

genesis

fall 2012



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Editor's Note

Every year brings about new changes and this semester, *genesis* went through many changes, receiving a whole new staff and fresh recruits for managing editors. We've been working to streamline our editing process and redesign our website in order to make being published easier on everyone.

As with any project, it comes with its ups and downs, but through hard work, dedication, and a few late nights, it's amazing how much can be done. Our pieces this semester range from subjects on nature, music, love, self-exploration and discovery, while our art spans multiple mediums, including furniture design. As editors, we hope to bring to you the best work from your peers and as always, hope that it inspires others to explore and create as well.

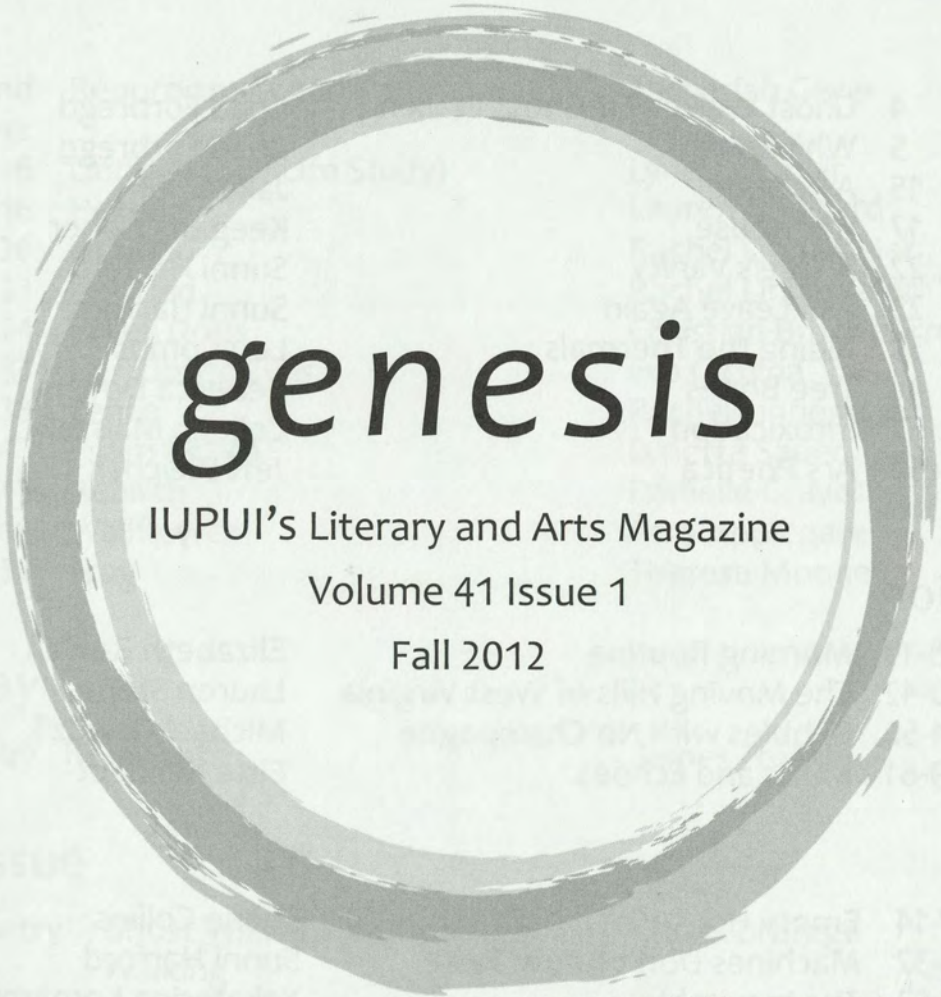
After all the hard work, it is nice to see a finished product. Now, with great pleasure and honor, we present to you the Fall 2012 issue of *genesis*!

Erica Swanfeldt Stout & Katie Reidy
Managing Editors

Front and Back Cover by:

Zachariah Geyer

Repurposed Landscapes



genesis

IUPUI's Literary and Arts Magazine

Volume 41 Issue 1

Fall 2012

We would like to thank the following:

Indiana University School of Liberal Arts,

IUPUI English Department,

IUPUI Office of Student Involvement

Liberal Arts Student Council

Friends of *genesis*,

Western Publishing

genesis fall 2012

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| Best of Poetry |

Chad Forbregd

Ghost Walker, Or Ghost Walking

I close my eyes, see a flashing black arrow:
a ghost walker, or a ghost walking.
I can't stop thinking about the West,
how at sixteen I was almost gone.
I dined by gaslight then,
used all ten fingers when praying.
Somewhere, in the distance, a train kissed the silence,
a seabird dragged its flag over land.
Horn-rimmed glasses corrected misprints of vision.
Whispers claimed Indian territory.
A sign read: Buy Land, Build An Empire

Whitewash

1.

Coca-Cola rusts in my mouth as
I leave the Carolina blue exam room walls,

stepping into the muck of Tuesday afternoon.

It's late summer, maybe August.

A woman dies, another finds shade.

All this on the way to the car.

Later, I told the pharmacist—
It was like drinking a black crayon in hot
water.

She picked up the seashell receiver of
the pharmacy phone and dialed

a number I could not decipher.

2.

A magazine on the table described
a broken window as the pane leaking glass.

Columns and columns of ads lay scattered
around me like mouse traps—

Just a little more cheese, I thought.

3.

Everything, a process.

Take one capsule by mouth
three times daily, more if needed.

I dine; microwaved steak,
Branston Brown Sauce.

The night carries on like this—
The silhouette of an upset stomach

resting on its side.



Lynnette Sauer

Untitled
(Still Life Study)

Shane Collins

Empty House

Jack felt the heavy quilt he slept under slip down as he tried to rearrange his pillows so he could more comfortably lean against the headrest. It was still dark outside, making it difficult for him to guess how much time he had before his alarm went off. It wasn't yet Halloween, but November seemed to have come early and the cool morning air prickled his exposed arms. Jack blew a few warm breaths into his hands before wiping the sleep from his eyes.

Sleep didn't come easily anymore and Jack found himself frequently waking up shortly after falling asleep. Arthritis had set in making his joints ache, making eight hours of sleep a challenge. His doctor had prescribed him some sleep medication to get him through the night and a host of other pills to get him through the day. They did their job, keeping the arthritis and the other aches and pains at bay, but the sleeping pills could do little to prevent his dreams from troubling him. He pressed his palms deep into his eyes trying to remember what had shaken him from his sleep.

The air was wet and fresh and there was a faint scent of lilac and earth in it. He held a large white daisy in his hand while standing over an open pit.

He pressed his palms in deeper, as he tried to remember more. Every time he felt himself getting close to the memory it slipped through his grasp, like fine sand pouring through his fingers and retreated back into the dark recesses of his mind. He couldn't recall the dream-- he had filed the information away

somewhere and then promptly forgot where.

He sat still for a long while with his arms up revealing the pit stains on his undershirt. Eventually, the chill air of the room caused little goose bumps to rise up on his arms and his neck hair to stand on end. His body convulsed suddenly as something of a mixture of a shudder and a shiver overtook him. With a deep sigh Jack decided to face the day. His dream had stolen any remnant of sleep from him and besides, he had plenty to do.

Elaine and the grandkids would be coming over later that morning to help him move and he still had to finish packing. He had five kids. Elaine was the only girl and the only one who still lived close enough to visit. She made the trip with her kids as often as she could but Jack missed the days when it was easier for him to get about and he didn't have to miss as many soccer games and choir recitals. That was why they had finally decided he should move closer.

He looked sideways at the spot where his wife slept. She hadn't moved despite his abrupt departure from slumber and for that he was thankful. He braced himself for his arthritis to kick in, and then slung his legs out from under the quilt to land on the pale yellow shag carpet. Out of bed he looked back. For some time now Suzy hadn't been feeling well. Mostly it was

old age he thought: she was just slowing down like he was. He caringly tucked the quilt in around her and gave her a quick kiss on the forehead in hopes a little more sleep would help her regain some of her vitality.

A few steps short of the door a soft meow reached his ears. He looked over to the corner of the room where his eyes met a set of luminous feline eyes.

"Well, come on," he said.

Without further ado, the cat rose to his feet and sauntered over to Jack in the way that only cats can. He was still young, filling out his slender form, yet even full grown he would still be small, the runt of the litter. Elaine and her kids had given him to Jack a few months ago; another guy to keep him company in his old age. At first Jack protested, but in the end he did it for the grandkids. He reached down and scratched the grey fur behind the ears and under the chin as the cat rubbed against his legs purring. The kids named him Charcoal on account of the fur, a name Jack didn't care for. Instead, he called him Charley.

"Good morning to you, too," Jack said, giving one last scratch and opening the door so the cat could run out to his food dish.

**For some time now Suzy hadn't
been feeling well.**

Padding down the hall after the cat Jack turned left into the bathroom. At seventy-five his eyesight was poor and without his glasses he walked to the bathroom mostly from memory and long years of routine. That was something he was going to miss. At his age, it wasn't going to be easy to pick up and start over again in a new place, but he reminded himself how it would make it easier to see his grandkids. Still, he was going to miss his routines, the house, even the yellow shag carpet. All of his memories had the kids playing on that carpet. Jack chuckled at himself as he peeled off his undershirt and stepped out of the boxers that he slept in before getting in the shower, trying not to aggravate the arthritis in his knees.

He stayed in the shower a few minutes longer than he needed, letting the hot water push out the chill and relax away the pain and anxiety both from the arthritis and his dream. It frustrated him that he couldn't remember more of it when he knew there was something important beyond his grasp.

Giving up once out of the shower, Jack turned and studied himself in the mirror. Time had not been kind. His once distinguished salt-and-pepper head of hair was now a uniform white, and Jack noted the deep creases in his brow, the chipmunk like cheeks, and the lines around his eyes. He smiled at his reflection and watched as the wrinkles transformed on his face. He knew the wrinkles were from living hard and

enjoying life. He smiled wider. No, time had not been kind, but he figured he and Suzy could squeeze a few more grains of sand out of Father Time's hourglass.

Later, while taping up the last box from the living room, Jack looked down at his watch. Most of the morning had evaporated as he packed. Elaine and her kids would be there any minute. The living room looked strange and unfamiliar to him. He hadn't seen it so empty since he and Suzy had first moved in. All the furniture Jack could move was stacked neatly by the door and Jack had spent most of the morning filling box after box with knick-knacks and memories. All of his books were packed away, and Suzy's china was carefully wrapped up. It was odd that Suzy hadn't gotten out of bed yet but maybe she really needed the rest. Jack stacked the box along the wall with the rest and then pulled on a heavy sweater. He decided he would let Suzy sleep as much as possible and that he would wait for Elaine outside. The fresh air would do him some good.

He hadn't been waiting long when a green minivan pulled into the driveway. Before it was even stopped all the way, one of the sliding doors flung open and a boy in a blue soccer uniform came sprinting across the yard kicking up amber oak leaves as he went. Kaden, Elaine's ten-year-old son, plowed into Jack without slowing down. It hurt, but Jack wouldn't trade Kaden's

enthusiasm for the world.

"Kaden," Elaine said. "Be easy on your Grandfather!" Elaine called while working to unload empty boxes from the hatchback.

"Grandpa!" exclaimed Kaden, ignoring his mother. "I scored two goals today!"

"Did you now?" Jack asked, reaching into his back pocket for his wallet. "Well then, I guess you better take these two dollars, one for each goal. I'm sorry I couldn't make it."

"Sweet! Thanks!" Kaden shouted, then added, "It's okay, Mom says that after we get you moved you will be able to come all the time."

Jack ruffled Kaden's hair and laughed. "I wouldn't miss them." Mary, Elaine's oldest and only girl, had just walked up. Jack gave her a quick hug and kiss on the cheek before she sat down on the stoop and opened her book. Last to walk across the lawn were Matt, an athletic boy of fifteen, and Elaine, both carrying awkward armloads of flattened packing boxes.

"We're just getting the small stuff now," Elaine explained to Matt. "Your dad is coming by later for the furniture."

Matt threw down his boxes and slid Mary over so he could have a seat, putting a dangling ear-bud back in his ear.

"Apparently you are ruining his life," remarked Mary, without looking up from her book. Elaine shrugged and smiled hesitantly at Jack.

"Dad, how are you?" she asked, a note of concern in her voice.

"Oh, I'm doing alright. This chill wants to take the strength out of my old bones, but I'm as ready as anybody for some heavy lifting."

"Well let's get started then," Elaine said with relief. "I'm so glad you are on board with this Dad, it's going to be so much nicer having you closer and out of this big empty house." The four of them filed their way into the living room.

"Grandpa, come here!" Mary shouted from halfway down the attic ladder. "I want to show you something."

Carefully climbing the ladder, Jack poked his head up into the brightly lit, but very dusty attic. He hefted himself up until he was sitting on the floor and took a look around.

"Oh geez, I haven't been up here in ages," he said taking stock of the numerous boxes he had tucked away and then forgotten about. Mary sat in one of the only spaces not occupied by junk, a couple of open boxes surrounding her.

"I thought we were supposed to be packing, not unpacking," Jack joked as Mary pulled something out of a box. Mary

laughed.

"Nah," she said. "This is more fun." She raised a large, black and grey camera with folding billows to her eye. "Say cheese, Grandpa," she said, pushing the button. There was a click and then the old Polaroid began emitting a low buzzing sound.

"How did you get that old thing to work?" Jack asked in disbelief. "Where did you even find it?"

"Grandpa, you never throw anything away," she said while pulling out the photo and waving it around in the air. "The instructions were in the box." She blew on the picture a little more and then handed the black and white photo to Jack.

"Look at that handsome devil," said Jack.

"This camera even has a self-timer," Mary said, turning back to the camera. She balanced it precariously on a short stack of boxes and hit the button before she ran behind Jack and hugged him around the neck. Jack reached up and put one hand on top of hers, smiling for the picture. The camera beeped and then clicked before buzzing again.

"There are lots of great old pictures up here," she said while waiting for the new picture to develop. "I even found your wedding album." She handed the box to Jack who began sifting through the pictures, smiling as he remembered each one.

"Your Grandma would love this,"

Jack said flipping through the album. Mary continued waving the Polaroid in the air.

"Yeah, I wish we could show her." She looked down at the developing photograph blowing on it gently.

"Let's go show her, she's downstairs sleeping, but it's well past time for her to get up, sick or not."

Mary didn't reply

"Mary?" he asked when she didn't say anything.

"You were doing so good this time Grandpa. So good..." She brushed a couple of falling tears from her cheek.

While he and Mary had been up in the attic, Elaine had been supervising the two boys as they carried loads out to the minivan. Now, Jack sat in his favorite green recliner in the living room. He still had the box of old photographs in his lap, but he stared past them. Mary sat on the couch up against the wall to his right, curled up and hugging Charley to her chest. He could hear Elaine in the next room talking to Bill, her husband, on her cell phone. He pretended he didn't notice they were talking about him.

"I don't know what to do Bill," said Elaine. "No, he refuses to come with us. He won't even get out of his recliner... I'm afraid of what he might do while he is waiting for you... No, no, he seems to be with us again. I mean it seems like he's accepted that she's gone, and it was faster this time, which

is good, right?"

He could hear Elaine pacing up and down in the kitchen. He could only sit there thinking: he had forgotten his wife had died. How could anyone forget something like that? And he had done it more than once. It was like his brain hit the reset button. Elaine ended her call, came in, and squatted down in front of Jack's recliner like she was about to explain something to a toddler.

"Dad," she began hesitantly. Jack didn't look at her. Elaine held one of his hands before continuing. "The kids and I are going to go ahead and unload this at your new place, okay? Are you sure you don't want to come with us? I don't feel good about leaving you alone." Jack didn't bother to look up, but he shook his head. Elaine sighed and squeezing his hand, she stood up. "We'll be back in two hours."

Mary got up off the couch and walked over to give Jack a hug and a kiss on the cheek. She headed for the door. Charley darted halfway down the hallway before turning back and licking a paw. Mary gripped the handle to the door, but stopped. Turning around, she left the Polaroid of the two of them nearby.

"I love you grandpa," she whispered before closing the door behind her. Jack was alone in an empty house.

Jack dragged himself out of his chair and down the hall. The walls were devoid of all the pictures that had once given them so

much character. They seemed sterile to Jack, like the walls of a hospital, not filled with the happy memories they once contained. It didn't feel like home anymore, but it was the only home he had known for years. He walked into his study, a room that at one point had belonged to his oldest son until he had gone off to college. This room was as empty as the rest except for a few boxes and a large desk. Pulling open a bottom drawer, Jack brought out the old bottle of scotch and a glass he kept there. He hesitated for a second. His doctor would probably blow a gasket at the thought of him drinking. It was a good bottle of scotch though. He poured himself a drink.

Normally, he liked his scotch on the rocks. He liked hearing the ice clink in the glass, but today, room temperature would do fine. He emptied the glass in two swallows. The alcohol burned down his throat and warmed his stomach, but it didn't do anything for his shattered heart. He took the bottle and the glass back out into the living room. Sitting in his recliner, he poured himself another glass before shuffling through the box of pictures. He found the one he was looking for, not that he even really needed to look at it.

In it, Suzy appeared before an indistinct background reclining on a wide staircase which Jack knew led to the altar of their church. She had propped herself up on one elbow while her other hand rested in her

lap. Her feet were tucked beneath her, not that they could be seen beneath her wedding dress that flowed down the stairs, a rippling river of white lace. Her eyes sparkled with mirth and there was a knowing smile on her lips revealing two slight dimples on her cheeks that Jack used to tease her about. Jack's favorite aspect was barely noticeable in the aging black and white photograph. He could still see the small white daisies, which had been artistically worked into the curls of her hair. He closed his eyes. He could still remember how they smelled.

He walked hand and hand with Suzy. The thumb on his left hand couldn't help but rise up and swivel the new gold ring on his finger. It felt heavy, but not unpleasant. He looked over at his bride who was laughing at something he had said. The words were now irrelevant to the memory. Suzy had changed out of her wedding dress already and into a more practical sundress. They walked along the sidewalk outside of their small church. The day was winding to a close and all the guests had left while the deacon's wives were happily returning the church back to its pre-wedding state. Quite suddenly, but unhurriedly, they turned and faced one another. Following some unspoken signal they embraced each other, squeezing tight. Jack buried his nose in Suzy's hair and for a long while he stood like that, savoring the scent of daisies that drifted around his

But still her voice in his ears was pure and unshakeable.

wife. Suzy lifted her head and in his ear she whispered, "I will never leave you."

The sweet sound of her voice danced through his mind. Jack opened his eyes and the vision of Suzy disappeared, but the scent of daisies drifted all around him. His wife was dead, he told himself firmly. But still her voice in his ears was pure and unshakable. He grabbed his glass of scotch and gave it another swirl, inhaling deeply. The smell burned the insides of his nostrils the way it had burned down his throat, scalding away the lingering smell. He drained the glass and slammed it down with a thud.

His wife was dead, but she hadn't left him. He could feel her memory still in the house. He wouldn't leave, he decided, one way or another he would stay in his home with Suzy. Jack pushed himself out of the recliner moving towards the kitchen. The box of photos spilled off his lap onto the floor. The kitchen was one of the first rooms to be packed up, but there was one box left sitting on the counter. Digging past a couple of potholders and the salt and pepper shakers, Jack found his pill organizer. His fingers fumbled as he tried to operate the childproof caps. Sunday popped open followed by Monday and he dumped the

pills into the empty scotch glass, the pills clinked against the glass like Jack was putting in his missing ice cubes. Soon six days worth of pills lined the bottom of his glass. Curiously it wasn't as much as Jack expected and he wondered if it would be enough. It would have to do. A little more riffling produced a coffee mug that Jack filled with water. There was a soft thud and a quiet meow behind him. Jack shut off the water and turned to discover Charley sniffing the concoction of pills.

"Charley, down!" he commanded, shooing the cat off the counter. Startled, Charley hopped down, his paws flinging the Polaroid off the counter. Snatching up the scotch glass, Jack watched him run off. Jack took a deep breath, but he couldn't bring himself to take the pills. The Polaroid was lying face up on the floor. From where he was standing he could just see Mary's smile.

Almost unconsciously, Jack set the scotch glass down on the counter as he bent to pick up the Polaroid. The corners of Mary's mouth curled in the same way Suzy's always had, like she knew a secret and wouldn't tell. Jack's feet began moving back to his recliner. Jack sank into his seat and continued to stare

at the picture. He had never noticed how much of Suzy passed down to Mary, unlike Elaine who always took after him.

Setting the Polaroid down, Jack began sorting through the box of pictures that had toppled over, restoring order to the box. Suzy may have died, but she would never leave him. Taking the Polaroid, Jack looked at the way Mary hugged him around the neck. He wasn't about to leave her either.

Jake Ezell

A Prelude

The players kick a stump
into the fire

Combusting amber and flame
into the heavenly bodies.

Look at her through its heat,
staring into the void
and all its emptiness.

Look at the conflagration flicker in her eyes
while the smoke from a
cancer-stick crawls out
her lips into the aether.



Lauren Robillard

Hexed

Made of walnut and a blue Ball jar that can be unscrewed.

Keegan Cooper

Her House

The chilly sun streams rays upon the plush tan
carpet, lint warm to the touch.
The air crisps in a tight grasp as wind
knocks at the window.
The snappy dry fireplace hazes in red hue like a fog,
heat in tiny twirls spiraling and covering.
As the purring cat curls closer on his pillow,
the oven door slams an echo
bouncing out of the kitchen.

She's cooking now; nimble fingers prance to
the oven's torrid beat.
She serves in confected celebration that
bursts over countertops and faces.
The smell of her baking blends with
smoked wood and the musk of adorned books.
The stacks and shelves line the house as wallpaper
never going out of fashion.

The dog sops water
while scratching vigorously towards an itch.
The beauty of beagles is never shy,
but traps every friend approaching the front door
into smiles and bent postures for petting
this pert companion,
this fuzzy dear.

I don't know why I'm absent,
but a part of me will never leave.
It's the only place I want to be.

Elizabeth Rowen

Morning Routine

I could hear the soft noises coming from the bathroom down the hall as my sister got ready for school. My attention latched on to a metallic clank from her curling iron, and the plastic tubes clicking in her makeup bag. Gradually, I woke from the light that slid between the cracks around my door. Being in fifth grade, I knew I would soon have to live like her – like a woman. I'd be waking up just as early, making my own little noises. Unsure of how she prepared herself each morning, I decided to see for myself.

I climbed down the ladder of my loft bed and deserted my room, joining her at the end of the hall. I had no reason to be up so early, and she asked why I was awake. I shrugged and passed her to put down the toilet lid and sit. Dad had gone to work a few minutes earlier, so the only light on in the house came from that bathroom. For a moment I wanted to go back to my room. I was tempted to curl up under the fluffy blue comforter that always smelled floral and clean. But I stayed, and watched as Kim continued to dab her smooth face with creamy makeup.

She leaned in to the mirror in front of her, making the bathroom feel like the dressing room of a great actress. She continued to prepare for her day at high school, something I wouldn't be experiencing for centuries. She stood before me, so grown up, in cat-eye glasses and a cream colored cardigan. Her concentrated smile and poise could

win anyone over.

Kim was now lining her eyes in black and curling her lashes. I watched her, taking mental notes. She opened her mouth like a codfish and swept the stick back and forth on her lash line. I asked her what she would be doing at school today. She didn't have much to say to that, so I asked her what all her classes were. I listened intently as she uttered words like "psychology" and "algebra." She encouraged me to go back to sleep, but I told her I didn't want to. I could feel the cold from the porcelain seat beneath me through my thin pajama pants. She was now applying her ruby red lipstick. She rubbed her lips together, watching her reflection.

I asked her if she was leaving now, and she told me that she still had to do her hair. I watched her reach for the steaming curling iron and twist her sections of ginger hair around it. She squirted some perfume from a tiny dark green bottle on her dainty wrists and rubbed her wrists on her neck. I asked her if I could spray some on my shirt and she hesitated, but said yes. I did so, and continued to smell my shirt as we entered the kitchen. She bit into an apple and put on her coat. She told me to have a good day, and stop watching so many music videos. I poured myself some cereal as she slid on her backpack, and grabbed her purse.

"I love you," she said to me.

"I love you too," I replied, with cereal in my mouth. She walked over and gave me

a kiss on the cheek. After she walked out the door I wiped off the red imprint she left on my face. I heard her car start and fade away as she drove off. As I took my cereal to the living room and grabbed the remote control, I pulled my t-shirt up to my nose, smelling the perfume again.

Once I turned sixteen, I'd become an expert at dabbing my face with creamy makeup and applying coats of lipstick just as she had. Her many tutorials were contained in each of my actions; when I shaved my legs in the shower, I could hear her cautionary voice: "Press the razor down hard, but not too hard. And for the love of God, don't neglect your knees."

I drove to school in cardigans, listening to Ray Charles or Fiona Apple. I auditioned for school plays and bad-mouthed sports. I sprayed my own little bottle of perfume on my wrists. Sometimes when I did these things I'd smile, remembering the morning I'd watched her get ready.

One day, I gave her a call while she was away at college. We chatted for hours about the last few months, exchanging laughs and descriptions of new friends. We discussed favorite moments in our childhood, playing home videos in our heads. I mentioned that I'd always been jealous of her, and that she was such a beautiful, unique person. Laughing, she said she'd always envied me.

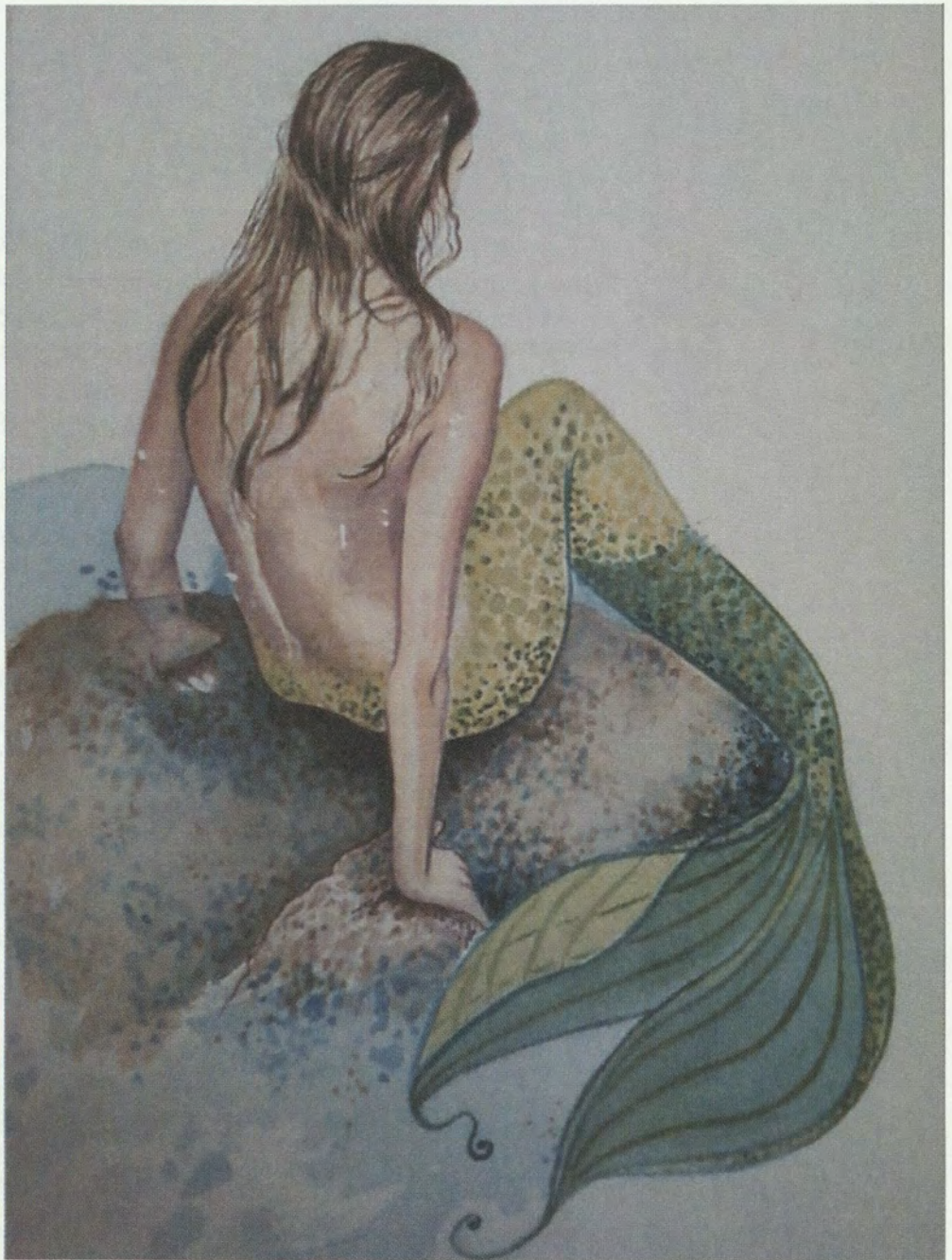
Rachel Linnemeier

Untitled



Rachel Linnemeier

Untitled



Sunni Harford

A Tree's Vanity

Wind scatters leaves in hues of sunset
over gray pavement. Pointed leaves
skid over concrete, sounding like
a rain chorus joining city puddles.
Trees with leaves still clinging,
call in a whisper as I walk past:
Look and listen to me now, while leaves
clothe my branches, now while the wind lets
me speak to you.

As I Leave Again

How many times have we done this same
hand wave with elbows tucked
into the stomach in front of the security line?
Conversations and confessions
used to belong to us, but now are part
of the airport scenery: Guards who see it every
hour, passengers with rolling suitcases off
to exotic islands, mothers with running
toddlers. I squint to keep tears in,
shifting my concentration
to carry-on bags—fastest way
to slip off sneakers, take out laptop,
and heave my back pack into plastic
bin?—as the security line inches
like a caterpillar and you disappear
behind sliding doors. Next time we meet again,
I'll mistake your reaching hand in the night
for a mouse's little foot, and shudder us both
awake. Like I do every time, until I
relax into the nest of your limbs.



Christian Brock Forrer

Valley Dogs

Acrylic, ink, spraypaint, and
charcoal on museum board and
foamcore

James Treakle

Neighbors

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Closed window. Pulled curtains.

Untidy bed.

Full trash can.

Cluttered desk.

Calendar. Events: Work. Work. Work.

Half-empty cash jar.

"Runner-Up" sports award.

Closet cracked open. A TELESCOPE
propped up inside.

White paper on the desk. Someone
pencils in STARS. A
crescent MOON. An ASTRONAUT... who
hangs from the moon by a
hand. EARTH looms large below.

The artist, MARK, sweeps eraser dust
off the drawing.
Stares. Blinks.

It ANIMATES: The Astronaut lets go,
falls back to Earth,
burns up on entry.

Mark smiles, crumples up the draw-

ing, and turns to throw it into the trash. Hesitates, as it's full. Just drops it at his feet and slouches.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Mark steps out. Stops by his car. Looks up at the sky.

The stars obscured by light pollution and clouds.

He walks through the

NEIGHBORHOOD

Looks at the rows of darkened homes.

A "Beware of Dog" sign.

Alarm system signs.

A dirty welcome mat pushed aside.

Trash can at the curb. Tipped over.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Lights on. Multicolored. Garish. Silhouettes of people moving inside visible through open blinds.

Mark stands outside, takes it all in.

LAUGHTER. A couple KISSES by the window. Dances. Close.

Mark steps up to the door. Prepares to knock. Hesitates.

Walks away, turns to go.

The door OPENS. Someone rushes out and slams it behind them.

SHANNON. She's not crying, but her eyes are red.

Mark turns to her. Smiles, a little sad.

She notices him. Steps up. Smiles back.

PRE-LAP the sound of an engine starting...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Wide. Stars BRIGHT above. Mark's car crosses the frame.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Car parked. Headlights off.

Telescope set up. Mark dusts the lens.

Shannon, seated on a blanket, watches the sky.

Mark tips the telescope and joins her.

They take turns peering through it.

A star above MOVES.

Shannon notices and points. Mark follows her.

The star dances through the sky.

They smile. Mark puts an arm around her shoulder.

The star DESCENDS.

They stand, awed, terrified. Its light on their faces.

It RACES towards them -- crosses directly overhead -- they hug each other TIGHT -- and it returns to the sky. Vanishes.

Shannon buries her head in his shoulder. He leans against her. Smiles. SATISFIED.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bed tidy.

Trash can empty.

Desk neat.

Calendar. Events: Work. Work. Date at 7. Work. Stargazing.

Two cash jars. One full, one empty.

Framed SKETCH on the wall. Two Astronauts stand on the moon.

It animates and they WAVE at us.

Open curtains. Open window. Telescope aimed at a starry night. We approach the window and look down at the

YARD

Where Mark and Shannon dance together, slow, comfortable.

And they kiss.

FADE TO BLACK.

Roll title: NEIGHBORS. Roll credits.

Sunni Harford

Machines Don't Know Taste

The line at Wal-Mart was slow. The *pling, pling* of the register scanners echoed throughout the front of the store. Megumi held two boxes of cereal and a gallon of milk in her hands. The condensation on the milk made the handle hard to grasp and she readjusted the items for a better grip. The fruity colored cereal had been advertised as “Buy one, get one free” in the paper she had received in the mail. After using up all of the money she’d earned at her neighborhood convenience store back home in Japan, she relied on the small bits of money her parents sent her through bank wire.

Her roommate, Yoshimi, who also studied at the ESL Center by the university, had parents who were lawyers and plenty of money. At first, Megumi was impressed by how freely Yoshimi spent money on unnecessary items, but after experiencing her party lifestyle firsthand, she suspected her parents were just glad to have her out of their hair. She wasn’t here to study seriously, instead came to waste some time while she figured out what to do with her life or on the type of man she would marry, unlike Megumi, who was planning on finishing college in the States.

The line was still not moving. Megumi leaned over to take a glimpse at the cashier. She was a young woman with blonde hair tied back tightly in a ponytail. Black eyeliner circled her blue eyes. Leaning back on one foot, she was chewing gum and taking each

item one by one from the conveyor belt, turning it around the flower of lasers as if they were delicate pieces of glass and not cans of frozen orange juice. Every once in a while her gum snapping paused as she sang along to the pop songs from the loudspeakers, her neck and shoulders doing a slight wave of dance. It was great that people were free to dance and express themselves in the States, but sometimes the service was unbelievable. If she had acted like that at the convenient store she would have been fired in five minutes. Maybe that's how she could have gotten her father to stop making her work at his *udon* noodle shop—slow service.

Finally, it was her turn. Megumi used her body to hoist the milk jug up to the moving belt. The cashier dragged the milk across the counter lazily, and then the two boxes of cereals. Megumi watched the monitor, waiting for the discount to kick in and subtract it from the subtotal. But it didn't happen and the girl mumbled, "Twelve twenty-nine."

"Ah, one is free?" she asked, pointing to a cereal box. The blonde girl looked back at her as if she'd just woken up. "Buy one, get one free," Megumi continued.

"You have to pay for it," the cashier answered back, her eyes squinting at her in disbelief.

"No, no," Megumi said, realizing she was misunderstood. "One." She scrambled through her large black leather purse to find

the advertisement in her bag. But the piece of paper seemed to be hidden among the books, cosmetics, and pens she always carried around with her, but she couldn't find it. A man in line began to grumble, and a woman coughed loudly. Megumi stopped looking through her purse and pulled out a twenty dollar bill. The cashier took it and gave her back seven dollars and seventy-one cents.

Later, in her maroon Honda Civic, she rummaged around in her purse for the advertisement again. She found it right away underneath her vocab notebook and compared it to the cereal boxes she purchased. They were exactly the same. Should she return to the store and talk to someone? She didn't even know how to begin looking for a manager in a place as big as Wal-Mart, and her panic at the register didn't encourage her either.

She hit her head against the headrest. Almost six months of intensive English instruction and she still panicked when she had to speak to any American besides her instructors. Back at home, people would ask her what she wanted to do. Telling people her dreams of becoming an English-Japanese interpreter were easy then and she had believed she really would achieve it. But now, she couldn't even talk to the Wal-Mart cashier. To top it off, she failed the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exams required to pass to enter the university twice. Of course, if she took ESL classes for the entire year, finishing at the final level, the TOEFL test wasn't

necessary, but her father's look of doubt when she announced she would leave the *udon* shop and home as well hovered in her mind constantly, and she wanted to prove to her parents that she was serious.

| She almost felt bad about what she was about to tell them. |

In Japan, an *udon* place existed on every corner in the cities. *Udon* were the thick white noodles that were the regional delicacy of her province, Shikoku. Traditionally, it was made using flour, water, and salt and plenty of time to knead the dough, let it rise, roll it out with a long wooden pole and then cut into long strands with a rectangular knife. As other shops began to purchase machinery to mix the dough, or cut the noodles, her father remained stubborn and woke up every morning with her mother to make the noodles for the day.

Her father would always dismiss her suggestion to buy a noodle cutter to make things easier, which was a knife attached to a long piece of metal machinery. "Machines don't know taste," he'd say, using a knife to slice the dough by hand, creating a uniform width for each noodle from years of practice.

One night, after the last customer left, Megumi and her mother cleared the dining tables while her father cleaned the kitchen. It had been the usual busy day and once again her mother had to hang a sign on the door with the characters "SOLD OUT" brushed on

a piece of laminated paper. There were almost never enough of her father's handmade *udon* noodles to satisfy the town's customers.

"I must really be old now," her mother said. She sat down at one of the tables and began rotating her shoulders. "I'm so stiff, but soon Megumi will graduate and will be so much help here."

"Time really does fly," her father said as he wiped down the stainless steel countertop. "Remember Megumi used to sit in that corner and draw while we worked?" Megumi sat down across her mother. Her mother still wore the same blue and white bandanna tied underneath her short ponytail that she wore when Megumi was younger, but she seemed to notice the wrinkles around her mother's eyes for the first time. Her parents were getting older. She almost felt bad about what she was about to tell them, but she knew she didn't want to work at the shop after graduation and wait around for some man who loved *udon* as much as her father to marry her and work at the shop.

"Okaasan," she said to call her mother's attention. "I had a meeting with my homeroom teacher today about my future plans. I told her I wanted to go to university."

"What are you talking about?" her mother asked after a pause. "You never told us anything like that."

"I tried to tell you, but you always kept going on about how life would be like

after I graduate or how I needed to practice cutting the noodles like *otousan*," Megumi closed her eyes. "And I want to go to an American university and become an interpreter."

Her love of English had begun when her parents began to let her come home instead of straight to the *udon* shop after school. She would turn on the TV and make sure to watch American movies or TV shows. She began to fall in love with the sound of the foreign words and the easy retorts they tossed back and forth. As she started to study English at school, she would listen to the words coming out of Julia Roberts's or Tom Hanks's mouth, aching to hear something she recognized. Her parents would find her leaning in towards the TV, the volume turned all the way up, and scold her for disturbing the neighbors with the blaring English. How had her love for English turned into such a nightmare? She had dreamed of speaking to Americans, but now whenever the opportunity came, she would freeze. Megumi climbed out of the car and took out her keys from her bag. As she was about to unlock the door, she heard shouting and giggling through the faded blue door. That's right, she thought, Yoshimi said she was going to invite some friends over for lunch. At the dining table back home, Yoshimi sat around with some classmates from their ESL classes. There were a couple

Japanese students, but the rest were Korean, Chinese or American students and they were all eating pizza.

"Megumi! Have some pizza!" Yoshimi shouted. "This is the first pizza I've ever ordered over the phone here."

"You called the pizza place and they understood you?"

"Barely. It was kind of funny. I had to talk really slowly." Yoshimi laughed and ate another bite. Megumi remembered the last time she had tried speaking in English over the phone. The static and the inability to see the speaker's mouth had made it so difficult to understand what each other were saying. She ran into her bedroom and threw her purse down on her bed. Yoshimi didn't even care about learning English, she was just going to return home after this year, Megumi thought. But Megumi would stay up late studying for the ESL classes and the next TOEFL classes at the same time, while Yoshimi would come home well after two or three in the morning from partying. But she was doing everything Megumi wasn't able to do.

The conversation from the living room wafted through her bedroom door. She could hear the grammatically incorrect English of Yoshimi and the other students and she cringed. Usually, she didn't care and would have fun with them, but the bad TOEFL test results and her failure at Wal-Mart put her on edge. Unable to listen to

their ramblings any longer, Megumi grabbed her keys and purse again, walked past the group back to her car, and drove away.

A shiny black pickup truck swept past Megumi on the country road. Her window didn't roll up fast enough and the dust flew into her car, making her cough. Just past noon, the sun beamed through the windows and heated the car to an unbearable temperature. She had made some random turns, just wanting to drive away, but not having anywhere to go and found herself in the middle of nowhere.

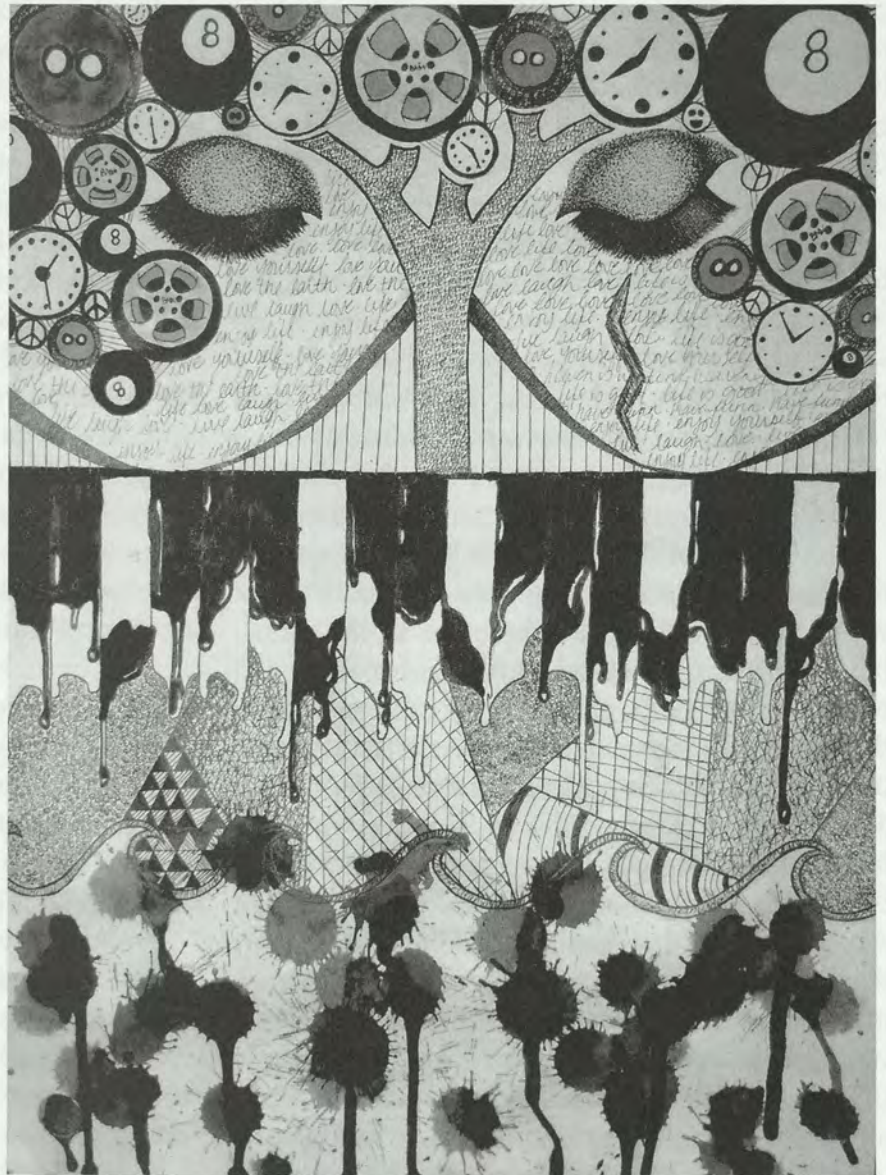
The land in Midwest America was flat and vast. Faded red barns and white houses dotted the wide stretches of green farmland. In Shionoe, the small Japanese town she was from, mountains and hills blocked the view of any landscape. When she first arrived in the States the sky that wrapped around the earth awed her. She had felt freedom in it, as if all of the obstacles in her way to becoming an interpreter had disappeared. Now, the clear sky felt like an empty desert without even a cloud to accompany her on this lonely drive.

A green sign with white letters signaled a place called Devinstown was a mile away. A gas station and small shops with signs like "Wilkin's Pharmacy" and "Country Crafts" appeared along the street. As her stomach complained, she realized that she had left without eating any lunch. Soon a red, brick courthouse with white

columns and stairs appeared before her. Bushes and large cement bowls filled with yellow and purple flowers decorated the grass that surrounded the building. A man in a white collared shirt and a dark red tie sat on a bench and smoked. This was the first time Megumi had ever visited a small town in the States. It had the same sleepy quality her hometown did.

The land in Midwest America was flat and vast.

Megumi decided to find a restaurant on foot and parked on the left side of the courthouse. Another craft store with large quilts on display caught her eye. She walked to the display windows and took out her camera. The patterns on the quilt were shades of blue, red, and white--a patriotic themed quilt left over from the Independence Day season. People came in and out of the doors of the different shops along the street. As she walked, a young woman in a white t-shirt and jeans stopped mid-sentence in a conversation with her blonde friend and paused her gaze on Megumi. Feeling uncomfortable, Megumi adjusted her purse strap and passed them, making quick strides pretending she knew exactly where she was going. Suddenly, her gray flats hit a protruding crack and she stumbled. Instinctively, she turned to look at the two women and saw them turning away from her. While there were plenty of Asian students on cam-



Eva Gichina

Her Closed Eyes

pus, this small town probably rarely saw anyone like her. Suddenly, she felt overdressed in her dark pink dress and creamy cardigan. Her glittery Coach purse felt too colorful among the washed-out colors of the town. But she was hungry—really hungry.

As she crossed the street, she looked for anything that resembled a place to eat. A bright red Coca-Cola sign with white, swirling letters caught her eye and below it, the capital letters, "THE SANDWICH SHOP." So the restaurant's name was the same as its identity, just like her father's place was simply called *Udon-ya*, or Udon Shop.

The restaurant was in a brick building painted over in a grayish blue. A wooden door with peeling red paint stood between two display windows. Before she even pushed the door open, her nose caught the smell of burgers and fries. As she stepped inside onto a black-and-white checkered floor, a bell tinkled amongst the sound of hissing burgers. A U-shaped counter covered most of the floor with an open kitchen in the back. An elderly man with a baseball cap sat at the right side of the counter and was laughing with a young man inside the counter whose brown hair snuck out messily from underneath his red cap. He wore a black shirt and jeans with a dirty apron tied around his waist and he looked at Megumi twice before murmuring "How's it going?" The place was chilly so she wrapped her cardigan tightly around herself for warmth. Unsure of what to

do in such a place she stood looking around at the few tables that dotted the corners, debating whether she should sit at the counter or at a table by herself. The older man solved the problem for her.

"Well, have a seat," he said and gestured to a spot on the empty side of the counter. The overalls he wore were faded and the button links made a metal tinkling as he returned his hand to his cup of coffee. She smiled a thank you and sat down on the stool. Her legs touched the cold metal of the stool and she shivered.

"The menu's over there on the wall," her new guide said. She looked to her right and saw the black board with tiny white letters and numbers. The letters were in all capitals, which took longer to read than the lowercase letters she was used to in her textbooks.

The younger man slid a dish with a burger in front of the overall man. Wiping his hands on a green-gray kitchen towel, he asked, "What can I get for you?"

"I'll have a cheeseburger and a chocolate shake please," she answered, trying to lose her accent as much as possible. Maybe if she sounded like an American they would stop staring at her like she was an alien or something.

"What?" the cook leaned forward, cupping his ear with his hand to hear her better.

"A cheese burger and a chocolate

shake," this time she spoke each word slowly, as if the man was a foreigner and she was the native English speaker. He nodded, and rummaged in the windowed refrigerator next to the range.

"So, where you from?" her guide asked. "I'm Dave, by the way, I own the hardware store down the street. Yeah, my son runs it now, so I just come on over to the sandwich shop and bother lil' Jimmy," his thumb pointed towards the kitchen, where the black-shirted man was making a beef patty with his hands. Megumi had to listen with a different intensity than she was used to. Her ESL teachers spoke clearly and slowly in a way that had tricked her into thinking her listening abilities had improved drastically.

"My name is Megumi, and I'm from Japan," she replied, hating how her words sounded like a flute that hit the wrong notes, while Dave's was as clear as a trumpet.

"Japan!" Dave wheezed, and managed a whistle. "How'd you end up over here?"

Megumi paused before answering, not wanting to share that she had found this place randomly while in a bad mood. "I like hamburgers." That was a simple answer, to say and to comprehend, she thought.

Dave's face exploded with a quiet squeaky laughter. He put his hamburger down to clutch his belly. "Well, you sure wasted your time. Lil' Jimmy here makes the

most terrible burgers I have ever tasted."

"Hey, she might like them. Give my burgers a chance," Jimmy said, returning to the counter with a coffee pot and winking at Megumi. Usually, she didn't like it when American men winked at her--it seemed too familiar an action between complete strangers, but today it didn't bother her and she smiled. Somehow the small, bright place and the laughter shared between each other already created a connection.

The banter between the two continued and Megumi listened, laughing when she could understand a joke and mentally storing the ones she didn't so she could work them out later with a dictionary. Soon, Jimmy slid a plate with a cheeseburger and fries in front of her and she took out her blue digital camera from her bag. She noticed Jimmy and Dave exchanging glances, but took the picture anyway.

The burger was a tower of balanced items. Meat on the bottom, then the green lettuce, a thick slice of tomato and wide rings of onion piled underneath the top bun. It was impossible to even take hold of it without everything falling apart and she squished it down with her palm to condense the size. She widened her mouth as much as she could and bit into the pile. The juicy tomato and the sharp onion mixed with the bitterness of the beef and created a taste she had never experienced in a burger. It was like the moment when she realized her

father's *udon* was special.

"Hey, Megumi, we're going to get some *udon* before going home. Do you want to come with us?" Kazuko asked her. They had just finished Sports Festival Day at her middle school and were on their way home. Megumi's class had won second place overall and everyone was tired and hungry. She had never really eaten anyone else's *udon* besides her father's. Why would she pay for *udon* when she had plenty of it at home? But today, everyone had worked hard together, throwing balls, playing soccer, and cheering for each other. She wanted to hang out with her friends a little more.

"Sure."

The group of girls entered the *udon* shop near the Sanuki bus stop. It was a large place with plenty of seating, much more than her father's place. Through the counter window she could see an automatic noodle cutter and other machinery that her father had refused to buy from the visiting salesmen over and over. "Machine's don't know taste," he'd said over and over again. Megumi thought that if her parent's bought even the knife, they could make more *udon*, and sell more, and then maybe they could buy her the MP3 player she'd been wanting. She'd tell her father tonight about how Sanuki's *udon* was just as good as his.

They sat down and she ordered her *udon zaru*-style. *Zaru* was when the noodles

came out cold and were dipped into a simple broth with sliced green onions and freshly shredded raw ginger. It was the simplest *udon* dish and all depended on the noodle and not on any other sauces or side dishes. Other girls ordered *udon* Sanuki-style, *udon* in hot broth or even the less-traditional *curry-udon*.

The server was a young girl not much older than Megumi with her hair in a bandana like her mother's and a long navy blue apron that covered her knees. She carried a large tray full of their bowls. She probably got paid more than Megumi did working at her parent's place.

"Thank you for waiting!" she cried, and announced each of their meals as she handed them out, "Curry, Sanuki, Zaru..."

The white noodles shone in a pile on the bamboo plate and Megumi quickly snapped her wooden chopsticks apart, eager to eat after a tiring day. She lifted the small dish of sliced onions and dumped them into the cup of dark, sweet broth. The cup was a bright red in the inside and black on the outside. Then she picked up the piece of raw ginger and shredder the server had left and shredded a pile about the size of her thumb. She then lifted the cup in her left hand and reached with her chopsticks for a strand of noodle, transferring it to the broth. She dipped it a couple of times before slurping it into her mouth.

But it was different from her father's.

Too different. The noodles weren't as firm. They squished between her teeth and tongue too easily. There was no taste, just bland flour, as if she was eating the noodles to taste the broth, instead of having the broth complement the noodles. Her plans to convince her father about the machinery dissolved as the noodles dissolved in her mouth. Hungry as she was, she couldn't finish the pile.

She never told her parents.

After spending a few hours at the Sandwich Shop chatting with Dave and Jimmy, Megumi finally drove back home with the directions they gave her. They had been patient and weren't rushed. She had never felt so comfortable speaking English as she had that afternoon.

"Megumi, where did you go? We had so much fun," Yoshimi asked when Megumi entered the apartment.

"I ate a really good hamburger," she answered entering into her room. The TOEFL test prep books were piled high on her desk, as they had been ever since she arrived. She considered them a moment, and then stuffed them all into the corner of her closet.





Rachel Linnemeier

Fence

Lou Combs

Riding the Thermals

Sitting in the car,
traffic stalled
thoughts racing,

She sees two hawks
riding the thermals,
circling . . .
hunting.

How lovely, she thinks,
To fledge your offspring
and then forget them.

Lauren Stone

The Moving Hills of West Virginia

Though the world is round and spinning, I usually feel flat and stationary. Maybe it is my surroundings that make me feel this way: that flat land of Indiana. The rows and rows of monotony — corn and suburbs. The roads never wind. Never lead to any great adventure. I have discovered that there are places that are not flat. Places that bound in and curve out like streamers dancing to a slow rhythm. Every gravel road leads to a home with tall-tales or to where the mountain broke years ago and now a creek slowly, leisurely flows downward. This place, where someone has tramped before me, lies and tells me that I am the first person to look upon it; the first person to behold its changing beauty. The leaf that falls to the ground, slowly crumbling, and deteriorating, never questioning its destiny.

West Virginia, it is the place where my mother and, many years earlier her mother, were formed on one dark night, deep in a holler. Surrounded by the thick forests that Indiana lost long ago. The gentle brooks and the haphazard bridges that poor men construct out of necessity. The back roads that are stones and pebbles warning your feet to beware because the land is alive here. The hills that make the inexperienced and going-blind drivers fearful. The young men speed down on, and the young women hold tight. Maybe that night, the boy would get lucky. When I see these things, I feel like I am moving, swirling in all directions. Moving through the

sky where the colored birds sing, and at the same time, resting peacefully on the bottom of the Ohio River where catfish ignore the bait because they are old and not easily fooled. West Virginia is backwards some may say, but what they mean is not “current,” not industrial or there’s nothing “to do”. The land is what you “do”, or maybe the land does you. It captures you and enchants you while you stand. When your feet begin to sting, you realize that nature caught you, and you plead for it to do so once again. One summer long ago, the land, and a boy raised on the land, caught me.

As I foraged through the vast acreage that my aunt and uncle owned, I walked along a thin crick that cows and horses sipped on when the summer’s heat dried their tongue. The grass was a rich green, and if I wasn’t careful, if I tried to make myself a bed among the growing wild flowers and weeds, I would acquire new friends: ticks and chiggers. As the wind moved, arching and bending, mimicking the motion of the mountains, I heard the sound of rubber boots against the grasses’ tops. There I saw the boy. His brow furrowed as he considered his workload. He waved hello, but his mind counted the burdens that being poor afforded him. No time to enjoy the land. No, not in the day. He waits for the day to end, and for the moon to sit on the mountain’s top and play its fiddle.

**I represented something foreign,
perhaps someone worth molding.**

Something hidden in his furrowed brow and the way his body moved as he walked along the land, never picking up his feet, always connected to the growing grass that sweats or the aged rocks that soundlessly cry out, made me attracted to him the same way I was attracted to West Virginia. I wanted to know him, beg him to tell me secrets about the shifting ground, the animals that roam and the people who were buried beneath my feet. Even if he didn’t tell me these secrets using his tongue, I could study his body: the movement of his muscles, the constant change of his body or the fullness in his graying eyes. Similarly, he was probably attracted to me. Allowed me to tag along as I watched the land strain his body; his muscles compressed and extended like the hills on either side of us. Though the boy was madly in love with the land, I represented something foreign, perhaps someone worth molding. Someone to hold loosely after a day of work.

The clouds never closed one afternoon as God allowed His water to wash the land. He invited me into his trailer where he lived with his disabled father. His father was gone, and the house was dark and still. He led me to his bedroom where I sat on top of his bed covered in an old quilted blanket. He did

not try to kiss me or woo me with promises no young man could keep, but instead, he pulled out his guitar and sat next to me. The bed dipped in the middle. We were in a valley, together. He played his guitar and sang. Occasionally, he would look up at me, and within his blue-gray eyes, I saw the sky that rests on the hills of West Virginia. Burdened but yet content to stay there because no place could be better. I wanted to touch his brow and gently kiss his eyelids that rest on top of those eyes that reveal West Virginia's secrets, but I was young and I didn't.

That was the last summer I spent in West Virginia, but my heart still promises myself that one day I will inhabit the land, and become a part of it. I never married a boy from the land, but I know the land will transform anyone that is willing, or sometimes even those who are not.





Lynette Sauer

Psalm 19:1-4a

Rebecca Downs

Tree Bones

I walk a path,
a skinny dirt line
that cuts through reeds,
tangled weeds
in an untouched field.

The skinny dirt line
glides gently around
old, grey trees—thick arms
with leafless sleeves—
just brittle branches.

Not a bird dares perch
on decaying trees,
the lightest touch
tangling cracking branches
with dusty dirt-fall.

I won't sit
beneath the aching limbs
that reach for my own;
I ignore their creaking
whining as I pass.

But my heart aches, too,
and I whisper and whine
into the wind, as I walk
beneath the crooked shadows
of their brittle bones.

I, too, long for a light touch
on my limbs, reminders
of a old familiarity,
a warmth in my arms,
to feel young.

Poor trees—their power
lies rooted in the ground,
and spreads only as far
as the swollen sun
allows its shadow.



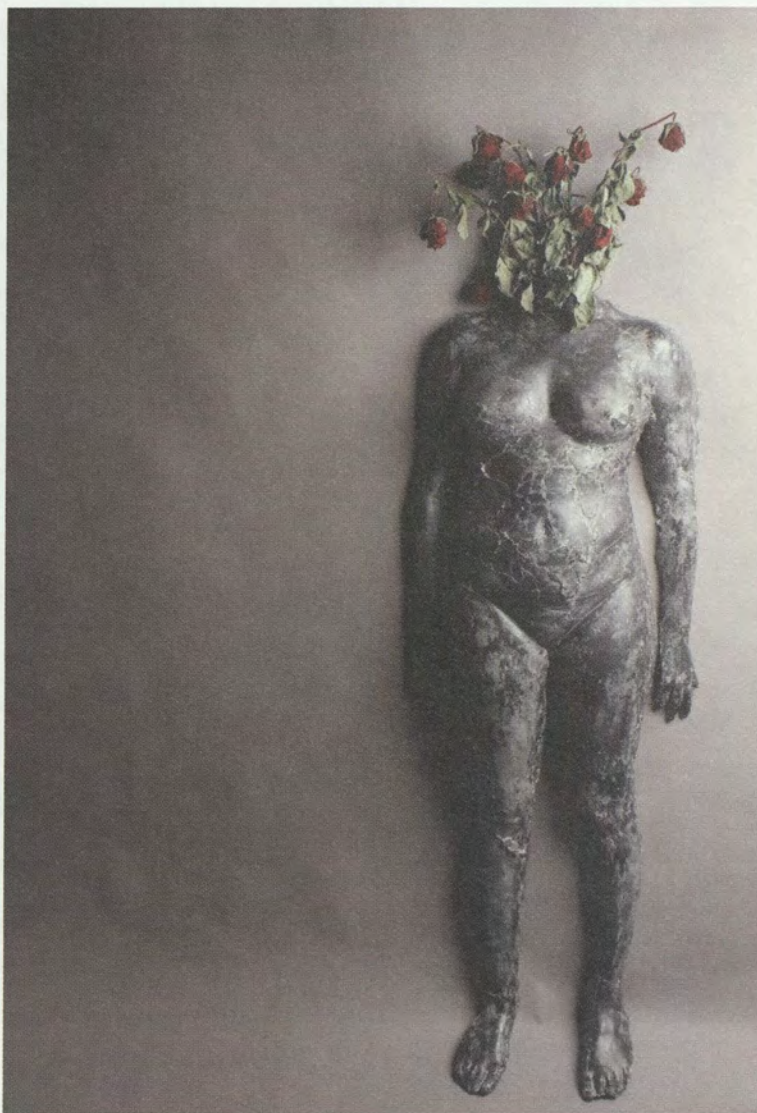
Danielle Graves

Rebirth

Amy Applegate

Wallflower

mixed media sculpture composed primarily out of fiberglass, but includes plaster, graphite, wire mesh, and red roses.



Yekaterina Komarovskaya

The Inevitable

It was 1985. The class of 9A had long since given up trying to stay awake. Vasiliy Ivanovich surveyed the heads drooping over identical double desks and hit the blackboard with his stick.

“Lazareva,” he said. “Where do you fall when you see an atomic flare?” A skinny girl in the back row jerked her head up. Smoothing her standard-issue navy blue skirt, she hesitantly rose. Masha Lazareva was silent and clasped her hands together in front of her while staring at her feet.

“Approach the board.”

Vasiliy Ivanovich’s mother, an illiterate, but very religious woman, taught him to love his country and the Bolsheviks who freed the serfs (his great-grandfather among them). He learned later that the Czar did it in 1861, but never gave up his mother’s faith in the Soviet Union. Vasiliy genuinely believed in serving his country. He also genuinely believed in making his students squirm.

“Today, Lazareva.” His voice had gained a chill air of authority over the years, which he loved to hear.

“Somewhere where there’s no flare?” Masha Lazareva’s foot tried to rub a hole in the parquet floor.

Vasiliy Ivanovich waited for the giggling to subside before speaking. “You fall with your eyes closed, so it doesn’t blind you, and with your head towards it, Lazareva. Duck and cover.”

“Yeah, so you don’t ruin your boots,”

someone called out. The girl turned slightly red from pressing her lips together.

"You think this is funny? BWP. Masha, what does it stand for?"

Masha searched the faces of her classmates to see if this was a trick question. "Basic War Preparation, Vasiliy Ivanovich."

"So what are we doing here?"

Masha smiled knowingly, "Learning how to defend our mother country from its enemies."

"Thank you, Lazareva." The girl practically ran back to her seat. Vasiliy raised his stick as if to hit the blackboard again, but instead, he lowered it with a sigh. "You may close your textbooks. Let's have a ten minute break. I will see all of you in basement. Be prepared for 'learning how to defend' as Lazareva nicely put it."

The unopened textbooks quickly got shoved into backpacks and a happily chattering class poured out the door. Vasiliy took a moment to glance at the familiar flag and portrait of Lenin, joined now by that of Gorbachev hanging beneath. He ran his hand through his thinning blonde hair and followed his charges.

Becoming a school teacher was not what he envisioned when staying on in the military after his draft term ended. It was not that he was itching to change the world--the world had treated him well. But it seemed that there should be more to life.

He had served in Afghanistan, albeit

in the capacity of a warrant officer, which meant the only action he saw was inside warehouse walls, though it had certain benefits—everyone was very friendly when supplies ran low. One should never underestimate the power of a nice pair of jackboots and a pack of cigarettes during war-time. Even so, it felt empty.

He found Uliya Mihalovna alone in the next room; a small, tired-looking woman of thirty who had not been rich enough to get into a university for translators. Her educated parents told her to become an English teacher even though factory workers earned twice as much. Working at a factory would have been too embarrassing for them.

Uliya Mihalovna wore Sabo, leather flip-flop shoes on a platform, instead of the usual boat-shaped heels. Vasiliy Ivanovich found them strangely attractive as they accented her stocking-less legs, which peeked from beneath the desk.

"Uliya," he said. "You are dressed very inappropriately today. Some staff might comment."

Her dainty nose twitched slightly as she looked up from the papers. "Like yourself, Vasiliy Ivanovich?" Her words came in sharp bursts: he had done this before.

Vasiliy moved closer, his eyes never leaving the target. His hand slid to the papers on the desk, idly sifting through them. Uliya Mihalovna snatched them back.

"You know what they say?" Vasiliy

leaned closer.

"I have no idea."

"Optimists learn English. Pessimists learn Chinese. And realists learn Kalashnikov."

"I would not call myself an optimist." Her hands shook ever so slightly as she pulled back and rose from her chair. Vasiliy Ivanovich stood in her way.

For a moment there was silence in the classroom so that the birds chirping outside and clock ticking in the corner became audible. "Comrade, remove your hands," Uliya Mihalovna rasped and shoved Vasiliy out of her way. He stood unmoving by the hard-edged desk as the door quietly clicked shut.

Vasiliy Ivanovich was breathing heavily when he reached the bottom of the stairs. The big heads in the Communist Party thought the youth of today was ill prepared for a potential attack on the USSR, whether nuclear or military. Personally, he thought no amount of preparation could help them in that case, but everyone else rushed to make their bosses happy.

The school had relegated to Vasiliy the responsibility of building a shooting range in the basement. After all, he was the BWP teacher and probably knew what one looked like. The whole thing had been one bureaucratic mess after another. He had barely cleared out the construction workers by the start of the school year. If only they had done as much building as drinking.

By the time he arrived, the class had already finagled the Kalashnikov AK-47 rifle from the custodian and pretended to shoot poor Masha, whose turn it was to put up the targets. Approximately twenty fifteen-year-olds lay on their stomachs and made "pow" noises. At least the custodian hadn't given out the 7.62 mm bullets. The administration thought that shooting the air rifles did not provide an accurate enough simulation of real world combat. He didn't know much about that, but these students sometimes scared him more than the "real world." Vasiliy silently offered a prayer before issuing his class a tirade on the seriousness of their duty to the Soviet Union.

Everyone knew the drill. They disassembled and reassembled their weapons under 30 seconds. Masha could do it blindfolded. She was surprisingly good despite her lack of theoretical knowledge. He even considered sending her to some district competitions.

About twenty minutes before the bell, Vasiliy Ivanovich called everyone together. The school had just received a shipment of F1 grenade duds, otherwise known as lemons, to be used in practice for defensive warfare. He pulled out a piece of cold metal. It was the color of swamp water. Its diagonal grooves, made for ideal shrapnel dissemination, fit nicely into his palm. Ivanovich switched the dud to his left hand and showed it to the class.

“Here you see safety pin,” he began. “This ring and attached pin connect to trigger the mechanism. In a real grenade, pressure on the trigger would keep it from exploding. If the real thing drops—you’re dead. You have three seconds from the moment of removal to detonation. Russian grenades are not like western grenades: you don’t have six seconds for whistling and smart-talk. Once the trigger is out, you duck into a ditch. That’s why it’s defensive not offensive. The radius is around fifty meters, so I would cover my head when ducking. Otherwise you get some funny fashion statements.” The class responded to his smirk with hesitant giggling.

“Is it true that in real grenades, if you can put that thingy back in and it won’t explode?” Masha piped in, eyes wide and firmly set on the simulated killing mechanism.

Ivanovich paused, trying to remember when he had been so excited on the practical aspects of war. Fighting for one’s country, the Communist doctrine all sounded very grand and he still believed in it. He really did. But on the front you found out that the ones who run out shouting “For Russia!” die and the ones sitting on crates in the warehouse make money. If he had been a little smarter, he wouldn’t have had to work at all or would have found a better paying job instead of trying to become one of those intellectuals that his mother always warned

him against.

Vasilii Ivanovich shook off the gloomy thoughts. The majority of the class was nudging each other, whispering jokes, but Masha still waited for his answer. Such zeal. With two identical brown braids tied with ribbons, a white blouse and the shining eyes of youth, she looked the very image of a Komsomolka poster. All that was missing was a red badge with Lenin’s profile and the urge to march ahead of the planet, converting all to Communism. She would probably wear the badge at some point, but Vasilii doubted that Masha was very interested in marching.

“Well,” Ivanovich once said he remembered about the question. “If the trigger remains compressed you can try putting back the safety pin. But with three seconds between you and something that goes ‘boom,’ I wouldn’t think too long and just throw. You can’t stop something that’s inevitable.”

Masha had her hand up before he could even finish the sentence. “So how do you know if the safety pin is off? Does it start making any noises?”

“Only one that blows your head off,” Vasilii snapped impatiently. He hated when students interrupted and kept pestering him. Especially Masha, since he knew that she would store the information and somehow use it against him.

“Then how can you tell if it’s real or



Theresa Mooney

Frog

Digital Photograph

not? How do we know that dud won't blow up?" Masha kept going, her arms waving to show the blowing-up part.

"You can't. And it won't, because this is school and not a battle for Stalingrad." Vasily rubbed the bridge of his perfectly straight nose. Something in the distant look of his eyes made Masha swallow her next question.

Vasily cleared his throat. Seeing that only about half of the class heard him he waved the dud around for emphasis. "Now, for throwing." Expertly, Vasily Ivanovich hooked the ring with his index finger and pulled, preparing to toss.

Something about the way the pin slid out in that slightly resistant manner did not feel right. Vasily Ivanovich fumbled for a second and that made it too late to compress the trigger. Three seconds. The instinctive nerves of his spine already knew every part of what would happen next, but his unwieldy brain had not yet made all of the neuron connections and still needed to give orders to the muscles.

Two seconds.

Vasily Ivanovich shouted. He did not know what he said, but for once, the students listened. Only Masha hesitated before joining the others. The fluorescent lights of the basement blinded him. His heart was deafening, and he could only feel the hoarseness in his throat. He had been shouting. Something pressed so comfortably against

the palm of his hand. He wondered if the adrenaline pumping through his veins right now would be enough. Maybe he should scream "For Russia!" But those that knew if it helped were no longer around to advise him.

One second.

He fell to the floor clutching at the metal, now the same temperature as his body, cradling it protectively to his chest. It was only to be expected that he would do his duty. He should have done it years ago, like his mother told him. She never forgave him for sitting in his warehouses while others died.

The linoleum felt rough with grains of dirt. Something hurt his knee; he had collapsed on a discarded shell. Would they award him the status of Hero of the Soviet Union? He realized that he was shaking now and the metal he clutched shook with him, but it was too late. He would be a hero like the other fools. They would name streets in his honor and sing songs with his name. Children would be named after him so they would grow up to be blown to pieces. The pastel pattern, bubbling slightly at the joints, distracted his feverish thinking. They would probably change the damn floor now, bring back those lousy construction workers—but someone else will have to deal with them. He smirked, pressing the grenade closer.

He forgot to remember his mother in

that last moment. He did, however, glimpse an image of Uliya Mihalovna's enticing leather shoes and her pupils widening as he tried to unbutton her freshly-ironed blouse the other week. How her skinny arms had slapped him, but not before he felt her breathing beneath him and her warm breasts push against his chest. He reached out to pull her closer by the nape of the neck, but there was no more time.



Michael Gawdzik

Bubbles with No Champagne

For some odd reason, last night I stuck the tip of my finger up my ass then smelled it. It smelled like warm, lightly salted water. Afterwards I promptly fell asleep. I awoke at 3 a.m. with the same unwashed finger resting in my nose. It still kind of smelled salty but now with a dash of fabric softener from my pillowcase.

When I was twelve years old I thought I was gay. Fortunately for my prepubescent-self, I innocently thought that being gay meant talking with a lisp and saying things like, “ooo he’s cute” and “oh my god, really?” Needless to say I was not a very good homosexual and so I kept these thoughts hidden from everyone, but managed to maintain a prancing inner dialogue with myself to figure out whether or not I was actually gay. I kept wanting to tell my brother I was gay while we were walking our family’s dog, but of course Norton, our Labrador, would always take a huge poop moments before my confession and I would be too focused on watching my dog’s ass (because I knew gay people were supposed to like butts. Again, I cannot stress enough just how terrible of a homosexual I was when I was a twelve-year-old boy) rather than telling my brother I was pretty sure I was gay.

I attempted to confess to my best friend but was met with a vehement no. I asked him, “Josh, if I was gay would we still be friends?” Josh replied, “No.” So that was that. I couldn’t really confess myself to any-

one ever for fear of being rejected and shunned or drug around by my dick to death like that guy in Brokeback Mountain (he was crazy gay in that).

During this time of uncertainty I was watching a movie in my sixth grade health class about a boy who got AIDS from a blood transfusion and was shunned from his town and had to transfer schools. At the time, I felt this boy was fortunate to be shunned for having a tangible, peculiarity within him. A doctor could pull up an X-ray and say, "there it is, there is the AIDS, I found it!" For me that was more comforting than not knowing if something was actually wrong or different about me. I had to navigate uncharted and frankly very shallow waters within my own mind to determine whether or not these feelings were true or just some weird childish curiosity. I will be the first to tell you that childish curiosity usually does not lead to a chemically burnt asshole.

I had to navigate uncharted and frankly very shallow waters

One night around 10 p.m., a show about teenagers came on the television. A gay man on the show was discussing with his potentially gay friend things he could do to figure out if he was gay or not. Naturally I turned the volume up and prayed my brother would not change the channel before I took the gay, bespectacled

man's advice. I shuffled around in my seat and waited for what he had to say. This is what he said: "Alright, next time you are alone, go to the bathroom, lock the door, put a little soap on your finger, and stick it up your ass." Sweet Jesus. I knew what I had to do.

So without much thought at all I stood up, walked to the bathroom then locked the door. The man in the television told me to use soap but I felt the green apple scented hand soap next to the sink was too girly so I ventured beneath the sink. I decided against Drano, dismissed GOOP and the other industrial cleaners and began to feel my search may have been in vain. Then I saw it: a lableless bottle with a thick, transparent, sapphire liquid rolling around the bottle staring up at me. The back was still attached which informed me that it was an old bottle of Dawn dish soap with extra grease fighting power.

I decided the dish soap was perfect because it didn't smell like green apples and was blue. I stood up, unzipped my blue jeans then rolled them down to my ankles. Two photographs of my parents hung over the toilet and stared directly at their youngest son. I turned my back to them then squatted down. I poured a large amount of dish soap on my index finger before rolling it around with my thumb. I paused and watched the blue strands of soap float into my underwear and jeans. "Now I don't have to wash my underwear," I said with convenience. I thought

the sensation would be like picking my nose but it wasn't like that at all. I entered my virginal ass nostril with an unchecked gusto and soon...a tingle existed. The tingle turned dark and grew teeth that salivated acid. The pain seared and scorched and overwhelmed my insides in a way I never thought possible. I danced around the bathroom in an attempt to distract myself from my melting orifice but forgot my pants were around my ankles and so I crashed to the frigid linoleum floor. I began crying as the dish soap worked deeper and deeper into me. I took my finger out in hopes of extinguishing the pain, but it was too late. I was an idiot.

I eventually got all the dish soap out of my ass and walked with a slight featheriness in my step for a few days. I decided then that I was not gay and haven't had a serious thought of being gay since. I am amazed at how an accurately placed finger can trigger such sensations like lightly salted nostalgia, all the way to searing rectal pain. I

am unaware of the sensations between these two extremes but I feel fine without knowing the rest of this spectrum.

I seldom think about that day. I now make sure to buy dish soap that is tested on animals because I like to think I have a bond with all the animals that have been subjected to an inappropriate use of cleaners. From time to time I imagine my own scenes of animal testing. I can smell green apples and even feel their waxy skin against my own. In the corner of a silver room, a monkey is being violated by a bottle of dish soap. The monkey throws me a wink, just before giving me the thumbs up.



Colleen Majszak

Intoxication

We could have been mistaken for drunks.
Leaning on each other's shoulders,
stumbling through the neon-lit city streets,
laughter dancing down the noisy block.
We were dressed
like we had somewhere to be,
me in a little black dress,
you in a smart suit
tailored perfectly to your body.
And we had been somewhere,
a beautifully extravagant Italian restaurant
for our fourth date.

We could have been mistaken for drunks.
But really it was only a few.
Your breath had just a hint of scotch,
and mine just a touch of vodka.
Every word, every comment you made
seemed so funny.
The odd, quizzical looks we got
from the crowd surrounding us
just made us laugh harder.

We could have been mistaken for drunks.
"Come back with me," I said.
You smiled your crooked smile,
you know, the one that shifts
my heart into overdrive.

You hailed me a taxi,
and helped me into the back seat.
You told me, "I'll call you tomorrow,
beautiful,"
caressed my cheek, and shut the door.
I looked back in time to see you give a little
wave.
A perfect gentleman, I thought.
Then I waved and blew you a kiss.
I smiled, touching my cheek
where your hand had lingered.

We could have been mistaken for drunks.
The funny thing was, we weren't drunk at
all.

Jeff Bleicher

Ars Poetica

Poetry is sex for the brain,
sometimes good, often bad
but for the insane
it's an everyday fad that

comes and goes irrepressible
like shitting or eating apple
pie, like getting your head
slammed into the bathroom stall,

and you can't help it. Sex is
a parable, like the good Samaritan
who does something bad the next time
or the time after that, again and again,

that irreproachable desire, that flawless,
sinless fuck up that fucks you over
the kitchen counter or scurries
to the other side of the road.

If you stop him on the street, he
probably wants his cigarette or dollar back,
'cause he has one thing on his mind:
getting back to his roots.

Elise Renollet

Music and Echoes

It's late in the evening, and I catch myself strumming on my guitar to that weighty tune, "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Rising out of my musical reverie, I smile and almost laugh with the surprising joy of it all. Here is my seventeen-year-old brother beating life into the drums and rhythm out of it. My sisters of thirteen and fifteen are tackling the congas and tambourine respectively. My dad is playing the old keyboard. We weave together the often mismatched and striving, but heartfelt sounds of an amateur band, which has played together only a few times before.

But we are making music. And that is a glorious thing.

My eyes linger on the keyboard, taking in the yellowed keys, the black body hazed gray with dust, and the multitude of buttons and knobs and blinking red lights of whose functions I am mostly ignorant. Though nearly thirty years old, it still bellows forth life as the keys yield to the impression of musical fingers. It is on the "organ" setting, which gives the music a sacred feel, like one was in church. I drop back into the washes of sound, and I remember.

My grandfather used to play the keyboard. He lived on a seven-acre farm in the patchwork countryside of Clifton, Illinois, a good three-hour drive from my family's suburban Indianapolis home. A

couple of times a year, we would visit him, his wife, and their two children, who were several years older than me, but still young enough to be playful. I can remember the old farmhouse, which was always in various never-ending stages of remodeling. The two-story structure was skirted in front by a rickety wooden porch that held some mismatched lawn chairs and empty bowls of cat food for the ubiquitous felines that roamed the place. I see the chipped brown siding. The cobwebs in the windows. The hinges rusted red. It was a fairytale castle to me.

Upon our arrival, my family would stand before the scuffed black door, Jell-O-legged from the long ride in the car, holding our sleeping bags, suitcases, and Tupperware containers filled with my mother's famous chocolate chip cookies. Waiting. Suddenly, the front door would swing open in welcome, and Grandpa would be there, smiling his magical smile, the light in his heart beaming through his brilliant blue eyes. "Come here and see Grandpa," he would say, as I would throw my arms around him, gripping his musty flannel shirt, breathing in the smells of cigarettes and coffee. I loved my grandpa.

In the old farmhouse, Grandpa would play the keyboard. Slim and petite, with a salt-and-pepper moustache, he tested at genius levels and could play any instrument.

Music was a part of life on the little farm in Clifton, and my memories of that place are stitched indelibly with the sweet sounds of melody.

We played together, crafting the magical tapestry of music

As a young girl of five or six, I would go to Grandpa's music room in the back, which doubled as a computer room. Looking around me in that cramped, dusty space, I would notice the desks filled high with computer parts, papers, and knick-knacks, and then the instruments: an electronic drum set, an upright piano, the electric guitar, and, of course, the keyboard. Blue eyes alight with wonder, I would listen to the music echoing from that magnificent device. "Come sit up here by Grandpa," he would say to me. I would climb up on the well-worn piano bench. "Here now, play this black key with me when I play." We played together, crafting the magical tapestry of music. "Look, Mom," he would say to my mother. "See how she plays!" I would smile.

For ten years after his death, grandpa's keyboard sat neglected in a closet, collecting dust ever since his funeral, until my grandmother gave it to my dad. In those days, things were not so unified musically in our home. Upstairs, I would sit in my room on the floor teaching myself guitar. My

brother would play his twenty-something-year-old chrome drum set in his room, which shares a wall with mine. Dad would play our upright piano down in the living room. Our home was an eclectic blend of conflicting sounds.

But, a few weeks ago, my dad bought a stand for the keyboard and hooked it up to a homemade amplifier, bringing it to life again. Though I do not play the keyboard, beyond my own idiosyncratic dabbling and amateur versions of “Heart and Soul,” my dad does. He set it in the computer room, which also houses his drum set, as well as some bongos and congas that he recently purchased. This coming together of instruments, sparked by the rehabilitation of the keyboard, has inspired many informal “jam” sessions in which I have participated. It seems that, with the awakening of the keyboard, a family “band” of sorts has been birthed. The creation of music in the house. The still unity of many sounds becoming one.

It’s now nearing eleven o’clock. The last remnants of “Dixie” have evaporated in the night, and my eyes are tired. My brother and sisters have begun to slink away into their nocturnal caves: off to watch “The Tonight Show” or to get on Facebook. Only my dad remains, his lean figure bent over the keyboard still, like the living apparition of my grandfather. In its thoughtful strains, I can hear the echoes of music emanating from that little back room in Illinois.

I think back to the sweet moments of this past evening, still warm in my memory like the warmth of the mug after the chamomile tea has been drunk. I see them form and congeal like a watercolor vision of my grandfather’s back room in the old days. I realize that we, the members of our family “band,” are continuing a tradition. We are continuing that precious tradition of music. I hope in the future to continue to play, to continue to develop my fledgling skills, to pass on the tradition of music to posterity as I submerge myself in the beauties of sound.



Contributors

Amy Applegate is a sophomore sculptor student at Herron School of Art and Design. She is minoring in Psychology and Art History and is planning on pursuing a degree in Art Therapy in graduate school.

Jeff Bleicher has much more potential as an intentional poet than he puts forth, though he feels like he's slowly working toward some kind of greatness. Even if it's a "one hit wonder" of a poem, he thinks it'd be nice to unmistakably rock for once in his writing because he loves to write.

Shane Collins is a recent IUPUI graduate with a degree in English (Writing and Literacy) and former editor of *genesis*. He is currently working on a Masters degree at IUPUI in Higher Education and Student Affairs. He enjoys exploring family dynamics through his writings.

Lou Combs is a wife, mother, grandmother, radiographer, avid reader, gardener and senior at IUPUI. She indulges in various arts and crafts, in her leisure time, but often has to tell grandchildren, "No, grandma can't play right now, I have to do homework."

Keegan Cooper is an English major studying literature and writing. His best friends are coffee, a cushy pillow, and a fresh book.

Rebecca Downs mostly likes to read, write, and run. She enjoys grocery shopping and watching the Food Network.

Jake Ezell is a 22-year-old senior from Mont Clare, Pennsylvania studying journalism at IUPUI with a

secondary focus in communication studies. He is on staff as a writer and editor for the *Campus Citizen*. He is graduating in December 2012.

Chad Forbregd currently resides in Indianapolis, Indiana where he is studying The Stoic Philosophy of Late Antiquity. He writes poetry that sounds like maids washing fine linen & quarters. In his spare time he feeds animals fruit-flavored sweets.

Christian Brock Forrer grew up in a small town in the Midwest has been a part of huge life that has increasingly become more important. The worn, rundown buildings that encompass the small town landscape, as well as his ongoing search for what's beyond the horizon, now directly inspire his work and imagery.

Michael Gawdzik enjoys writing and reading. One day, he hopes to have the opportunity to live in a log cabin with a dog.

Zachariah Geyer is a junior at Herron School of Art and Design. He is studying drawing and illustration. He likes to explore other mediums than just pencil on paper. These pieces he's created are made by painting a form of a circle onto old paintings that have been discarded and overlooked, to give the old painting a new life, which is represented by the circle.

Eva Gichina was thinking of painting a picture of man-made things colliding with nature when she drew this piece. She tried to explain how Mother Nature, if she was humanized, would feel about it.

Danielle Graves is a freshman at Herron School of Art and Design. In the past several years art has become

Contributors

her passion. Being at Herron is one step closer to pursuing her passion and because of this she am overly grateful. She is willing and determined to become the successful artist that she one day hopes to be.

Sunni Harford is a Creative Writing major who loves to learn about new cultures through traveling and reading.

Yekaterina Komarovskaya is a second year student at IUPUI. She enjoys writing whenever she is not practicing archery, horseback riding, fencing, arting, or is simply curled around a good book. This is the second time her work is published in genesis.

Rachel Linnemeier is currently a senior painting major at Herron School of Art and Design. Her favorite mediums are oil and watercolor paints.

Colleen Majszak is a sophomore English Education major at IUPUI. She has always loved reading, especially fantasy stories. She believes writing is something that happens when it's midnight and there are no papers due the next day.

Theresa Mooney is an art education major at Herron. Photography is one of the areas of art she likes to work in, although more of her work is three-dimensional. The subject matter she likes to photograph are areas of depression, candid images of people, and wildlife.

Elise Renollet is a French and English major. She has a great passion for words, in all their quirk and brilliance. Someday, she hopes to follow in the

footsteps of her literary heroes and play with words for a living.

Lauren Robillard is a junior studying furniture design and sculpture at Herron School of Art and Design.

Elizabeth Rowen is a nineteen year old, secondary English education major. She's always been in love with art and literature, and cannot wait to introduce writing to her students one day. She'd like to dedicate her piece to her dear sister, Kim – the Irish in my coffee.

Lynette Sauer is an undergraduate student at IUPUI pursuing a B.F.A. in painting and drawing at the Herron School of Art and Design as well as a B.S.B. in Management at the Kelley School of Business. She enjoys working in graphite, charcoal, and acrylic.

Lauren Stone is currently a senior at IUPUI. She is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. She's married to her best friend and is loving life!

James Treacle is a screenwriter and Indianapolis native. His first produced feature film, Cheery Point, is due for release in Fall 2012.

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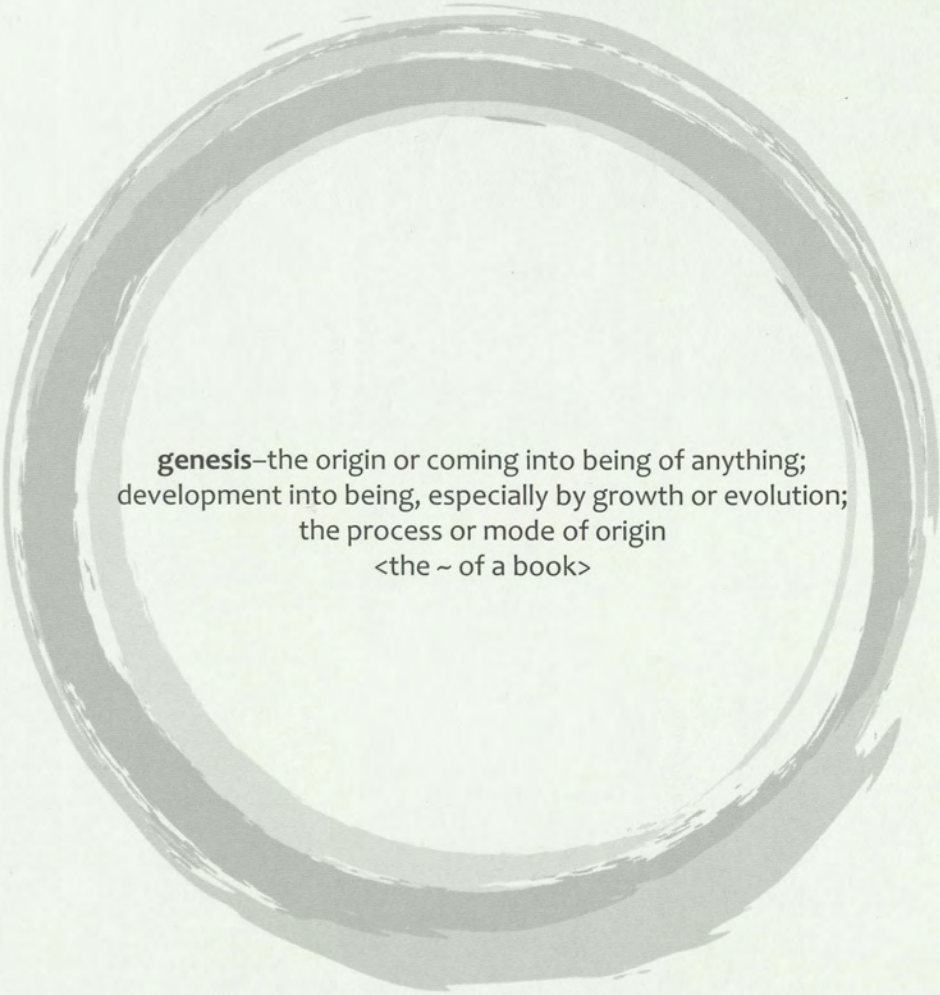
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Upon publication, copyright reverts to author. *genesis* is
published in the spring and fall through a grant from the Indiana
University School of Liberal Arts and the Student Activities
Fund of IUPUI.

genesis



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