  
Office of Student Involvement,  
IUPUI English Department,  
Liberal Arts Student Council,  
Friends of *genesis*,  
Western Publishing

# Table of Contents

## Poetry

4	Pirates and Shadows	Debra Smith
6	Ghazal of a 17th Century Mother	Caitlin Wash
15	Stranded	Rachel Winzeler
16	From Atop Edinburgh Castle	Dawn Cunningham
19	These Little Pigs Went to the Beach	Megan Rainwater
22	Barefoot in Barcelona	Megan Rainwater
23	Purgatory	Dawn Cunningham
28-29	Protection	Dawn Cunningham
30	The Dead Men Follow	Andrew Scott
32-33	Madonna Fantasizes about the Lone Ranger While Enjoying a Coke	David Thompson
46	The Messenger	M.J. Gillot
47	Held	Dawn Cunningham
58	Waiting	Debra Smith
60	The Carpenter's Drink	Amy DeMein

## Nonfiction

25-27	On Seasonal Affective Disorder	Erin S. Gabrielson
49-56	Jazz: Divine Vibrations	Elise Renollet

## Fiction

7-13	Soldier Medic	Zachary Bayless
34-43	Baker and the Bowman Monk	Ryan Felton

## Art

Front Cover	Attached	Josh Corken
5	Hazy Sunrise	Sarah Dozier
11	Unknown	Lauren Davis
14	Nymph Boy	Lauren Davis
17	Sunset Jump	Ronni Moore
18	P-Bug	Tasha Hoover
20	Standing as Time Goes By	Heng Yang
21	Race	Aaron Pierce
24	Sunset at Mount Everest	Heng Yang
31	Sacrifice	Heng Yang
35	California 55	Aaron Pierce
41	Little Dino	Lugao Kasberg
44	Greenwood Skatepark	Tasha Hoover
45	Little League 2	Ronni Moore
48	Sweet Louisiana	Sarah Dozier
53	Fall Dreams	Tasha Hoover
57	The Road of Pilgrimage	Heng Yang
59	Kyra 3	Ronni Moore

## Best of Issue

Best of Art	Attached	Josh Corken
Best of Nonfiction	On Seasonal Affective Disorder	Erin S. Gabrielson
Best of Fiction	Baker and the Bowman Monk	Ryan Felton
Best of Poetry	From Atop Edinburgh Castle	Dawn Cunningham

Debra Smith

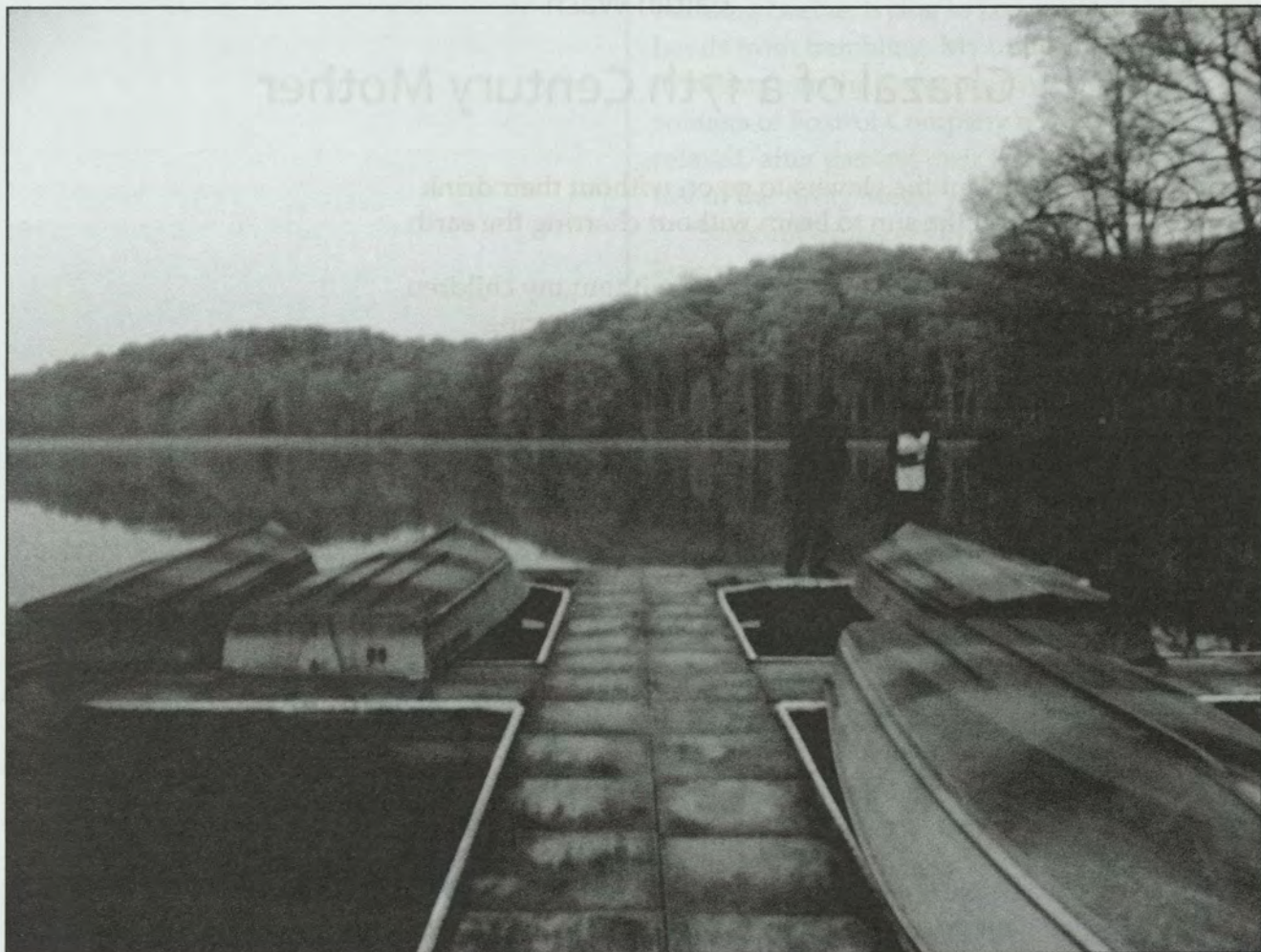
## Pirates and Shadows

We stepped off the ship on shaky legs,  
the Key West sun illuminating the horizon  
that danced on the edge of a the sparkling sea.  
A man in red and white stripes ran toward us—  
“Picture with pirate! Picture with pirate!”  
He leaned in from the left,  
one arm around my new husband,  
pulling him away from me with a scowl.

Looking at the photo,  
I am on the right, standing sideways,  
holding my husband’s elbow to stay steady—  
my body isn’t used to being sober or still;  
this was our first cruise, after all.  
I pull him toward me, already clingy,  
squinting against the harsh sunlight  
behind caramel-colored shades.

In the middle,  
my husband is lost in the silhouette  
of a swashbuckler hat with an oversized plume.  
His fingers barely brush the small of my back,  
already pulling away.  
The pirate’s shadows bathe him despite  
the glaring sun, and he shrinks  
into the ocean behind us.

It’s been over three years since that trip,  
and the honeymoon is over.  
Pirates and shadows don’t lie.



## Hazy Sunrise

Sarah Dozier

Caitlin Wash

## Ghazal of a 17th Century Mother

I want the clovers to go on without their drink  
and the sun to beam without charring the earth

I want the faeries to dance without my children  
and my soul without its fearful withering

If only the men could work without the little one's hands  
and the children would not labor 'till their death

I want the midnight wind to send my chills to God  
so he will feel them on the shoulder he has turned to me

I can hear the patter of feet on the  
hills covered green mixed with pixie giggles

I fight the pooka who is forcing my eyelids to close  
wanting to keep them stamped shut

But don't let the sky be painted in orange jubilee and narrow beds  
grow warm from the sun instead of from their wriggling bodies

Leave me in my darkness where I can still imagine my little ones  
but do not let your eyes surrender



## Soldier Medic

Zachary Bayless

I paced under the shade of classroom building twelve, trying to keep my legs and hands from trembling. My uniform was soaked in sweat from the Texas heat. All around me, soldiers of Foxtrot Company rested on the grass, relaxed, after passing their last hands-on skills test in the Army Medic program.

Sergeant Brunson's eyes followed me as he leaned against the wall by the double doors leading inside. My rifle, Kevlar helmet, and medic bag laid by his feet. "Are you going to pass the test this time, Allen?" he asked.

I stopped, faced Brunson, and put my hands behind my back. I made eye contact with him before looking down at my feet. My voice cracked as I answered him. "I don't know." *As long as you're not grading me again.*

"You know almost everyone else in Foxtrot has passed except you, right?"

I felt blood rush to my cheeks.

"The last few in there, they're not going to pass. They've struggled just to make it this far." Brunson shook his head. "But what happened to you? You passed all the written tests on the first try, but you hardly seemed to know what you were doing in there."

*No one was watching my every move during the written tests.*

"Look at me, private."

I looked up at Brunson. Unable to keep eye contact, I peered past his left shoulder.

"You are too good of a medic to let this stop you."

I looked Brunson in the eye, but before he could say anything else, the doors behind him opened, and another soldier in the Medic program came out.

"You next, Allen?" Harwood asked.

I nodded and picked up my rifle and bag, placing my Kevlar helmet on my head. *Here we go again.*

As I stood, Sergeant Brunson leaned into me and whispered, "It's just a bunch of head games in there, private. Pass this, and all that's left is field training. Pass that, and you're done."

"Yes, Sergeant," I said. I turned and started walking with Harwood toward the doors.

"Harwood," Brunson called out, "make sure he gets to Staff Sergeant Winters." Harwood nodded at Brunson.

The two of us walked inside. "You know Winters and Brunson are battle buddies, right?" Harwood said. "He's probably already got him set to fuck you up. He wants you to pass, but he's not going to make it easy for you."

We came to another set of double doors. I put my hand against the wall to steady myself. I trembled, hearing the sound of recorded gunshot fire and Muslim prayer music from the simulated combat zone inside the next room.

"You okay, Allen? You look like you're gonna pass out."

"I'll be fine."

"They believe in you, Allen. But you have to show them you can handle the stress. Don't let the chaos get to you." At this, the double doors

opened. Smoke spilled out around us as the prayer music and gunshot fire filled our ears. Sergeant Winters stepped out.

"You ready, Allen?" he yelled over the music. I took a deep breath and nodded. "Follow me!"

I gripped my rifle in both hands, and we followed Winters inside. As we walked toward Winters' station, I heard graders screaming at the last few soldiers taking an exam in their trauma lanes. Soldiers scrambled over the floor, dumping medic bags and searching for items. Some were in tears.

We reached Winters' station. "Brunson tells me you've had a lot of trouble with this test, private. Is all this too intense for you? Do you need me to hold your hand through this?"

I shook my head. *I know how to patch up this stupid doll.*

"Private, you're going to fail my lane. But you'd better do the best damn job you can—regardless. Is that understood?"

I nodded.

"Good. You ready to try again?"

I nodded again.

"Don't think I won't let you fail a second time, private."

Winters looked at his clipboard. "You've got a male, twenty-seven-years-old, out on patrol when his vehicle was hit by an IED. He wasn't wearing his helmet, and the gun hatch hit him on the head."

**"Private, you're going  
to fail my lane."**

A few feet away from me, a life-size doll lay on the ground. A large cut on its forehead spurting fake blood, and large burns covered its arms.

Winters finished speaking. "You got all that, private? Take a minute, familiarize yourself with your surroundings, and make sure all the equipment you need is here."

I looked around, but didn't inspect anything. Everything I needed was in the medic chests against the left wall. I could get to them when I needed to.

"Harwood will be your support. He will pull security and help you as needed. He can act only if you give him directions, and he may not perform any critical task for you. You will also do your IV stick on him if needed. Any questions?"

"No," I said. *I can handle this.*

"If you fail, you only have one more chance. Time starts when you start. You have thirty minutes."

I took a deep breath and got down on one knee. Harwood did likewise, facing the other direction. I pretended to take aim and searched my surroundings. "Hey, are you okay?" I shouted toward the doll. I felt like an idiot.

Winters took control of the scenario. "No response."

"I'm scanning my lane. Is the scene safe?"

"Scene is safe."

I stood and hopped the few steps toward the doll and shook its shoulder. "Are you okay?"

"No response. Patient is unresponsive to verbal or painful stimuli." I patted the doll's arms to look for blood. I found none.

Winters took out a spray bottle of fake blood and sprayed my uniform. "Your patient is hemorrhaging, private! You'd better stop it or he's going to bleed to death!"

I ignored Winters and began feeling the legs for any blood.

"His forehead is bleeding, private! Why aren't you putting a tourniquet on him?"

The doll's legs weren't bleeding. "Harwood!" I yelled over my shoulder.

Harwood came to my side. "I need you to help me move him. I'll get his shoulders." It was extremely heavy, but we moved it the few feet into the shelter. *I can do this. It's just a doll.*

"You are now in tactical field care. Administer treatment. And stop that damn head wound from bleeding out!" Winters said, spraying my new boots with fake blood.

I bent down by the doll's side. *No extremity hemorrhaging. Now the ABCs. Airway and Breathing first.* I let my rifle fall to the floor next to me. I lifted the doll's head and inspected its mouth. Nothing there.

I put my ear next to the doll's mouth and peered over its chest to check for breathing.

"Breathing is steady but slightly rapid. Are you going to do anything for it?"

"No, Sergeant," I said.

*Now Circulation. Control bleeding.* I opened my medic bag and began tossing things aside,

looking for bandages. I opened some Kerlix gauze and placed it on the doll's head.

"It's about time you got to that wound, private! He almost bled to death!"

*Ignore him.* I wrapped a trauma bandage around the doll's head, securing the Kerlix tightly underneath it. *He wasn't bleeding that much.*

Winters put the bottle down. "Bleeding has stopped. He looks pale. Twenty minutes remain!"

I placed my fingers on the doll's wrist.

"Radial pulse rapid but weak," Winters said.

"I'm gonna do an IV stick on him, give him 500 mL Lactated Ringers."

"Lactated Ringers? What the hell are you giving him Ringers for?"

I stopped working.

"Well? What are you giving him Ringers for? Just give him some saline!"

*Don't let him get to you.* I pulled out my IV kit and the bag of Ringers.

"What the hell did I just tell you? You give a burn patient Lactated Ringers and you are going to kill him, Allen!"

I reached for my bag, stopped, reached again. I grabbed a saline bag and considered the two.

"This patient doesn't have all day," Winters said. "Make up your mind! What are you giving him?"

*Just do something!* "Harwood!" I yelled.

Harwood scrambled over to me. He took his blouse off and laid down next to me. Sweat was

streaming down my forehead and cheeks now. I felt for a vein in Harwood's arm.

"Don't screw this up, private. Are you sure that's what you want to do?" Winters asked.

*Don't lose it now,* I told myself. *Give him the IV. He needs fluids.* I prepped the saline bag and wiped the injection site with an alcohol pad, put a constricting band around Harwood's bicep, and took out a syringe. I inspected it for any nicks, then positioned it by Harwood's arm.

"That's not the right angle! You're gonna stick that needle all the way through his vein!"

*Just tune him out.* I stuck the needle in Harwood's arm. I taped the catheter to his arm and pulled out the syringe. I threw the syringe away and screwed the IV tube into the catheter.

*I did it!* Though my hands were trembling even harder now, I somehow managed a smile. Excited, I looked up at Winters. My smile disappeared when I saw him holding my rifle.

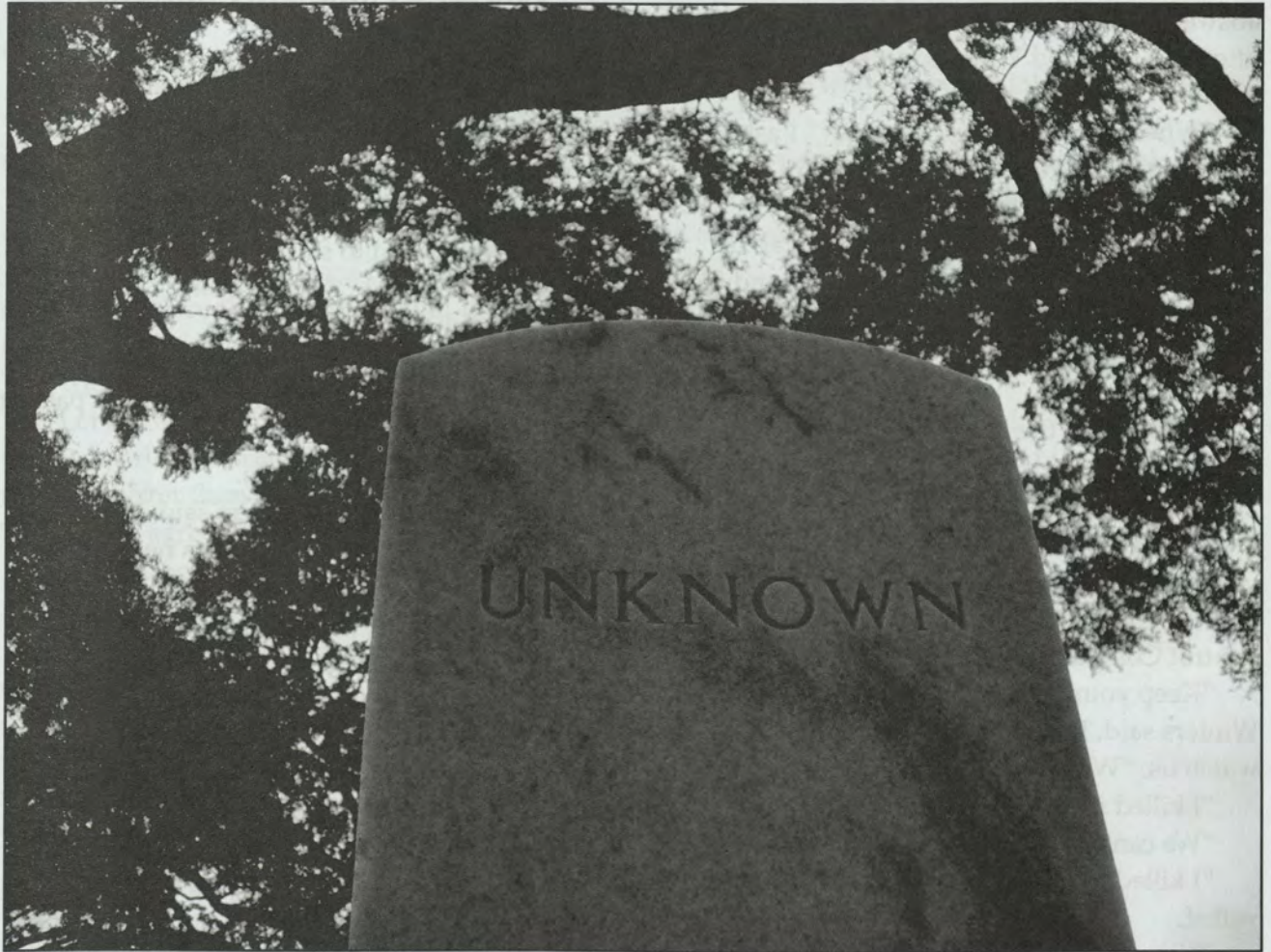
"Too bad, private. You failed to secure your weapon."

I looked back at the doll. *Just treat the patient.* I reached for some dry Kerlix to cover the arm burns and stopped short.

"You see what you did wrong?" Winters said. "Why did you give him an IV if his arms are burned?"

I sat in shock for a moment. *I wasn't supposed to give him an IV.* All the confidence I had gained from that successful stick was gone.

"Stand up, private. You too, Harwood. Put this patient on a litter and follow me."



## Unknown

Lauren Davis

*What's going on?* Harwood and I placed the doll on a litter, and I looked at Harwood for an answer. He shook his head. We picked up the litter and followed Winters out the first set of doors.

"Where are we going, Sergeant?" I asked.

"Outside." We got to the next set of doors and stepped out of the classroom.

"At ease!" Winters yelled. At once, all of Foxtrot Company jumped to their feet and faced Winters with their hands behind their backs.

"Start running, Allen," Winters told me.

"Sergeant?"

"Jog around the Foxtrot Company. Start yelling, 'I killed my patient.'"

I hesitated for a moment and looked back at Harwood. Harwood shrugged.

"Run, private!" Winters yelled.

Harwood and I started jogging around Foxtrot Company.

"Keep your eyes on Allen, Foxtrot Company," Winters said. Everyone turned their heads to watch us. "What did you do, Private Allen?"

"I killed my patient," I said.

"We can't hear you, Private Allen!"

"I killed my patient, Sergeant Winters!" I yelled.

"Now keep at it!"

I heard stifled laughter coming from the rest of Foxtrot Company and felt their eyes burn into me as I repeated, "I killed my patient, Sergeant Winters! I killed my patient!"

After the fifth time around the company,

## "I killed my patient, Sergeant Winters! I killed my patient!"

Winters stopped us. We carefully set the litter down. I held myself up on my knees, exhausted and embarrassed. I could still hear giggling.

"How did that feel, Allen?" Winters asked.

"Did you like hearing everyone laugh at you, knowing you failed to save your patient?"

I shook my head. "No, Sergeant."

"How did it make you feel?"

"Not good, Sergeant," I said.

"How do you think it'll feel when that patient is real, Private Allen?"

I stood, at a loss for words.

"Follow me, Allen," Winters said. "Harwood, start packing up the doll." Winters headed for the doors, and I followed him inside. The music and smoke machine had been turned off. The room had been cleaned up except for my medic bag and supplies. Winters turned on the main lights. Brunson was inside, waiting for us.

"You failed again, Allen. This is not acceptable." Brunson glared at me. "What happened?"

I was still breathing heavily, unable to speak.

"You gave him an IV. Why was that wrong?" Winters asked.

"His arms were burnt," I said.

"What should you have done?"

"Given him an IO. I could have put the saline through the bone marrow in his sternum."

"Was saline the right choice?" Winters asked.

"No," I said. I wiped the sweat from my forehead. "I should have given him Ringers."

"So why did you give him saline?" Brunson asked.

"I . . . I second guessed myself."

"You can't do that in real life, Allen." Brunson said. "Your patient would have died."

"I know." I looked down at my feet. "I messed up."

"Private Allen," Sergeant Brunson said with authority. I placed my hands behind my back. "I have decided that we will not be testing again."

I tried to interject.

"Let me finish. You have demonstrated through written testing that you know the material better than anyone else in this company. Would you agree, Sergeant Winters?"

"I would agree," Sergeant Winters said, nodding.

"It's getting late. You will have plenty of opportunities to prove yourself as a medic during the week of field training. If I see sufficient improvement, I'll indicate in your records that you've passed. Let's go, private."

Brunson turned and started to walk away.

"Sergeant?" I asked.

Brunson turned around. "What is it, private?"

"I want to take the test again." I looked Brunson straight in the eye.

"Why?" Brunson asked. "Just do it next week. I already cleared everything with the company commander."

"I can pass it now," I said as I took a few

steps toward Brunson. "I want to prove myself here. Like everyone else."

"Are you sure?" Brunson asked.

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Winters, what do you think?" Brunson asked.

Winters gazed at me for a few seconds, then looked at Brunson. "Let's test him again. Send the other soldiers to dinner chow. I'll take care of Allen."

"If that's what you want," Brunson said to me.

I nodded. "It is."

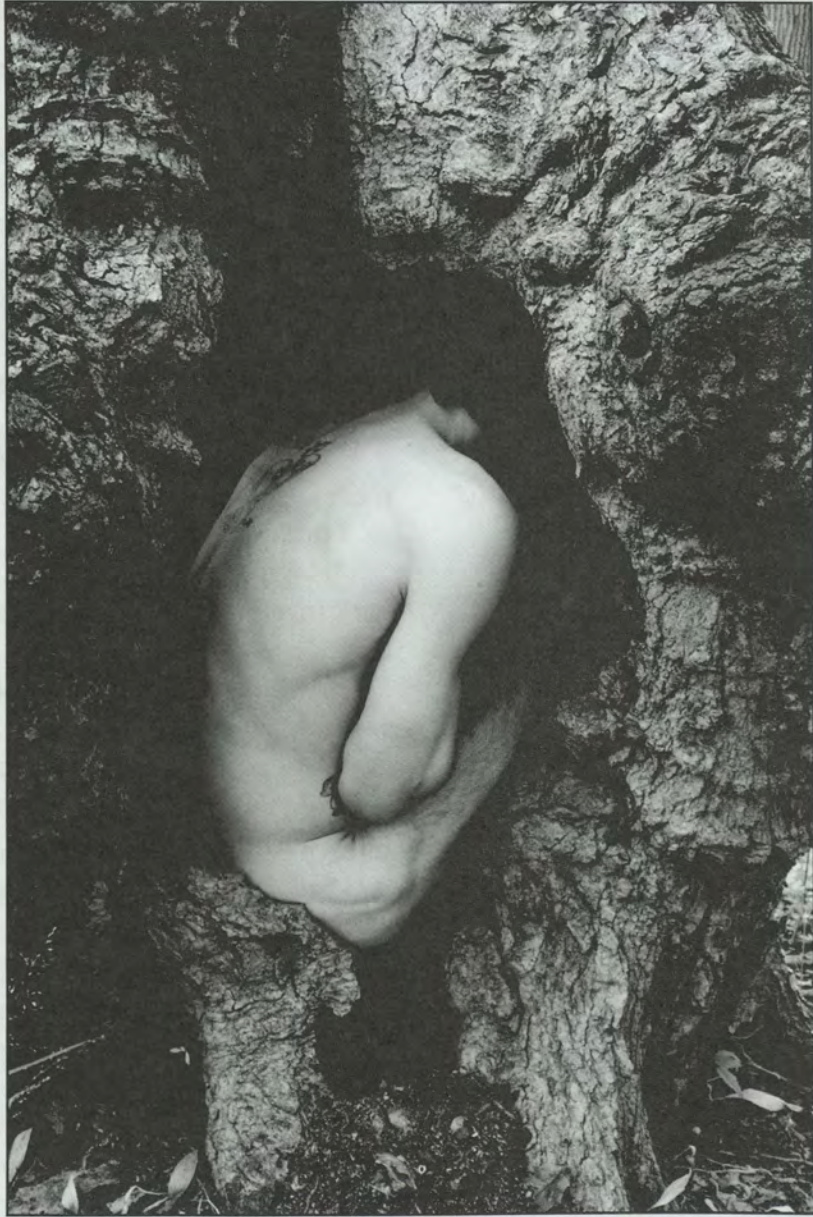
"Hey Sarge," Winters said, "send Harwood back in, would you? And have him bring in the doll."

Brunson nodded. "Okay," he said, and walked away.

Winters looked at me. "Pack your supplies back in your bag. You ready for this, Allen?"

"I am, Sergeant."

•



## Nymph Boy

Lauren Davis



Rachel Winzeler

## Stranded

The warm shallow water  
where we sit and stare  
at the bits of sand  
that used to be proud rocks  
and say the things  
buried in the corners of our hearts  
finding the shells  
half-hidden and caught  
in the brilliance of the sun  
holding our missing selves  
in our fingers loosely

Sunset Jump

Ronni Moore

# | Best of Poetry |

Dawn Cunningham

## From Atop Edinburgh Castle

We can see the whole city from here:  
the old town, the new town,  
the cold, abandoned railways  
and the crisp, jeweled waters of Leith.  
We are from two different worlds—  
you  
and I—  
America and Iran.

Tonight, it does not matter.  
It never matters, really.

Some errant ashes from your cigarette  
grace my arm in a white hot flash  
as you stub it against the high stone walls  
built many, many years ago.  
You take my hand softly  
and find the deep, honest place  
in my eyes  
as I turn to face you.

It can never be,  
I thought.

The castle begins to glow in an opulent violet.  
I jump as fire shoots and showers into the sky  
just above us,  
raining like ringlets and pasta  
onto the ancient city.  
We are from two different worlds—  
you  
and I—  
but tonight we share the same sky.

We are both Scottish,  
if only just for tonight.

Nymph Boy  
Lauren Davis



## Sunset Jump

Ronni Moore



P-Bug  
Tasha Hoover

Megan Rainwater

## These Little Pigs Went to the Beach

The ocean meets the sky,  
and they say hello.  
Your cement-calloused hand  
meets my coast-covered toes.

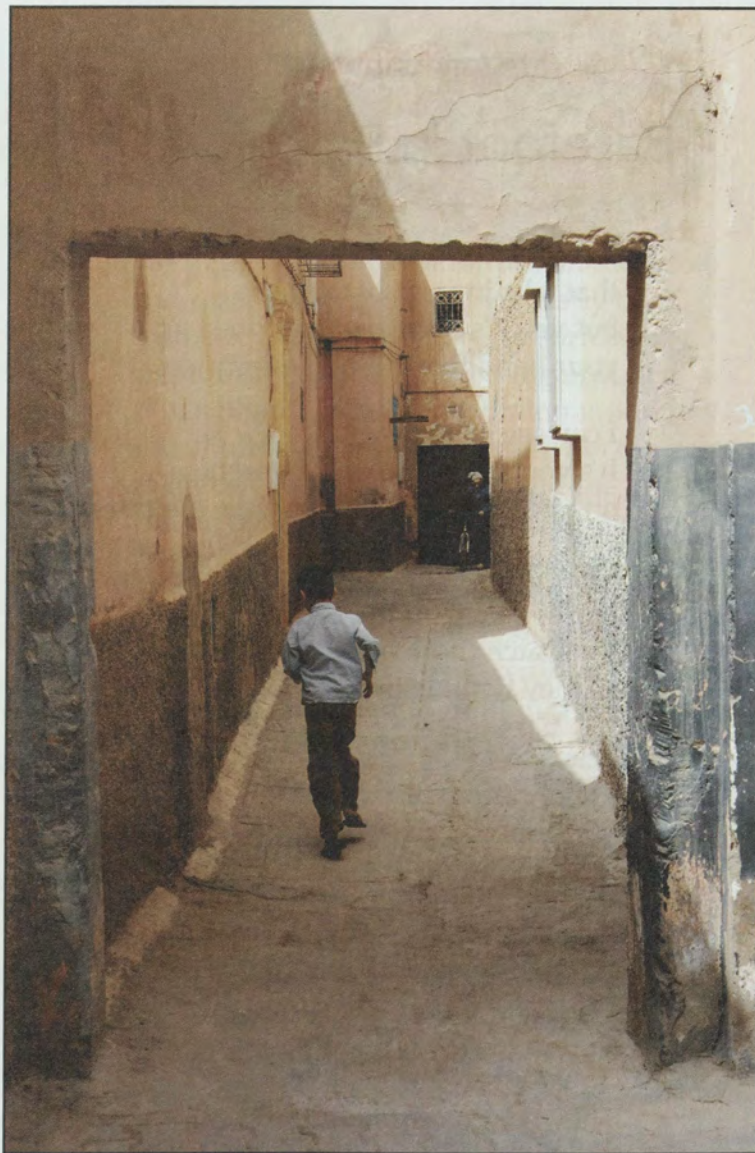
"This little piggy went to the market..."  
Your voice is the cool morning sand.  
The corners of my lips tickle and twitch:  
we both know these piggies went to the beach  
instead.

These little piggies flitted around naked  
and played touch football with strangers.  
These little piggies fell in your footprints,  
ran into the misty chasm,  
and kissed the saltwater.



## Standing as Time Goes By

Heng Yang



## Race

Aaron Pierce

and I know they finally found  
what it means to truly fly

Megan Rainwater

## Barefoot in Barcelona

The sky forms dark as the hair  
that falls in front of my face,  
but yet, it's as freeing as  
your hand fixing it behind my ear.

I can see it.  
It's you and I smoking cigarettes  
on a rooftop that is older than the stars.

My pinky finger clinging to yours,  
our eyes take in the view.  
We watch those bright orbs of streetlights  
as they twinkle in the distance.

I can see it.  
We're sitting, discussing  
our blessed existence  
while building mansions in the sky.

Our vibrant spirits begin to rise,  
leaving our bodies below.  
They dance toward the ledge,  
slowly stepping off, pinky in pinky.

They float on through the night,  
accompanied by a fanciful melody,  
and I know they finally fathom  
what it means to truly fly.



Dawn Cunningham

## Purgatory

For in the autumn, death rides on the wind  
and reaches out from every ghastly tree  
with bony fingers writhing in sorrow,  
limbs whipping like the lash against her back.  
When phantom bells ring ominous and low  
and shutters thrash so fiercely from the gale,  
so fiercely from the thunder and the rain,  
you all but miss the man who stands alone.  
The one who seems not ravaged by the storm,  
but seems to hover just above the leaves  
that paint the road a gothic, sexy red,  
with eyes so hollow, shrunken from the bone,  
which race from left to right in search of her.  
For he was said to have been there the night  
when she was turned to fire upon the stake,  
and when her soul was swept up with the wind.  
And now he lurks among the rain-soaked leaves  
to look for her—his daughter—in the night,  
whose soul roams in search of final rest,  
for in the autumn, death rides on the wind.



## Sunset at Mount Everest

Heng Yang

## Best of Nonfiction

### On Seasonal Affective Disorder

Erin S. Gabrielson

What the hell happened to me? A few weeks ago I had a to-do list the length of my arm: craft projects to start, recipes to try, restaurants to visit, stories to write, and some I wanted to read. Now I'm just...blank. I look out my second-story apartment window, and all I see is the white of nearby rooftops. Is it the snow, the cold that has settled on my apartment building that freezes up my brain, making it impossible to think clearly or even move from my couch? Is this a normal side effect of not seeing sunlight for six days straight?

I tell myself that if I can just stay alive for a few more weeks I will resume my normal functioning. That's a lie I like to tell myself obscuring harsh truth as the clouds conceal the sun. We've got more than merely a *few* weeks of winter left as I've just been reminded by that filthy, fat groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil. What does he know? He gets to hibernate. His judgment should be highly suspect. I'd run back into my little hole too if it meant I got to sleep for six more weeks. At least in this bone-numbing cold I can still feel appropriately-placed anger toward supposedly prophetic rodents. I can countdown week by week until wake up time for good, ole Phil. Maybe anger can keep me moving.

I approach every aspect of life in baby steps during these Indiana winter months. Just keep buying groceries and then placing the food in your mouth. Good girl. Just keep chewing. Just get through one week at a time. Just keep going

to bed every night and allowing your body to react on impulse to the sound of the alarm every morning. Start by placing your feet on the floor. Let's just take one tiny step toward any source of caffeine to help you face yet another sunless day. One more step. There you go. Don't count the days since you saw a break in the gray clouds overhead. Don't think about how cold you always feel, even standing right next to the steam radiator in your tiny bathroom. Just let the physical memory of common actions necessary for living take you from one week to the next, and eventually, whether you remember it or not, the earth will tilt back toward the sun. You will cease to be a drone. You can pull out that to-do list and become that lover of life once more. I keep up this nauseating pep-talk from about December through March every year.

Through these familiar acts, I am sometimes able to think. And I think about tropical islands. Mai Tais. Coconuts. SPF 30. I find it hard to imagine how a person could *not* be affected in a disorderly way by this season of icy roads and ice-covered cars, frozen pipes, dead or dormant plants, constant gray monotony, blank whiteness, wind chill factors. And then I remember my ex who claimed he loved winter so much that it was his favorite season. That should have told me something right there.

I check WebMD for my symptoms, just to make sure I'm not making this stuff up. I'm immediately chagrined by the name "Seasonal Affective Disorder" so conveniently creating the

acronym SAD. I can only imagine whoever came up with that name as a self-amused, happy-in-winter, pun-loving, asshole of a doctor. Very witty, Mr. Some Asshole Doctor. Hey, that spells SAD too!

WebMD helpfully points out that "Experts are not sure what causes SAD, but they think it may be caused by a lack of sunlight. Lack of light may upset your sleep-wake cycle and other circadian rhythms." God love those scientists.

Next, I read through the predictors for experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder.

*"Anyone can get SAD, but it is more common in:"*

*"People who live in areas where winter days are very short or there are big changes in the amount of daylight in different seasons."* Okay, so I should move. I've been planning on moving back to a southern state, my birthplace and the adopted homeland of my parents, for years. I've even researched the best latitude to live in for someone who experiences SAD. How sad.

*"Women."* Sadly, there's not much I can do about this one. And I'm questioning the validity of correlating a propensity for depressed moods in winter to a specific gender. I really don't have the energy to go into a tirade about the medical profession's tendency to lump any mysterious condition more commonly found in women as a "female problem." Nor do I feel like ranting on how that lumping together of "female problems" often means doctors have treated me with dismissal. I'll leave that one for spring when my mental faculties are sharper.

*“People between the ages of 15 and 55. The risk of getting SAD for the first time goes down as you age.”* Interesting since my grandfather’s mood tanked around the time he turned eighty. He seemed about as happy as his fellow nursing home residents. I think it might have had something to do with facing his mortality. That tends to bum out even the most cheerful person. At least senior citizens don’t have to worry about getting SAD. They can just be normal lower-case sad all year long.

*“People who have a close relative with SAD.”* Ah, the most interesting and controversial predictor of all. Am I SAD because of the lack of sunlight changing my brain chemicals in winter? Or am I SAD because my mother is, and always has been, SAD? Before my family moved to the Hoosier state, we were all happy, sunshiny people in the land of gators, living near Tampa, Florida. Upon moving “up north,” my mom began experiencing what I now believe were largely psychosomatic illnesses every winter. As a child, winter meant Dad taking care of us, preparing dinner from soup cans and cereal boxes, because Mom was either sick in the hospital or convalescing upstairs in her bed. The rare times when she was physically healthy, her own winter SAD moods were inescapable and impossible to ignore. Maybe I’ve just learned to associate winter with bad feelings, numbness, dread.

So I should move south or buy a sunlamp, try every month of the year to achieve the same stable mood I feel in non-winter. And yet, in my

**“But at least it’s not an entire frozen hell.”**

envy of the fat rodent Phil, I realize that, for as much as I hate winter and the constant veil of grogginess it brings, this part of the yearly cycle feels necessary to me. My physical energy and mental faculties *need* this break, lying dormant until my usual manic burst of creativity and activity in spring.

Maybe I should accept this as natural. Maybe it’s evolutionary since my ancestors are Swedish and lived half the year in perpetual darkness. Maybe it’s the rest of the world that has the disorder for insisting on cheeriness in the midst of monotone dreariness. If I moved south and had endless days of sunshine, wouldn’t that become monotonous as well? Would I miss my hibernation days, my soup can dinners, my either learned or chemically-induced slowness of the season? Whether doctors want to consider this a disorder or dismiss it as a symptom of female hormones, I know what is real for me. And for me it is damn near impossible to feel motivated until April, which may be a cruel month, but at least it’s not an entire frozen hell. So I think I’ll join the groundhog, return to bed, and accept my winter proclivities as a residual survival instinct whether evolutionary or familial.

Dawn Cunningham

## Protection

My father was once a meticulous man  
who checked every lock twice  
and did always seem to keep watch  
from the windows in the den.  
I used to think he was protecting me—  
my brave dad who never slept,  
who told me to always keep my hands clean.

After years spent bent compulsively over the sink,  
scrubbing beneath my nails, I know now he was talking of  
trust, and guilt. This I thought of as I walked  
toward his gaunt frame, shrinking inside the loud orange suit.  
It was my mother who forced me to see him,  
to reconnect with this “confused” man.  
Because, she said, he was suffering for good intentions.

I wrung my hands as he spoke, trying to forget  
the dawn I awoke to baying sirens and blurred commotion  
as my father, the protector, was wrestled from our homestead,  
exposed as a man responsible for fueling addictions.  
I had been blissfully ignoring these memories,  
had left for good, the life of a bastard child.  
But he was sick now, and mother said I had to say goodbye.

He had been using too, it appears,  
and too many mangy fingers  
grasped the same mangy needles that an illness  
now blistered within him. His eyes pleaded for forgiveness,  
but there was a vacancy that struck me.  
It was for you and mom,  
he said, to protect us, to provide for us and protect us.

I watched his knuckles shake and sweat form along his brow,  
his mouth squirming and eyelashes flitting anxiously.  
My eyes were hard and determined when I told him  
we did not need his protection anymore.  
His hand still rested upon mine and, avoiding his gaze,  
I frowned at the grey grime and dirt beneath his nails,  
clouding the tips a rotten yellow, a man who was once so meticulous.

Andrew Scott

## The Dead Men Follow

apathetic were the spirits of the crew  
as time drew toward their conclusion in battle  
their captain sat before them  
fingering his gun underneath the table  
his eyes agape in the bewilderment of his  
selfless solitude  
there would be no epilogue in his tale

they grew weary as they saw the enemies approach  
whispers of prayers echoed through the trenches  
they would see their gods soon enough  
but their loves  
never again

they looked to men on their left and their right  
the enemy nearing every moment  
he could feel the sorrow and anger inside  
making its way through the fear that gripped him  
he was but a single piece  
in a game without reason

the battle began  
as bullets and bombs tore through his sanctuary  
his brothers and sisters beside him dying at his feet  
his nightmare played on  
through the broad daylight

save us save us  
they cried from broken bodies  
but there was no help to be found  
they fought to live  
in a fight to die  
the dead men follow





David Thompson

## Madonna Fantasizes about the Lone Ranger While Enjoying a Coke

Life is a sordid mystery: my signature, brash platinum 'do  
fades to unkempt violet-hued wisps. Manuela—now, *she* could  
keep these scarlet lips from smudging outside the lines.

“She better have fixed me dinner before clocking out.”

Wheeling this chair out onto the balcony earlier—the pool  
boy aglow and beading up bronze and virile—I placed that Coke  
bottle between these tits for him to quench his thirst.

Silicone doesn't wither—but his gaze sure did. “Prick.”

When was I touched for the very last time? Whose heartbeat,  
a masked Love Ranger and his rearing stallion, lay afire next  
to mine? My memory only calls up—thanks!—disgruntled Jesús,

my beer-bellied handyman with crisp hundreds tanly fisted

as he squatted—like he was having a heart attack!—before my  
wheelchair. His silver hair bucked—that clumsy, thick tongue  
trying to raise my no-longer-bleeding stigmata from the dead.

I want love—but a hug from my Bella Nails manicurist would do!

I always have myself. “Watch me justify my own love, dammit!” I roll to my bedside table, “Let’s see.” No power for my favorite buzzing toy—I threw the batteries down into the pool. One can

only hope that planets would align for that young sex puppy

and his flaccid, Speedoed pecker to fry! I rifle the drawer for a dildo. No cucumbers—nothing. The Coke bottle! (I like Pepsi better; but, cans, like fists, don’t feel as loving.)

“Hi-yo, Silver, away!”

## | Best of Fiction |

### Baker and the Bowman Monk

Ryan Felton

I've never been all that comfortable standing in a blockade of yellow police tape, and judging from the way I felt, surrounded by an uneven square of the stuff on the vacant lot outside Benny Hascomb's place, I suppose I never will. There's something about that command—DO NOT CROSS—that's so stern it makes me feel a little guilty for disobeying.

The name's Walden Baker: Private Eye.  
Please, tell your friends.

Trina Hascomb, only my third client since I started a two-bit investigation agency over a year ago, tiptoed down the concrete steps that led out of her father's run-down home. I lit a cigar. I'm not really one for stogies; give me a good old-fashioned cigarette any day. But if I want to be taken seriously as a detective, it's better if I'm seen biting off the end of a Swisher Sweet and spitting it into the grass before lighting up. It's part of the job.

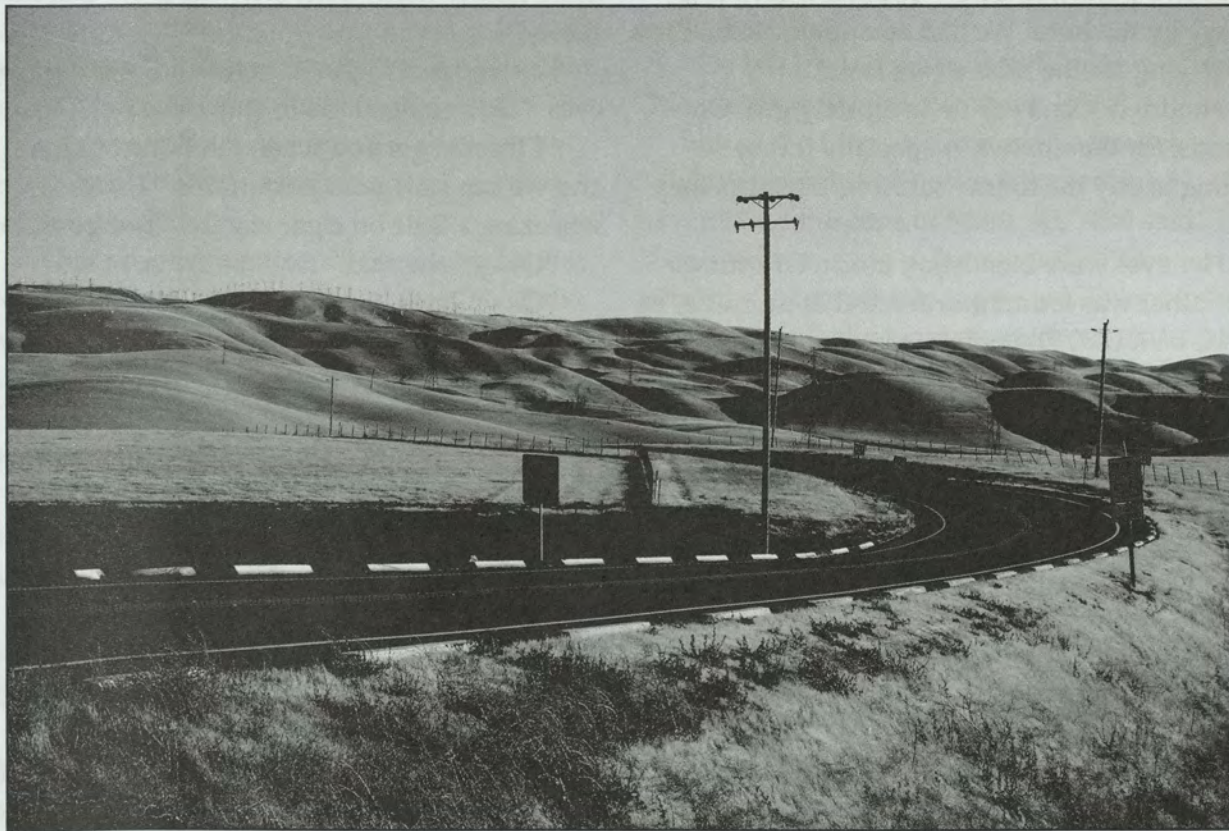
She was adorable—no doubt—with those curly brown locks and her novelty nineties cartoon t-shirt. She lifted the police tape over her head and crossed into the crime scene. "You're late, Mr. Baker," she said.

I licked a stray bit of tobacco off on my arm and hoped to God it looked sexy, or vaguely mysterious.

"Yeah, well..." I started.

"Well, what?"

*Well, I had to visit the men's room and couldn't get the toilet to flush.* "Other obligations," I said. "My apologies."



## California 55

Aaron Pierce

She flashed my own business card between those two perfect fingers. “Your card says you charge by the hour. We had an appointment. I’m not paying for the time we’ve lost.”

I nodded. Can’t say no to a pretty girl. Or anyone, for that matter—especially if they’re willing to pay me for my services, trivial as they are.

Her eyes were bloodshot, moist. Of course. Her father was found murdered that morning, or so she believed. The police wrote it off as a heart attack, so she called me. If I was lucky, it would be a homicide. That would be something.

“How’d you hear about me?” I asked. The last ad I could afford to put in the paper was eight months ago, and they misspelled my name.

“You were on the news,” she said. “On the ‘Lighter Side’ segment.”

“Really?” *How about that?*

“They kind of poked fun at you.” She smiled. *Was she poking fun, too?*

“So how does this work?” she asked. “You just draw the crime scene?”

I shook my head, opening my satchel to remove a sketchpad and a No. 7 pencil. “No, there’s more to it than that. I’ll start by drawing the crime scene, yeah. After that, I’m sorry, but I’ll need to question you for a while about your dad. His old haunts, his friends... his enemies, if he had any. When I’ve got all the pertinent information I’ll work up a composite sketch and hopefully something will stand out to me as I’m drawing. The devil is in the details, Ms.

Hascomb. I just tend to see that devil a little more clearly in my own artwork. Does that make sense?”

She nodded. “I guess,” she said, wiping her eyes. “Do you need me to stay close by?”

“I’ll come get you when I’m done out here, and we can start your part in this,” I said, wheezing a little on cigar smoke. “You go relax.”

“Okay,” she said. “And it’s Trina.”

“Okay, Trina. Go relax.” I smiled, as best I could without flashing my teeth. I’m self-conscious about my teeth.

Trina went inside and I squatted on the cracked pavement, soaking in the surroundings: the chalk outline, the tufts of grass pushing through the cracks in the concrete, a cigarette butt right where Benny’s head would have hit the pavement. I’ve always wondered what it would be like to go into a virgin crime scene, one the cops haven’t picked clean yet. As things were, I had to make do with table scraps, hope the police had overlooked something helpful. For instance, maybe the discarded can of RC Cola on the ground was a clue—just maybe.

I clicked my pencil and put it to the page.

An hour later, Trina let me inside the house. “There’s lemonade if you want any,” she said. I declined.

“How about an RC Cola? Any left?” I asked.

“No one in this house drinks that stuff,” she said. Her face pulled back in half-insulted protest. I took note of this.

We crossed the kitchen into the den, where an older, overweight woman in a bathrobe sat back in a hideous burgundy armchair, grinding a cigarette butt into a plastic ashtray. She lifted her head at the sound of our footsteps.

"Is this the *detective*?" she said, drawing out the last word in mock admiration.

Trina nodded.

"What are you, eighteen?" She looked at me, obvious disdain on her wrinkled face. The light emphasized an unfortunate mole on her upper lip.

"Twenty-five," I said. "Are you Mrs. Hascomb?"

She pattered her lips and stood up, then walked past us into the kitchen, bumping into my shoulder on her way.

Trina's face flushed, assuming the burden of shame on her mother's behalf. "Sorry," she said. "Mom's upset, as I'm sure you can understand."

"I understand," I said, although I took note of her behavior. The devil is in the details.

Trina sat on the couch, gesturing for me to take a spot beside her. I hesitated—it was a small couch, with little room for two people unless they were going to be canoodling—then I sat.

"You know," she said, "Dad was an artist, too. Like you."

"Oh, yeah?"

"You can take a look at some of his work," she said. "In the attic, in some boxes. It's pretty amazing. Can I see what you've drawn here?"

I shook my head. "Not yet," I said. She

looked disappointed, so I apologized.

"No, I get it," she said. "Mr. Baker, are you a comic book fan?"

"Do I fit the bill that much?" I asked, smiling. "No, never really got into them. Why?"

She rubbed her arm in nervous strokes. "There's something I noticed. Something I haven't told the cops or Mom yet," she said.

"See, Dad was a big collector, and..." She inhaled. "When all this happened, I went to his room and pulled a longbox out from under his bed. I wanted to leaf through some of his comics just to feel...I dunno...connected, I guess."

"Of course," I said.

"One of them was missing, Mr. Baker," she said, her eyes widening. "A rare piece, the debut issue of a series called *The Bowman Monk*. Have you heard of it?"

Again, I shook my head.

"It was Dad's prized piece. If nothing else, do you—do you think you could find it?" Her eyes somehow grew even wider, and again they welled up with grief.

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe."

Her head dropped, becoming entangled in a mess of curly locks. "All right," she said. "Let's get started. Ask me whatever you need to know."

I obliged, and we talked for hours about her father.

Later that night, I envisioned what my final portrait of the crime would wind up looking like. I was surprised to find that, of all the information she'd divulged, the one detail I kept coming

back to as most crucial was the inexplicable disappearance of *The Bowman Monk* #1.

The next morning I Googled the nearest comic book shop and headed straight there. A kindly woman in a wheelchair sat behind the register and looked up with great enthusiasm when the bell above the door rang.

"Well, hi there! What can I help you with today?" came her sing-song, twangy voice.

I introduced myself, flashed my card, and tried hard not to feel so damn cool doing it. I couldn't help myself; when she took the card I flipped up the collar of my pea coat and pushed my fedora down so the brim cast a shadow over my eyes.

"Well, wow, mister," she said, eyeing the card with genuine awe. "What can I do to help?"

"I'm looking for a copy of *The Bowman Monk* #1," I said.

Her smile faded, her lips pursing and sucking in air. "Ooh," she said. "I'm afraid that's gonna be a tough one. That's an extremely rare collector's piece. I read somewhere about one bein' auctioned off for half a million last week. I'd kill to get my hands on one, but..." She shrugged: *c'est la vie*.

"I'd never dream of buying an original," I said. "Haven't you got a reprint or anything like that?"

**"Benny Hascomb  
was murdered?"**

She frowned. "Ka-Pow comics, the publisher, can't do reprints of that origin issue. There's a problem with the copyright. I'm sorry," she said. She reached down beneath the counter. "I know it's a small consolation, but can I interest you in a complimentary issue of *Thor vs. Zombies vs. Werewolves*?"

"No, thanks," I said.

"I can't interest *anyone* in an issue of *Thor vs. Zombies vs. Werewolves*," she said. She set it down like a smelly discarded piece of meat.

"May I ask what this investigation of yours pertains to?" she said.

"The murder of Benny Hascomb," I said.

"Benny Hascomb was murdered?" she said, leaning back. "I heard it was his heart that did him in."

"*The Bowman Monk* begs to differ."

My next stop was the obvious one. The drummer for my buddy's hack band works at the Legion of Nerds booth at the local Bargain Buy electronics store, fixing up computers and burning bootleg DVDs on the sly. He's a nerd, all right, and loves comic books like a normal man might love his wife or child. If anyone could help me out here, it would be the Drummer. I swear that's his name. I think it's on his birth certificate.

"*The Bowman Monk*?" he asked, spraying me with bits of chewed-up beef jerky. "But Walden, that's out of print. Everyone knows that!" He seemed rueful of this, his bearded, puffy cheeks sagging. "You wanna read about the B.M.,



you can buy the new stuff. Or, heck, go see the movie coming out next year! But the first issue... no." I almost expected him to make the sign of the cross against his chest, he spoke with such reverence.

"What's this I hear about a rights dispute?" I asked, noting how his demeanor seemed to darken at the mention of it.

"The creator of the book, Russell George? He caused a stink about them reprinting the old number one issue when some guy's family slandered him by saying George didn't create it or draw it. That George stole this guy's work. Which is ridiculous."

I felt my stomach lurch. "What was the family's name?" I asked.

"Um... Hasbro—No, Hascomb," he said, nodding. "The guy's name was Ben Hascomb. But I never once read anything about Ben himself claiming ownership of *The Bowman Monk*. Just his wife and daughter. Leeches," he said, and he spat on the pristine tech room floor.

"Benny Hascomb's dead," I said.

"Hm," the Drummer said. He crossed his arms. "Convenient."

I lifted an eyebrow. "For whom?"

"The family," he said, tapping out a beat on the counter with his fingers. "It always looked funny to *Bowman Monk* fans that while they were blabbing on and on about how Hascomb's work was stolen, he never complained once himself. Convenient for them."

"Or," I said, "convenient for Russell George,

if what the Hascombs are saying is true." Though, I admit, I did wonder why Trina hadn't mentioned this giant detail.

"So, yeah, I think you're up a creek on that copy of issue one," he said. "Unless you want to beg George for one in person. He's appearing at the New York Comic Con this weekend, you know."

"Drummer," I said, leaning over the counter and dropping my voice, "I know you have ways around these things. Isn't there a torrent of the issue that you can rip or something?"

He beamed. "Sure, I can get it on a flash drive for you, but it's gonna cost ya."

I straightened up, lifted my head, and sighed. "What, Drummer?" I asked.

"Hire me as your tech guy at the agency," he said.

"Drums, my 'agency' is run out of my apartment. I've made less than four hundred dollars this year doing what I do. Trust me, you do not want to work for me."

"Say you'll think about it, and I'll do it," he said, then tore into another stick of jerky.

"It's thought about," I said, twirling my hand in a "go on, go on" gesture.

Less than thirty seconds later, he held out a flash drive, burping stinky jerky fumes into my face.

"Thanks," I said and pocketed it.

"You and me," he said as I turned and headed for the store exit, "the dynamic duo."

When I got home, I read through the debut edition of the Bowman Monk's adventures. After a power nap and a case of Red Bulls, I went to work, filling up pages of my sketchbook with renderings of all the important pieces to the puzzle: Trina and her mother, the Drummer's sallow expression at the mention of the Hascombs, the friendly comic store proprietor, and an empty RC Cola can.

After that, I redrew *The Bowman Monk* #1 in its entirety.

And in those pages, I finally found something. The devil in the details.

Trina sprang for two tickets to the New York Comic Con. I hoped to God she wouldn't dock that off my pay.

During the plane ride, as I explained myself, she held my hand. I tried not to take too much stock in that, but I'm sure she noticed how sweaty my palms were, and how my heart was practically throbbing in my throat.

We stood in line for four hours to get a signature from Russell George, creator of *The Bowman Monk*. Only we weren't there for an autograph like all those backpack-wearing, costume-clad fan boys. We had bigger fish to fry.

Once we approached him, I slapped my sketchbook down in front of him.

"Who do I make it out to?" he asked without looking up. He was old, sporting an Einstein hairdo, and had a thick New Yorker's accent. He smelled like baby powder.

"That's my original artwork," I said. "Please don't sign your name to it, too."

At this, George looked up. He smiled. "What?" he said, taking a sip of soda from his glass.

"I've been doing some reading," I said. "Catching up on the origin of the Bowman Monk. Great character," I said. "And I loved his debut."

"And how'd you get hold of one of those?" he said.

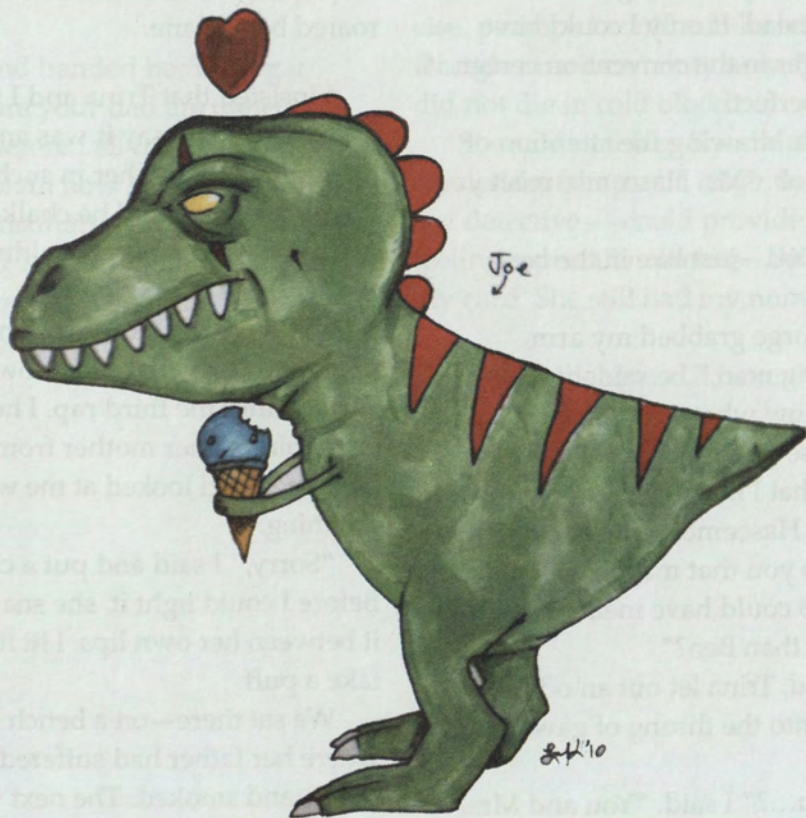
Trina simply watched me as I spoke. "Well, we know I didn't pay half a million for it in an auction, because that was you, wasn't it? Or one of your employees."

George shook his head. "I—" he began.

But I was on a roll. God, I love it when I'm on a roll. "Let's just say I read it, and I redrew every panel in painstaking detail. And something rather interesting caught my eye."

I flipped to a particular page in my recreation, then pulled out from the sketchbook the printed copy of the original, placing them side-by-side. I pointed to a woman the Bowman Monk happened to be rescuing in a certain frame. The woman was young, beautiful, but a little thick around the waist and had a distinctive mole on her upper lip. She was the spitting image of what Mrs. Hascomb, that crotchety old hag, must have looked like back in her glory days.

"It's interesting that you drew Benny Hascomb's wife into this issue," I said. "If you actually drew this issue."



## Little Dino

Lugao Kasberg

## “I jumped as George grabbed my arm...”

George’s leg twitched involuntarily, knocking into the table and spilling his soda in the process.

“What a waste of a perfectly good RC Cola,” I said, cocking my head. If only I could have been smoking a cigar in the convention center, it would have been perfect.

I turned to Trina, drawing the attention of the surrounding mob. “Ms. Hascomb, meet your father’s killer.”

The crowd gasped—just like in the best courtroom dramas.

I jumped as George grabbed my arm, squeezing it. “Young man,” he said, his eyes intense, “I don’t know what you think you’re doing, but I promise you it’s a mistake. Did it ever occur to you that I may have known my good friend Benny Hascomb’s wife back then? Did it ever occur to you that maybe, just maybe, Henrietta Hascomb could have meant something to somebody other than Ben?”

My jaw dropped. Trina let out an odd, sad yelp and escaped into the throng of gawking geeks.

“You mean, you...?” I said. “You and Mrs. Hascomb were...? I mean...?”

In my mind I drew a picture, one of a man trying to hide an ancient mistake from the world, a man betrayed by an old flame who was publicly calling him a fraud and a thief, sullyng his good name over sour grapes.

George pointed at me. “Get this man out of my sight,” he said, and I didn’t put up a fight when a security guard ushered me by my arm toward the nearest exit. I could only hope this wouldn’t wind up as a viral online video clip.

“And get me another Diet Pepsi!” George roared behind me.

I insisted that Trina and I take separate planes home. I’d like to say it was an act of chivalry for having humiliated her in such a public forum, but honestly it could be chalked up more to my own embarrassment. I couldn’t bear to sit next to her for three hours.

The next day I knocked sheepishly on her door, letting my fist slide down the wooden surface after the third rap. I heard her shout something to her mother from inside. She answered and looked at me without saying anything.

“Sorry,” I said and put a cigar to my mouth. Before I could light it, she snatched it and put it between her own lips. I lit it and watched her take a puff.

We sat there—on a bench in the empty lot where her father had suffered a heart attack and died—and smoked. The next words said aloud were hers.

“The plane ticket was your pay,” she said. “Hope you liked Comic Con.”

I nodded. “It was all right,” I said, pleased to see her smile in response. I opened my satchel and removed a pile of stapled papers, offering it to her.

"What's this?" she said.

"I promised you I'd find your dad's copy of *The Bowman Monk* #1," I said, "but I'm afraid the best I can do is offer my recreation of it."

She smiled, leafing through the pages. "No, this is nice," she said. "I actually know the guy who drew this one."

I looked down and handed her the cigar again. "I'm pretty sure your dad auctioned his original off a week before...all this."

"That would explain how Mom's affording all these attorney consultations. She's planning on suing George and Ka-Pow Comics around the time *The Bowman Monk* movie comes out," she said. "I told her I won't testify, but she's hell-bent anyway."

"Your mom is an odd bird, if you don't mind my saying," I said.

She puffed on her cigar, the smoke billowing out of her nose in cloudy tufts.

"You don't think he was murdered anymore, do you?" I asked. I had to, because if nothing else, perhaps I could soothe her with what I thought was a certainty now: Benny Hascomb did not die in cold blood.

She said nothing. She didn't have to. If she needed further proof, other, better detectives—*real* detectives—could provide it. Or, if she was feeling especially careless... Well, she still had my card. She still had my number.

But for the record, I haven't seen her since.

•



## Greenwood Skatepark

Tasha Hoover



## Little League 2

Ronni Moore

M.J. Gillot

## The Messenger

My father and I are émigrés  
from a nameless land.  
The language and customs  
formed our bones.

He, the refugee,  
could not assimilate.  
So he hides—  
God knows where—  
pushing aside the mask  
for a kiss or a laugh.

I, the diplomat,  
drift between the Homeland  
and back,  
tracking strange soil from my shoes,  
singing strange songs from my tribe,  
painting to quell the storms  
of pus and rage inside me.  
Mortal eyes give my visions  
unexpected grace and joy.

Both of us need our medicine,  
to breathe this foreign air.

But...I think  
I know you.  
I think  
you know  
something I've forgotten.

Can you  
sing it?

Sing it  
with me,

please.



Dawn Cunningham

## Held

You are not at all mine to hold. In bed, alone,  
at night, my frame aches to be held by you,  
to lace my fingers around your neck, to dig my nails into your back—  
and a shallow pit forms

uneasy inside me as I writhe and quiver,  
feverish and deliriously hot. My cheeks are a hectic rouge  
but my sheets are calm and white: alone  
without your scent, your stain

that burdens my brain as I meet your eyes in the light of day.  
I fear I betray myself—my desire—for I cannot avert my gaze,  
close my mouth, or quell my quickening breath:  
before you I am petrified,

still and unwavering as you move closer  
and embrace me, as only a friend would. I laugh  
instinctually, gasping at your touch, but you don't hear it  
because I don't really make a sound.



## Sweet Louisiana

Sarah Dozier

## Jazz: Divine Vibrations

Elise Renollet

When I was a little girl, I remember watching a documentary on TV about some jazz great. Though his name escapes me, I do remember one thing that an interviewee said about him: "When I heard him play, man, that was all the religion I ever needed." Sensing some profundity in these words, these words that spoke of music in such transcendent terms, I told them to my musician dad. He just laughed a knowing laugh, and I smiled at his mirth. But I never really understood the statement until the day I heard Marcus Miller play at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Indy Jazz Fest last fall.

I like jazz. Since I was a small child, its complex, soulful sounds have made their way through my ears and into my heart. My dad has hundreds of CDs exemplifying various musical styles, and, over the years, I've been able to borrow from this wealth. Sometimes, I would choose a jazz CD, like Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* or Thelonius Monk's *Straight, No Chaser*. I grew to appreciate the unique vibe of jazz music, as much as my haphazard listening would allow. So, when my dad told me about the Indy Jazz Fest, I knew I had to go.

"Marcus Miller will be there," he said.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"A bassist, a good one too: one of the best. Just look him up on the web. His discography is incredible. He's played with Miles Davis, Aretha Franklin, Herbie Hancock, Whitney Houston, Dizzy Gillespie. This list goes on and on."

I nodded thoughtfully.

\* \* \*

It was a gorgeous September afternoon—one of those perfect ones that only autumn can pull off. The sky was a clear azure, and clouds were few and far between. I took off the light trench coat I had brought, breathing in the fresh breezes. Though the Indy Jazz Fest is a multiple-day event held at various venues across Indianapolis, the primary show—the one that I attended—was held at White River State Park, in the heart of downtown Indianapolis’s cultural life. The Indiana State Museum, the Eiteljorg, and the canal surrounded the hub of the festival. My family and I parked in an underground parking garage nearby, then made our way to the park.

As soon as we surfaced from the garage, I could hear the faint melodies of jazz music. My insides started to go all quivery with anticipation. I knew I was going to witness something spectacular tonight. I noticed a small cloud of high-school-aged kids with brassy tubas and trumpet cases making their way onto a yellow school bus. They had already played, and were leaving. I began to walk a little faster. I didn’t want to miss anything else. Closer, closer, we came. The rich, mellow music gained strength and forte. These sounds were now competing with a rougher, rocky jazz music that emanated from a distant tent. We reached the front gate easily, with only a few couples waiting in line before us. At the entrance, some tough-looking guys with yellow shirts and shades looked through our stuff, to check it for

hazardous items like tape recorders and guns, I guess. *Who would want to hinder the presentation of jazz?* I wondered. Handing in my ticket, I stepped onto a clean, wide sidewalk. A few of the staff wearing the same yellow T-shirts were giving out plastic beaded necklaces of various metallic hues. I took a few, in the spirit of the occasion. I also grabbed a program guide and briefly looked over the names. There he was, at the end, the last act: Marcus Miller.

Looking up from the guide, I took in my surroundings. On both sides of the walk were several white-topped tents. People in one tent confiscated things that were prohibited in the festival, like coolers and lawn chairs that were too tall. To the immediate right of this tent was a POD holding the regulation size lawn chairs. They were blue and small enough so that the person sitting behind you would be able to see over your head. Other tents advertised radio stations, offered free massages, or sold Indy Jazz Fest memorabilia. People wandered about, grabbing free promotional stuff or talking to vendors or just listening. Several hundred people came, but the fenced in area that made up the festival was not overly crowded. Ironically, I wished more people had been there. I hate crowds, but there was something inside of me that wanted the whole world there. Things like this, things that showcase music are vital to our

“The rich, mellow music  
gained strength and forte.”

culture, and to be present is to proclaim your appreciation for such things. *Music is vital. Jazz is vital*, I thought. It's important. It's so much more than sound. And it deserves more than this.

We veered off of the concrete path, over a low hill, and onto a wide, grassy lawn. At the back were some bleachers, which were mostly unused. Most of the two hundred or so people sat hypnotized in the lawn chairs. An older African-American couple was in the very front and center of the crowd as if listening to the word of God. Listening. How rare and beautiful to do nothing and just listen: to sit in awe before the glories of heaven-breathed music. Before the small crowd, a gigantic black stage had been set up. Attached to the top of the construction were posters protruding from the wind. The black one spanning the length of the stage announced the event in bold white and red letters, while others to the left and right showcased the sponsors, such as Michelob beer and Marsh supermarkets. It was from this stage that the sounds came. I smiled. This was it. Sitting down in my lawn chair, I absorbed the sounds coming herky-jerky, smooth and silky from the instruments. Complimented by the irregular thud of the upright bass, the drummer beat out a light, bouncing rhythm, his sticks glancing rapidly over the cymbals and drums. A saxophonist sang his smooth, brassy notes, and an electric guitar player sitting on a stool rocked back and forth, creating a mellow sound reminiscent of Wes Montgomery. Loosely following a string of

melody, the voice of Pharez Whitted's trumpet predominated, weaving in and out of the music around him. As I relaxed, I thought, *What a grand thing it was; what a privilege it was, to be able to experience the wonder of jazz.*

After the act ended with some bows from the performers and some hearty clapping from the crowd, I decided to explore. I crossed the main sidewalk, making my way towards the area of the festival I had not yet seen. This area was comprised of a series of white tents that formed a secondary venue to the main stage. A big tent was the primary attraction here, while a series of small tents formed a perimeter around it. These tents sold food from various restaurants. There was Cajun food, a place selling hotdogs and hamburgers, and a smoothie stand. I bypassed all of this, heading towards the big tent in the middle. That was where the music was coming from. Entering, I saw several rows of green plastic chairs before a small stage. Fifty or so people filled most of the chairs and the green tables on the perimeter. I stood with a fringe of people on the outer edge of the tent, half in and half out. But it was just enough to hear.

A pretty, heavily pregnant young woman in a casual floor-length black and white dress was playing the keyboards. Behind her in the band was a drummer, a bassist, an electric guitarist, and a few back-up singers. They were all weaving together this cool, jazzy-rock sound that I really liked. When they played "When Love Comes to Town" by B.B. King, I found myself

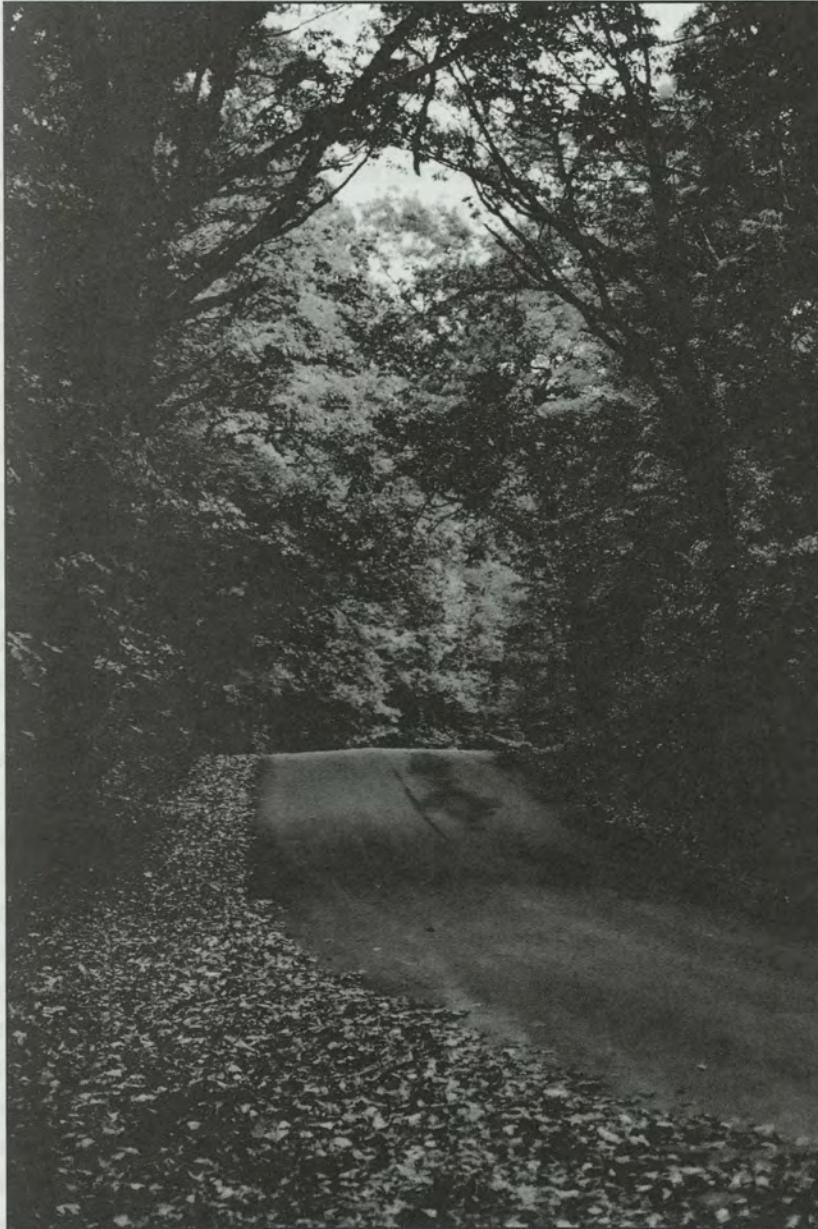
swaying a little bit with the beat. Other people, too, were infected by this magical, intangible something called music that manifested itself in the physical movement, however slight, of its listeners. *What is it about music that makes its way into your being and causes you to dance inside? What is it about a series of sounds that can so move a person?* I wondered. The last song they played was an original piece called "We Are All the Same," simple and sweet. The gal on keys encouraged everyone to sing along and clap their hands. Watching, I was struck with how music could so unify random strangers: people old, young, Asian, white, black, affluent, poor. Here was a group of people from all walks of life singing a chorus about brotherly love and unity. For a minute, they were one. But when the music ceased, the ties were broken and the people went their separate ways. I wondered if maybe that song still lived in someone, like the smoldering embers of a bonfire. Music could do that. There's something more to music than notes, I thought.

When the song ended, I made my way back to the main lawn to hear the next set of musicians who performed in a group called Hana-Neel. My dad, brother, and I made our way to the front, where the older African-American couple sat. To be there, up close was so different from listening at a distance. Here I could see the faces of the musicians, see them rock and sway. Those little movements they were doing on their instruments, a flick of a finger over a string, the thud of a foot on a pedal,

were creating so much big sound. And they were telling a story, too. I noticed how the pieces would start off kind of slow, and then build to a crescendo, a resounding boom, and then they would meander from there, undulating, twisting, finally reaching a stopping place, a home. The leader of the band was the bassist, a lean African-American man who wore jeans and a thick tan sweater. As he played, he would jump around and move with the beat. He smiled as he played, and I watched as he interacted with the other members of the band as if they had a secret code. Joy, joy. He was exuding joy, a joy galvanized by music. I lit up involuntarily when I saw him enjoying himself. It was a contagious joy.

After his band played and a standing ovation had been given, we all walked back to our original positions. Time passed, and the setting sun shone flaming orange behind the stage. During these few hours, I heard one man sing who had a voice like Dean Martin. Then, the Steve Alee Big Band played in an array of brass. A young couple swing danced to this music. The blond-haired girl was slim and laughing in her long black dress, while her partner wore a blue button-up shirt soaked with sweat under the arms. It made me happy to see two people enjoying the music so thoroughly, allowing the sweet sounds to overtake them and go through them in the form of twists and twirls.

As the big band continued on, I looked at my watch. It neared eight-fifteen. The Steve Alee band was great, and I tried to soak it in,



## Fall Dreams

Tasha Hoover

## “Marcus Miller came out smiling, and the crowd roared...”

appreciate it musically. But I could not wait to hear Marcus Miller.

At last, the big band finished, and the conductor bowed before exiting the stage. By now, every vestige of the sunset had been swallowed up in black. I was jittering with cold. My younger brother and I walked down to the stage. We watched as the tech crew rushed bustling about, plugging in wires, doing sound checks, and moving equipment on and off the platform. A heavy-set man with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth was testing the drums, pounding endlessly on each section of the kit: the snare, the tom, the kick. One man came out with the bass. The bass. Marcus Miller's bass. He began playing riffs and tuning it. "Is that Marcus Miller?" my brother asked.

"Don't think so," I said. By this time, a small crowd had gathered, standing, at the foot of the stage. Everybody was keen with expectation.

Gradually, the tech crew dissolved from the stage, and the MC brought out two people who had initiated the Indy Jazz Fest. My brother and I sat down in our little blue folding chairs. I listened to the pair speak, for I greatly appreciated the production they had helped create. But I couldn't wait for them to finish. I couldn't wait for Marcus.

At last, the musicians came out on stage and the crowd exploded in claps and cheers.

There was a bald, unpretentious looking twenty-something guy with a sax, an older man with a trumpet, another man with unkempt gray hair who took a place behind a massive array of keyboards, and a young drummer in shades wearing neon greens and blues and untied shoes who sat down behind the drum set. Finally, Marcus Miller came out smiling, and the crowd roared even louder.

Wearing a black fedora, a T-shirt, and a loose, white vest despite the chill, the lanky African American man waved to the people. He exuded "cool." Amidst the applause, he picked up his bass and began playing. The fingers of his right hand plucked the strings, while the fingers of his left traipsed slowly and deliberately over the length of the fret board. Then, gradually, the song took wings and Marcus' fingers began to dance and even fly. This dude had something to say.

His thumb now beat the strings, rather than plucked them. Notes high, deep, strident, and funky echoed from the instrument in rapid succession, creating the off-kilter, yet strangely unified sounds that characterize jazz. Sometimes he would embellish the pieces with the sweet, bell-like tones of harmonics. I watched as Marcus directed the other musicians while playing himself, cuing the others when to begin, initiating a battle of instruments, so to speak. Gaining momentum, the drums would play off of the bass in establishing the fervent rhythm, and the keyboards, sax, and trumpet would



join in, further adding to the jarring complexity of disparate parts that was so strikingly, oddly whole.

To me, it was a life-changing moment to be in his presence. His agile body moved with the driving funk jazz rhythm as if he were a man possessed. I suppose he was possessed. By music. The music had gotten so deep in his soul that it eked out of him in a frenetic energy. He was brilliant. He was the master of his instrument in every way, so smooth, so confident. As an aspiring guitarist myself and an enthusiast of music, I am learning that you must have confidence to play an instrument well. It's taking a stab in the dark, a leap of faith. It's believing that you have it, that you have the beat, that music is a presence, real and living. Marcus had so much faith, he was leaping all over the place. Listening, I felt the pulsing, surging music jump out from Marcus Miller and shock me in the heart. I got out of my seat and stood at the stage to be closer to the overwhelming magnificence of the music.

The small crowd standing about the stage was grooving, captivated. Many had their cell phones out and were taking pictures and video. One girl with frizzy brown hair was so into the moment, I wondered if she was drunk. Another man nearly tore off my head when I accidentally moved in his way. My dad stood exuberant watching this god-like figure, and his friend bounced to the beat. One man was fairly jumping in place. And I couldn't help but move

myself. Once, the drummer struck his snare so hard, that the stick went flying into the air. The crowd roared.

The music was almost like a conversation. The bass would say something to the trumpet and the trumpet would answer back. They would build on each other, each out doing the other in complexity of rhythm and mastery of style. Then Marcus would take it away with a fantastic display of finger-work, and the song would swell and rise and become magnificent. It was then that the music inside me outgrew the bounds of my heart and leapt up and spilled over and I felt like crying for some reason or laughing out loud. Maybe it was because I was glimpsing a shade of the divine. For a second. I believe God speaks through us lonely jars of clay. And when He speaks, the jar breaks.

Marcus would talk a little bit about each piece. He mentioned playing with Miles Davis, encouraged the crowd to get into the music, and made me laugh with some of his comments. "This next song is written by Paul McCartney. Maybe that's why it's so good. Y'all might know it." He played the intro bass line. The crowd cheered, ecstatic with the joy that comes from recognizing a tune so familiar. It was "Come Together," but charged with an incredible energy that broke the bounds of that old song. I watched as he played while tuning his instrument, his wild fingers drummed on the fret board, dancing wildly.

After the set and a marvelous encore, the crowd screamed with riotous applause. Body to body, I felt faint with claustrophobia and knee-weakening exhilaration. But buzzing with energy and admiration for the bassist, I cheered, too. After we had exhausted our praise, we walked back to where the rest of our family and friends were. My mom asked me how I liked it. "It was incredible," I said. "It was awesome." And I never use the word awesome. We gathered up the fold-up chairs, purses, and cameras. It seemed odd that such mundane tasks followed so soon after something so ethereal.

As we all walked back to our cars in the dark, I thought to myself, God is real. God was in that music. I finally got it. This is what that man was

saying in that old documentary. I don't believe that music is any replacement for religion, but I understand what he meant. He was tying music, specifically jazz, to the unspeakable splendor of divinity. Music is beyond notes. It transcends sound. It can hypnotize a crowd for hours. It can bring a group of strangers into a brotherly unity. It can cause you to move and even more, to dance. It can manifest itself through black sorrow and pure joy. It can so get into you, that your being is flooded with something more than earthly, as if God was flashing a little bit of Himself. This something in my soul that heaves and rises to such joy, this is beyond sound, beyond a simple vibration. It is divine.

•



## The Road of Pilgrimage

Heng Yang

Debra Smith

## Waiting

Waiting is  
    lingering,  
        delaying,  
            pausing.  
Putting plans on hold.

It begins in childhood, but it never really ends.

Sit through dinner to get dessert, and  
take Mommy's hand before crossing the street.  
Wait for the school bus with sweaty palms.  
Count the days until summer break,  
your stomach rotten with the fear of finals.

Tick, tock.

Wait for your date to pick you up for prom,  
his tux the same color as your dress.  
Soothe your fluttering heart  
while you wait for a goodnight kiss.

Stand in your white dress,  
his tux matches your bouquet, and  
wait for Daddy to take your arm.  
Eager for the rest of your life to start.

Tick, tock.

Women wait throughout life.  
But instead of getting easier,  
It only gets harder.

The worst kind of waiting comes when  
that biological clock starts ticking.

Tick, tock. Tick, tock.

The waiting is  
    maddening  
as you hold your best friend's newborn  
or pat your sister's protruding stomach.  
It's

    sickening  
while you hover over a little white stick,  
watching for a pink line that seals your fate.  
    Heartbreaking  
when it never comes.

Amy DeMell  
The Carpenter's Drink



## Kyra 3

Ronni Moore

Amy DeMein

## The Carpenter's Drink

This is the morning she hauled  
his tools off to the shed  
half-built but all laid out  
in sketch books  
at least,

the morning she lugged  
with heavy arms and tiptoes  
careful not to crack underfoot  
the hollow-bellied toys with arms  
bolted down, sporting knobs where  
finger fought to be fluted in wood,

then sidestepped buckets of  
white coat and varnish,  
dressings for fences unlatched,  
creek mud dirty and nude.

And these are tools she cradled,  
until the weight and weaved paths  
loosened her hold,  
stilled her walk and  
left it all to rest  
under canopies swung between  
spruce and sweet gum  
their bulged bottoms like lemon peels  
in yesterday's tea

like pieces finished and prim  
cased in glass gluey  
with corn syrup and sun  
and in the mirrored images of  
planks bare of paint and nails  
waiting on windows and in cross-legged piles  
while fruit slices  
drift in circles,  
in the drink half gone.

# Contributors



Richard Taylor is a Creative Writing student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published poetry in *Grain* and *The North Carolina Quarterly*. He is currently working on his first novel, *The Last Days of the Republic*.

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# Contributors

**Zachary Bayless** is a Creative Writing major and Philosophy minor, graduating in 2011. The setting of his story is drawn from a real life experience with the Army Combat Medic program.

**Josh Corken** is a graphic designer, drummer, and aspiring filmmaker. He is an associate art director at a local interactive agency. At his heart, Corken is a musician and artist.

**Dawn Cunningham** is a graduate student in English focusing on fiction and poetry. She addresses themes of sexuality, travel, and solitude. She's influenced by British Romantic literature and works by Irvine Welsh and Stephen King. She's currently developing a novel provisionally entitled, "Morning Naked."

**Lauren Davis** just transferred from the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. She majors in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She likes to photograph loneliness and nature. This is her first publication.

**Amy DeMein** is a Psychology and Creative Writing double major. She likes to challenge reader perspectives in her writing. She likes to experiment, but mostly likes to write for and about people.

**Sarah Dozier** is a photography student at Herron School of Art and Design. Previously an English major at IUPUC, she was inspired to transfer last year when her grandmother passed.

**Ryan Felton** occasionally forays into filmmaking, comic book writing, and fiction. He's scripted one-third of a thirty-issue run on an independently produced comic book series and is developing his second novel.

**Erin S. Gabrielson**, a victim of Indiana winters for twenty-one long years, recalls happier days from the first seven years of her life in various Southern states. While working from home as a librarian, she's plotting an escape to Hawaii once she finishes her MA in English.

**M.J. Gillot** draws, writes, paints, and strives to create in any way. She has a nine-year-old son who often shares her adventures. She has written and illustrated one book, "Belle's Wings," available on lulu.com. Her second book, "Zola Yearned for an eXcellent Waffle," is creeping toward completion.

**Tasha Hoover** is a freshman at Herron. She is a dedicated artist and wishes to start her own photography business someday. She loves to work with people to create beautiful images and memories.



**Lugao Kasberg** dabbles in photography and graphic design. This New Media major has put his nose to the grindstone for various organizations and musicians around the city.

**Ronni Moore** is a photojournalist also taking pre-requisites for optometry school. Moore has an insatiable wanderlust and, when not attending school, she can't stay put for long. Her free time is spent searching for new, interesting subjects to photograph and her favorites are athletes (and her family).

**Aaron Pierce** spends his time studying, working, wakeboarding, and mountain biking when not busy with his 2024 presidential campaign. This is the third time he's been published in *genesis*. Aaron is now looking at taking photography from the amateur to professional level.

**Megan Rainwater** is a part-time writer and full-time designer with ambitions to leave the Midwest immediately after graduation. She dreams big and keeps pushing forward. She's begun to realize: life is what you make it and "ars longa, vita brevis". The sky is the limit.

**Elise Renollet** is pursuing French and English degrees. She's been fascinated with words since childhood and immensely enjoys crafting written work. Someday, she hopes to follow in the footsteps of her literary heroes and publish a bit.

**Andrew Scott** is a bearded young man. He enjoys the sea and freshly baked cookies. He currently resides with his wonderful girlfriend in a dingy little apartment with his cat, Gustav.

**Debra Smith** has been writing since age four and would love to make it her career. As a backup, she obtained two Bachelor's degrees and plans to earn a PsyD. in Clinical Psychology. More of Debbie's work can be found in various Pill Hill Press anthologies.

**David Thompson**, a recent transplant from New York City, has now been writing poetry for almost as long as his first Midwest living experience—he hopes to succeed at one or the other.

**Caitlin Wash** has been writing poetry since high school. She is looking forward to graduating soon and being a high school English teacher.

**Rachel Winzeler** has a thirst for learning, which cannot explain the word "saudades." With a heart partly in Brazil and partly in the United States, she has many homes with twice the tears, thrice the laughs, and four times the love.

**Heng Yang** is an international student from China, studying Electrical Engineering. He loves life and loves photography.

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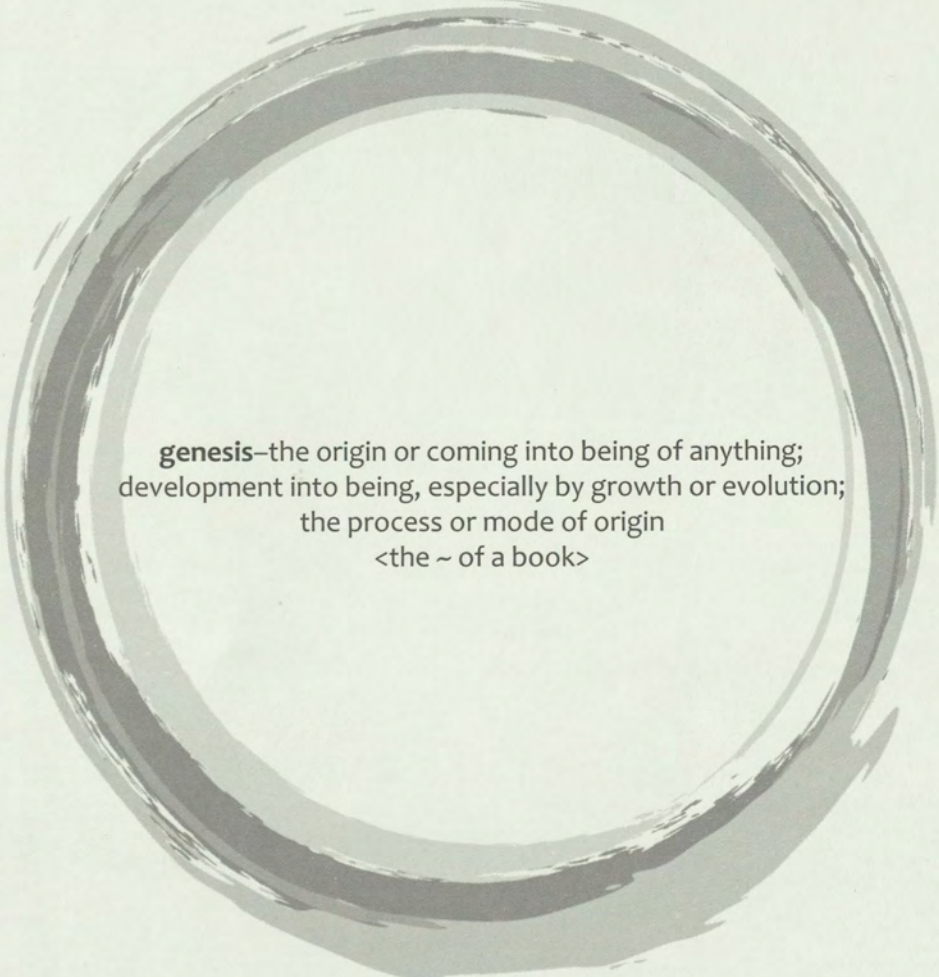
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**genesis**—the origin or coming into being of anything;  
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Upon publication, copyright reverts to author. *genesis* is  
published in the spring and fall through a grant from the Indiana  
University School of Liberal Arts and the Student Activities  
Fund of IUPUI.

# genesis



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