



genesis
the literary & art magazine of IUPUI
fall 2014

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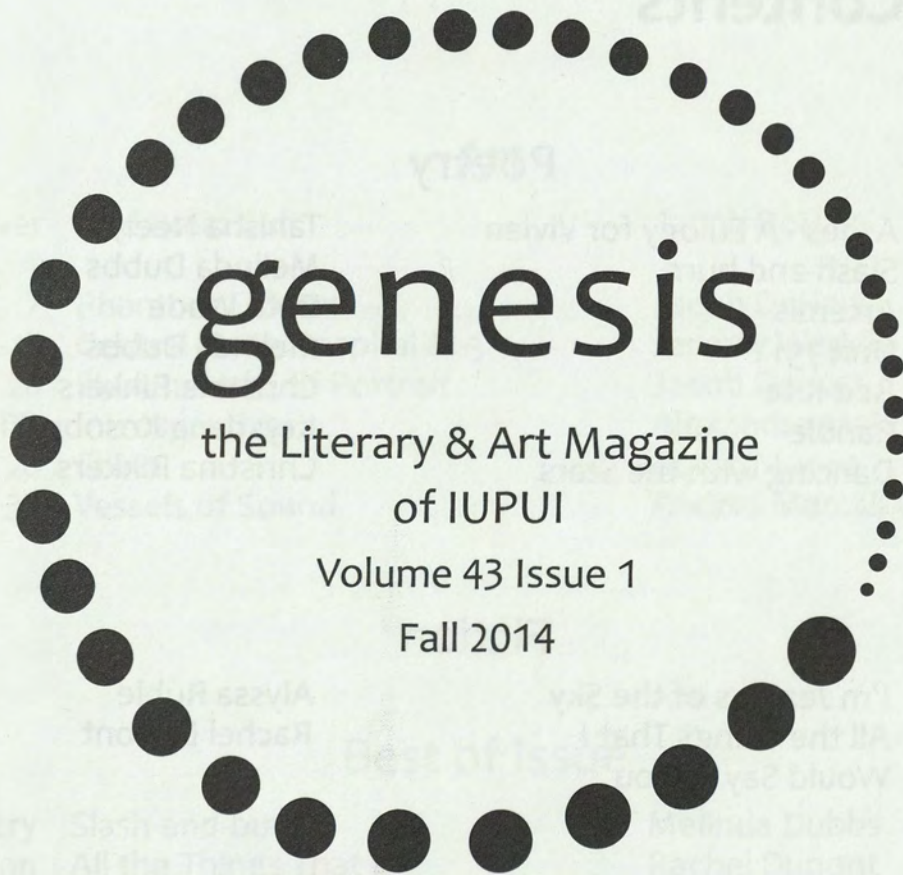
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Editors' Note

genesis is dynamic. All any editor has to do in order to understand this is spend a moment (or a full day's time) in our office in Cavanaugh browsing through old issues, through the pages of individuals' art, experiencing year after year of thoughtful work framed forever between the covers of our magazine. Each issue has a different life. Inside this semester's, you'll read and see what we think to be the best work that we received – a candle, a violin, and a girl who likes to use the word “barfalicious,” among others. This issue has life like none previous, as it's readers will find out. It breathes differently from any previous issues, it will sit differently on that shelf, as its contents are the thoughtful work of new (as well as old) student authors, poets, and artists. This issue, like so many before it, has it's own voice.

And that's it now. Turn the page and let it speak.

Tyler Anderson, Jennifer Nissley, and
Frank Schwarzkopf
Managing Editors



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of IUPUI

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Ashes - A Eulogy for Vivian

Tanisha Neely

Fire searing through mentholated tobacco, cotton & flesh / hit me at your door /
I find you stiff / upper body angled to the sky / in a hospice bed that holds you
captive

A tightly woven cobalt blue blanket/ layered / over sterile white sheets / cover the
lower half of you

On your belly burns a Newport 100's cigarette that's made its way through / your
fingers / your blanket / your sheet / your gown / and now you / I brush the burn-
ing butt and ashes to the floor with my hand and grind them into the carpet with
my bare feet

I see your sunken eyes / wide open / staring in lucid meditation at the Lilac col-
ored paper taped to the wall / sunflowers in the upper left corner / Audre's words
penned by your hand

*Forcibly and essentially
Aware of my mortality,
And of what I wished
And wanted for my life,
However short it might be,
Priorities and omissions
Become strongly etched
In a merciless light,
And what I most regret
Are my silences.*

Chalk dry tear stains streak your face / "Ma?" / Your eyes blink and your lips move / barely / but no sound escapes you / I hold your face / align your eyes with mine / and for a moment your spirit rejoins you / eyes smiling when they finally recognize who I am

You watch me watching you dissolve / Earth into water / water into fire / fire into wind / your breath drawn away / I witness your decay / like one would the birth of a child / only backwards

There is no funeral / no eulogy / just me / and what remains of you in a sunset Orange ceramic urn / us / in a church full of empty pews / slowly walking down this sacred aisle with heavy steps / my feet encased in cemented blocks of grief

I finally sit soaked in tears my anger promised me I would not cry / wondering / "What would she say to me if her silence could be broken?"

Slash-and-burn

— — — — —
Melinda Dubbs

This bruise is a quarter of my life,
a continent of blues and greens
expanding onto my thighs and hips.
A conquest of his love.
He draws on my legs like a
hunter, tracing his kill on varicose veins,
following each raised bend
to my heart.

My skin is topographic,
the cellulite valleys
eroding into in-grown hairs
and bleached crescent scars.
The scars stripe my body,
a timeline on my breasts
and thighs as I grew
and shrunk
into my womanhood.

But he pounds into my flesh,
fracking for every last
ounce of myself, breaking
plate tectonics within
my soul, a release
pushing its way out.
He devastates my body,
deforests me as he plants
a kiss on the barren land
he's made and the stretch
mark scars that remind me
of a time before him.



Phantom Fiddler

Jacob DeHart

colored pencil and
marker
9" x 12"

Artemis

Beth Wade

Who can fathom the sea of stars
rising in the darkness? Who can take note
of the huntress
in the sky? Stranded from her world,
she scavenges the sky for beasts. Her bow
shivers
at every pull. Her arrow soars
but captures dust. She travels the night,
whisking to the edges,
searching for her Orion
but he does not come.

She aims her arrow home
but it fades into the morning, dissipates
in the light of her past. She pleads with
Zeus
to give her one more breath
so she may stand in the glistening mead-
ows,
hunt the game that roam her forest.

But would she remember us?
Would her forest spread out before her?
Uninterrupted
by our future? Can she see the sun
peaking above the skyscrapers,
her stars
igniting her sky?
Her world
is ours, and we have forgotten her deer.
We have filled in the lakes
she used as lavatories. Her house crumbled
in the fall of Greece.

But she cannot forget us.

Artemis,
ever trying to return home
and replenish her forest.
She reaches for the green,
but her hands fall fisted
to her side. She is stranded,
watching the spinning of the globe.
Catching hold of night
for one last glance of home

I'm Jealous of the Sky

.....
Alyssa Ruble

I wish I were out there; that I could somehow become one with the fields and soar with the blue skies above. My hair would swirl with the golden streaks and the pink shadows would frame my face. My breath would blow across the landscape, rustling the leaves and giving birds resistance in their flight.

The wind turbines would ask permission to borrow my skyline, which I would allow with their geometric arms spinning, reaching out to

compliment me in synchronized dance. Drivers would pass underneath my span, a select few stopping to share a moment with me. Pleasantly enough, my life would be simple and quiet, with all others leaving me be.

Peace and wholeness would be my voices; only subtle whispers to blow through people's hair as they lean their heads back, close their eyes and sigh. I would smell of clean, green, fresh memories of moments long gone, the kind that pour out of human eyes to remind them what it felt like.

And when my light became tired the moon and fireflies would take over, keeping spirits high of the people under me. All things need rest, and I would take mine under a deep blue midnight blanket. I would be sympathetic to the worries, anxieties and sleepless fidgets below, and I would give shelter to the deep thinkers sitting on rooftops or the dreamers lying awake in their beds. I would let them talk to me as I encourage them to drift into blissful rest.

But as I watch the sun set, the sky closing its eyes and darkness taking over rippled clouds in the sky, I am the recipient of all I wish to be. My deepest concerns and questions are resolved under the cover of night, the high of deep revelation buzzing and mimicking the cicadas. Fragments of misunderstandings, confusions, and hurts from the day come together as the stars do when they form the Big Dipper. And as I take in these parts to make a whole, to make sense of things, I realize I will long to be a part of this symphony forever.

The blackened early morning sky above me sits with me, humming me softly to sleep.

.....

All the Things That I Would Say to You

.....

Rachel Dupont

They told me to keep a journal while I'm here. Supposed to be some sort of therapeutic thing. As if I don't get enough therapy with an hour of counseling every day and group therapy and feelings sharing and all that barfalicious crap. Even our downtime is therapy; we have to interact with each other over meal times and snack times and evening recreation in which we play team-building games and watch stupid heartwarming movies. I could probably fill this entire notebook by writing out the script to *Facing the Giants* from memory. In fact, maybe I'd even rewrite it with better dialogue and less predictability.

But the thing about journaling is that it gets me more time to myself. And trust me, that's a hot commodity. Because when I wander off on the grounds to have a moment of quiet, or when I take my morning cup of herbal tea (because God forbid I should be allowed something so stimulating as coffee) to the table in the most secluded corner of the cafeteria, or when I try to take my bag of chips left over from lunch up to my room just so I can HAVE A MOMENT TO BE ALONE, I've immediately got a very helpful nurse breathing down my neck wanting to know what's going on with me, how I am feeling, why am I isolating myself? It's usually Bettie the Imperialist Nurse, but if not her, there are plenty of others checking up on me. Which, let me tell you, is not helpful. Because when someone clearly wants to be alone, anyone who has the audacity to join that person just going to make them want to be alone even more. And it doesn't help that I can see through these people enough to know that I am a job to them. They aren't my friends. I am their duty.

Their obligation. How I am doing defines how much work they have to do.

So I journal. Because when they see me journaling, they feel appeased by the fact that I am participating in something that fits under the umbrella of Therapy. And then, for the moment, they're off the hook. And maybe one day I'll publish my beautiful memoir of the time that I was at West Villa Addiction Rehabilitation and Recovery Center for thirty days (of which I am currently on the seventeenth) and I will make moneymoney. And if no one finds it entertaining or profound enough to publish it, then I will give it to YOU, my dear self-righteous sister, you who took it upon yourself to bring me here against my wishes and better judgment and overall desire to be fixed.

Sure, sis. I am a worthless, lowlife drug addict. I like painkillers. I like joints rolled up with tobacco (vanilla cigarillos make the best). I sure as hell like combining them with alcohol. But apparently this form of entertainment isn't good enough for a member of your picture-perfect world, so you felt it necessary to intervene. As if your shit don't stink.

Why are you making a fuss over this, Emma? you will ask me, one day, when you approach my table at a book signing, where you waited in line for three hours to talk to your own baby sister. I helped you, you'll say. I got you here. Because I was doing fine, I'll say. I still got through college, didn't I? I wasn't like those druggies on the streets. And I was mostly able to work. Whatever. I know how to balance my substances, okay? I have anxiety issues. You should know this,

I've had them since mom and dad died. I take just enough of whatever will curb the stress, no more. Maybe it's stronger stuff that what most people take, maybe it's a little more, but does that even matter? And you manipulated me. You made me go through withdrawal in this ugly institution where I had no fucking privacy and YOU THINK YOU'RE BETTER THAN ME, THAT'S WHY.

You think you're better than me.

Last week when you came to visit me you brought me all these weird essential oils in tiny vials, and aromatherapy candles with dried leaves molded into them. Somehow they were supposed to solve all my problems. The candles were confiscated. Way to go. You think they allow open flames in a clinic full of addicts who are all delusional from withdrawal? And those bottles of rosemary and lavender oils that you instructed me to rub onto the bottoms of my feet to ease the symptoms of withdrawal...and I'M the delusional one. A pack of Marlboros would have been a million times more helpful.

If it hadn't been for that stupid truck. The truck that Dad left to you, and you gave to me, but here two years after that we'd never made it over to the BMV to sign the title over to my name. How convenient. I wonder if you thought that through, if you stacked the deck so one day you'd have leverage over me if you needed it. And the time came and you said, If you don't go to rehab I want the truck back, and when I said HELL NO, you

threatened to report it stolen and have me arrested.

You backed me into a corner, and I had no choice but to comply. I don't know why I didn't just give you the truck, but you hung it over my head for so long that Dad had left it to YOU when he knew I wanted it, and you know what, it's not even really about that. I don't know what it's about, but in the end I let you pack my things, and drive me there, and then I signed over a month's worth of freedom and I didn't read the fine print but they probably now have custody of my soul and my future firstborn child. And all the while the rage was slowly growing inside of me until I couldn't take it anymore, and I exploded and started spewing insults at you that you probably remember better than I do so they don't need to be written down.

And you were irritatingly calm.

FIGHT ME, I yelled. SCREAM AND CUSS AT ME, YOU BITCH.

I'm sorry. I love you.

You just kept saying that. I'm sorry. I love you.

And Rob the Friendly Security Guy kindly restrained me. And you didn't cry, you just left, the skirt of your yellow summer dress breezing behind the hips you were always self-conscious about.

I don't really remember the five or six days after that. Just fever and chills and vomit and sweat and this craving--for a smoke, for a drink, or a giant bar of chocolate or a hamburger or a bottle of Vicodin or oh God just a cup of coffee. And I filled about sixty pages of this journal and

none of it makes any sense, so I can't remember any more clearly even when I flip back through. So there goes my grandiose idea of publication.

There was that day you came for a visit last week. Maybe Tuesday. I don't know anymore, I mark the days in tallies.

Bettie the Imperialist Nurse interrupted my meditation time.

Emma. What are you doing.

I am meditating.

You aren't supposed to be in here. I have been looking for you for twenty minutes.

Maybe I am in here because I don't want to be found.

This supply closet is for our administrative staff, and for doctors and nurses. Not you.

I have my journal. See?

Emma. Your sister is here. Come out of the closet.

I don't want to see her.

Well, she wants to see you.

Tell her to fuck herself.

Tell her yourself.

That Bettie--she sure is a feisty one. But I didn't go. I got out of the closet, and I went to the Group Therapy Room a half hour early and pretended that you didn't exist.

Later Bettie the Imperialist Nurse gave me the bag with the weird hippie oils and the note you'd left me explaining how they were supposed to cure me like magic potions. Oh, and that verse from Corinthians. Something about cleansing ourselves from things that defile our body and

soul. Right. Thanks, sis.

I used to search for traces of your face whenever I looked in the mirror at my own. But I always favored Mom's side--I had her eyes, and the Cherokee nose. You had those hot high cheek bones and the hair that did its own thing but always did it right. It was our teeth that were the same, but yours were never a gate to a beast of a tongue as sharp as mine.

I don't know when it was that I stopped looking for you, that I stopped trying to be just like you.

But I don't really look in the mirror anymore.

It must be Tuesday again, because you came to visit me, wearing your yellow dress just like the first day. It's that goldish color--the same color as the mustard that dries up around the lip of the bottle and crusts over the hole. A color that's ugly on everybody else but somehow makes you look like a Disney princess.

I would have avoided you if I could have, like last time. But I was passing through the lobby as you were at the front desk talking to Bettie--presumably about your familial burden of a baby sister.

And your face lit up like nothing was wrong or had ever been wrong between us, and before I could do anything about it your arms were around me. And I felt tiny but you felt fragile--your shoulders had always been so much narrower than mine despite your wider hips, and you smelled like sandalwood oil and childhood.

And I let go faster than you did.

We sat at a picnic table behind the rec hall where we sometimes had group therapy led by Fred the Freudian Therapist. I could see Bettie watching us from a distance; there was always a nurse observing visits, to make sure no one was sneaking in contraband. Due to my withdrawal-induced oral fixations, I couldn't stop playing with my gum and chewing on my thumbnails, and I could tell from years of being your little sister that this annoyed you.

You frowned and exhaled sharply through your nose but you didn't say anything. I both love and hate that I feel like a little kid again when you're with me.

Were are the kids? I asked, because I didn't know what else to say.

They're with Justin's mom, you said.

Oh.

How are you doing?

I didn't answer the question. You pulled at a strand of my hair, the same burnt auburn as yours.

Your hair is so dry, you said. You need a better shampoo. They've probably got you using some terrible cheap stuff that's mass-produced for motels.

It was true, but I pushed your hand away. I hadn't thought about my hair in I don't know how long. I wasn't here to talk about my hair.

Emma, I'm sorry, you said. I just want you to have a better life.

A life like yours? I don't think even *you*

want that, Izzie.

What is that supposed to mean?

You are so fucking self-righteous. With your picture perfect husband and your adorable kids and your bible-thumping and your weird housewife hobbies--all to cover up that you aren't happy. And you can't control your life so you try to control me.

You didn't say anything, so I kept talking.

I tried to tell you not to marry him.

Remember? Three days before your wedding. When he got mad at you for something stupid, and he wouldn't stop yelling at you. And you were laying on the kitchen floor...

Stop. I don't want to hear this, Emma.

...screaming, *I hate him, I hate that asshole.* And then you married him three days later. Even though I told you it wasn't too late...

Yes it was, you said, a little too quickly. And your eyes dilated as you realized what you had just come so close to admitting.

No it wasn't. I would've helped you take care of the baby.

Stop it, Emma. I love him.

I know. But he doesn't love you.

And then you slapped me across the face, a flame rising to the surface of my skin under your hot palm, which didn't ache as much as the knots in my belly, and by the time I looked back up, you were walking away, and for the second time I watched the yellow of your skirt. But this time I caught myself wishing you wouldn't go.

I spent the rest of the afternoon in the supply closet again--the one Bettie the Imperialist Nurse was always kicking me out of (but the lock on the door was old and easily picked with a hairpin, so there really wasn't much she could do about it). The only things they really kept in there were spare office supplies and therapy journals. I sat in the very back corner, wedged between a wall and a wire shelf covered in boxes of Bic pens.

I don't know why everything I say to you is so venomous. I don't know why you keep trying to save me.

In the end, it all comes back to the fact that I know too much.

I know the way you've started to look more like your mother-in-law than like our mother. I know the way he yells at you and I know that you don't leave him alone with the kids, and I know that there is so much behind your smile that is never said.

And I think that maybe you are trying to save me because it's easier than saving yourself.

I never liked the chemicals controlling my brain. And if I wasn't so preoccupied with being angry at you I would be grateful, but we used to be the kind of sisters who braided each other's hair and painted each other's fingernails, and I somehow didn't foresee us becoming the kind who check each other into rehab institutions. And sometimes I feel like I hate you almost as much as I hate me.

I don't know how to stop looking for

**And then you
slapped me across
the face, a flame
rising to the surface
of my skin under
your hot palm...**

the days we can't go back to, when I knew you better than anyone.

The yellow rain boots that you would wear to school every day, no matter the weather or the colors of the rest of your clothes.

The notes you would leave for me in my locker when I was having a bad day, and how everybody knew who I was because they knew who you were, and they were all just a little bit sweeter to me because I was Izzie's baby sister.

The way I could sneak into your room at night and tell you all the things that scared me.

The way you ate Lucky Charms, picking out the cereal pieces first, so at the end you'd have spoonfuls of marshmallows that crumbled and melted in your mouth, leaving your tongue fuzzy and pastel-stained.

I don't even know if I have the energy to be mad at you for bringing me here anymore. But I'm mad that you're still trying to save me, after I couldn't save you.

I don't know how long I cried or how long I slept, but I could tell by the angle of the light creeping in that it was almost dusk when Bettie finally found me.

Emma.

I gasped awake, all of my vertebrae feeling like disjointed puzzle pieces inside me from the crooked fetal position I was in against the wall.

What? I know, I know, the supply closet is for administrative staff.

Your sister dropped this off for you,

Emma.

Bettie the Imperialist Nurse crouched down beside me, and handed me a brown paper bag with hemp handles. I was confused.

But I saw her earlier...

I know, she said. But she came back a little while ago and left this at the front desk for you.

And then she left, closing the closet door behind her, without even telling me to get out.

I rubbed at my eyes and set the bag down on the floor between the towers of my knees. I opened the bag, and found two plastic bottles inside.

Calming Lavender Moisturizing Shampoo and Conditioner.

I waited a few minutes, until I didn't hear footsteps or voices outside the door. Everyone would be going to the cafeteria for dinner around this time, so if I planned it right, I could preserve my solitude for just a little longer.

And once it was finally quiet, I snuck up to my room to wash my hair.





Central State Hospital #1-3

Jeremy Weddle

photography



Unit 731

Melinda Dubbs

Batches of factories snore obsidian
clouds, each pinched through
small cylinder spouts, petite
tornados pushing out of
concrete, twisting over

barren tracks, once log
transporters before its factory
closed.

Grass spills over metal beams
and splintered wood, ground soft
with eroded ash and lichen, roots
of ginkgo trees exposed
in loose dirt. Burned
brick walls yield into
pregnant curves.
The factory still stands.

Bricks splotted with eczema rash,
red stone defaced
with each season's ice.

Through naked holed windows
lie marred hospital floors, scratches
from gurneys, fingernails, shells
from a bacilli bomb.

A rabbit screams as he squirms
through rubble, voice
dampened by chain link fence.
Little chest throbbing, he rests against
the chimney that towers
above this roofless haikyo.

Firebox and throat
congested with lumber, cinders,
bone. Sixty years
and the smell still smokes
through, little town
sodden with Cimmerian snow,
genocide.

And it washes on our shore, a still
born, tummy open, umbilical
cord corroded, baked with sand and
soot. The tide hushes its lied,
white foam dyed black
body twisting in the surge.

Red Kite

Christina Rikkers

The kite
a tiny square
millions of miles above us—
a string, fine as spider's web, slight as silk
tied to a finger.
"I've got high hopes."
Broken glass cuts bare feet,
and the red square hides behind a cloud of smog
for a moment.
"I've got high hopes and
higher aspirations, higher
than this kite,"
you say, and tug it.
Scabs score sore knuckles,
white with age and taut.
"I'm going to be a doctor,
and heal the sick
and give the little old woman down the road sparkling clean
water.
I'm going to tell stories to everyone
and help them want to be better, and
help others too.
I'm going to touch hearts,
change lives."
The kite falls,
tugged down by a scrawny, callused finger.
"I will," you
mumble
as you tuck the paper kite under your arm
and pick your way over the garbage
because you can't afford to stop
your work.

Illuminated Self-Portrait
Jacob DeHart

pastel
19" x 23"



Candle

•••••
Krystiana Kosobucki

Just wax—
Cool and smooth as butter,
Stripped from the papery passages
Of a fertile queen's domain—
And a shred of white string,
And one day I'll sputter and fail,
But for now let me
Communicate light.

Let me bring
My golden color to the drab,
My honey-sweet aroma
Where air is stale and sour,
A glow to the shadows
And warmth to cold rooms.
For I carry fire
That I did not make.

And when I've given
To the end of myself,
Melt me down.
Remake, refill, remold me,
That I may be useful still,
That the fire may outlast me—
Being, as I am, just wax
And a shred of white string.

What Not to Say



Angie Therber

Though it doesn't seem possible, I must have been small enough to fit on the bench next to her vast presence. I remember my legs dangling from it and my strained fingers nearly covering the octave Aunt Pearl wanted me to attempt. I was old enough to read the large red letters on the cover of the book she brought with her each time she came to our house. John W. Schaum, I guessed, was the one who had splattered "When the Saints Go Marching In" all over the page in

some code I had yet to conquer. So much confusion, and I tried, I really did, but the slow, plok-plok of the metronome only made it all the murkier. Aunt Pearl shifted her substantial rump and stretched her paisley-encased arm across me to turn the page back to the beginning. "Try it again, Angie," she sighed.

The metronome finally died, and my mom peeked from around the corner, some type of kitchen tool in hand. "Tell your aunt thank you," was my signal that the hour was over. Still tense, I took it upon myself to lighten the mood for all of us. I felt the words frothing and forming in both brain and mouth simultaneously. Oh, how we would all laugh!

"Thanks, biggie!" I blurted out.

I just caught a glimpse of Aunt Pearl standing up and stretching her green, paisley dress down over her hips as Mom nearly yanked my arm out of the socket. My body flew off the piano bench and out of the room. When I see it in my mind, there's always an animated streak and poof in my wake, just like on my seventies Saturday morning cartoons.

The rest is a conglomeration of hot tears, apologies, intense embarrassment, and acknowledgment that Aunt Pearl is so very nice to me and that she comes every week just to teach me something good for me and that we will have another talk when Dad gets home. I must have grown soon after, or maybe the rest of the lessons were uneventful, but I don't remember sharing that bench with Aunt Pearl since.





Introspective
Alexandra Makris

acrylic
30" x 25"

My Indiana Sky

— — — — —
Krystiana Kosobucki

1997. I was three years old when my family made the move to Indiana from Poland, where my parents had been teaching English and doing church work for several years. For my parents, it was a move back, at least to America if not to their exact roots, but for me and my sister it was just a move.

When we first arrived, we stayed for a few weeks with kind acquaintances who welcomed us into their home. But it wasn't our home. Their Carmel house was a palace compared with my family's five-hundred-square-foot Soviet-era Polish apartment. Houses like that weren't home. Outside was worse. In Poland, we hadn't owned a car. Like most of the population, we took the smelly and rattling buses, or we walked. At three years old, I was used to walking the mile to church with my father on Sunday mornings. Here, everyone drove cars the size of elephants. Half the suburban roads didn't have sidewalks, and the ones that did were the wrong shape. Being three-year-old size and used to walking, I was on pretty good terms with the sidewalk, and these edges didn't turn down to meet the street in tidy little right angles like the ones I knew. They sloped in graceful curves, like birds that announce their importance by puffing out their chests. As if anyone who is anyone should know about sidewalks like that. I walked contemplatively along the slope. If the places I slept and the places I put my feet didn't even look like ordinary places for a little girl to sleep or put her feet, how could this be home?

Three-year-olds don't keep diaries. They can't draw from the great seas of words like displacement and belonging and nostalgia and loneliness and home, and identify which

ones appropriately describe this scenario. I'd lived all my life on one side of the ocean with the understanding that I really belonged on the other. Now I was on the other side, and I didn't know where I fit. Away from Poland, Poland looked a lot more like home. Did that mean Indiana would feel like home if I left? Why couldn't home just be where you were when you were there? But I didn't know the words for those feelings. The displacement wasn't a thing I could describe. It just was.

My family's first home in Indianapolis was in the ghetto. Fountain Square in the year 2000 was a neighborhood marked by peeling paint,

Indiana, this place that I still didn't understand and didn't love, and which certainly was still not home...

in case we forgot, our neighborhood made sure we couldn't be normal. In the tension between nervousness and naiveté, our mother let me and my sister play with the neighbor children, but only in our own house or yard—not theirs. Saying no to invitations from the lonely little girl next door was embarrassing, but we were just enough frightened by the dog who never stopped barking and the father who sat on the

cracked sidewalks, and police sirens. With clothes eight years behind the times and bookshelves built from the packing crates that had brought our life from Poland, we already felt out of place, but just

porch drinking beer that we wouldn't have gone even if our mother had let us.

The same wasn't true of the elderly woman across the street. I don't know how long she had lived there, but I suspect it was longer than my parents had been alive. Long enough, probably, to have watched the decay into urban blight and long enough to have stopped mourning it. One sticky day, we wandered into her yard to see her sitting on a plastic folding chair with legs spread and a bucket at her feet, surrounded by piles of hard, green fruit. Her fingers were black as ink.

"What are you doing?" we asked after watching for a timid moment.

"Shellin' walnuts," she said with a smile that twinkled her watery brown eyes. "Want to watch?"

We nodded, and sat down on the cracked steps and watched, intrigued.

I knew what walnuts were, of course, but they were small and hard and brown with deep folds like brains. I picked up one of the greenish fruits, pressed it to my nose, and closed my eyes. It was a warm, bittersweet smell. It smelled like something that lived out in the sun all the time, getting ripe and hot under a tree beneath the vast blue Indiana sky. I didn't even like the taste of walnut and I still don't, but in that moment the fragrance captivated me. This didn't match the smells of the rest of the neighborhood—cigarette smoke, car exhaust, and unwashed people. This was something about Indiana, this place that I still didn't understand and didn't love, and which certainly was still not home, that was sharp and beautiful and strange. This was something I could

love for itself.

Just outside the center of Oxford, England, is a wide and undeveloped space called Port Meadow. Vast and perpetually muddy, it spreads out from one bank of the Isis—what Oxford calls its stretch of the Thames—where people keep their boats and walk their dogs and hang up petitions on the splintery wooden bridge to protest the new building project on one side of the meadow that's going to ruin the view of dreaming spires.

The semester I studied in Oxford, I was the only one in my class group who didn't go away for Spring break. Mostly that was because I couldn't afford it, but I used the time as a chance to explore. One rare sunny afternoon, I walked along the towpath up the river, and crossed the bridge to the gate that marked the entrance to the Port Meadow. And there I stopped. Was this Oxford? I knew Oxford. Oxford was crooked cobblestone streets and libraries hallowed by centuries of learning, and bicycles and coffee shops and opaque grey skies, and echoing halls where your feet click on the floor as if it just wants to remind you how many, many feet have walked there before your own. I loved Oxford. This, on the other hand, was openness. It was vast and vivid green and blue. The uneven meadow grass stretched out in front of me for a mile, to the horizon where the hazy rooftops and towers of the city met the edge of the sky. That sky. It was blue. Unbelievably blue. Not a passive, halfhearted blue that hasn't quite embraced being that color, but a vibrant blue that shouted with life.

I opened the creaking wooden gate, stepped into the grass, and breathed. Mostly it was the smell of mud, but it was a beautiful one. A mud that is perfectly satisfied to smell like mud because that is what it does best. I closed my eyes, spread my arms wide, and drank in the openness. This was like home. This was the sky I'd missed without realizing it, during the days and weeks on end of clouds and drizzle. This was the openness that sang, not of the centuries of human accomplishment and learning that the rest of the city did, but of rawness and natural beauty. This wasn't typical Oxford beauty. It was Indiana beauty. This was like the home I'd missed without even knowing I missed it—perhaps without even realizing it was home. That was the first time I knew that in a few weeks, when I had to leave the Oxford I'd grown to love so very much, I wasn't just going back to the Place Where I Lived The Rest Of The Time. I was going home.

In 2002, we moved into The New House. It was the new house years after it was new, partly because it was such a momentous phenomenon. After living for four stressful years in a place they did not want to raise their children, my parents were able to buy a house—their first owned house, after well over a decade of marriage—in an improving area, just east of downtown Indy. For us, the house was enormous. We had three floors. How would we ever find each other? For that matter, we had three toilets. How would we ever decide which one to use? For two months after we moved in, my mother remarked how she felt like

she was staying in a fancy hotel. She looked apologetic when people admired the house, as if we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for such extravagance. Was this really ours? But it was, or at least it was my parents'.

As an eight-year-old who was by now used to not quite belonging, and thoroughly sick of it, I desperately wanted something over which I could feel that kind of ownership. I found it in a tree in the nearby park. I discovered it the summer after we moved in. It had a massive sloped trunk and a split that formed a seat just the perfect shape for a medium-sized girl to nestle and look up through the leaves and feel the wind that made them dance. That might be the place where I first came to love the wind.

At eight, I climbed the tree with a book clasped in one sweaty hand. It was an art form, climbing a tree with one hand. At twelve, I mourned my inability to reach the tree, as half the park was roped off for construction. At sixteen, I climbed it again with a camera. At twenty, I climb it with a book again. From the top of the tree, if the light is just right, I see through the leaves to the silhouette of the city against the sky. My city. My tree. My Indiana sky.





China
Ronni Moore

photography

Dancing with the Stars

Christina Ridders

She took me dancing,
and we twirled so fast our feet left the dew-stained grass.
She lead me on paths of balls of rock and ice
up the asteroid belt like a boardwalk
until our fingertips brushed the hanging glass stars.
“Catch them,” she told me,
“catch them all in nets.”
But the thickness of the inky blue
caught in the string and splashed down on us
and speckled us through
though we had tried so hard not to get it on our shoes.
We skipped on planets to reach the sun
and stretched out side by side and
took in the great warmth of it.
We picked out constellations all our own
and named them all after fruit.
The cherry red of her lips curled up into a smile at that.
She was a child of Theodore Roosevelt
and she put Pluto on a leash
and let it lead her for what felt like light years.
I tossed an asteroid into the vast dank pit of a black hole
and we had a game of skee-ball.
She won, pretending like I hadn’t let her.
And as we sat on the cold asphalt of a Saturday’s two AM
and shivered as we stared up at the moon,
and all the constellations we didn’t name, her fingers laced
with mine, well—
the cherry red of her lips curled up into a smile at that.
She is my galaxy. I have decided. They can keep their glass
stars.

I Never Wanted to Want Football

.....

Andrew Kimmel

1. I can't tell you much about football. I know enough that two sets of eleven men wrestling with each other and trying to get a small, leather, egg-shaped ball into a colored rectangle by an astonishing array of techniques including kicking, punting, passing, and running which are all further complicated by the sailing of little yellow pieces of fabric that seem to have the power to move both squads up and down the field at will does not seem odd to me. I can explain why clipping is bad, too—though I'm not sure exactly what it is.

Others would call me a fan, especially those who put on a bemused expression whenever they find themselves in a football-related conversation with a bookish philosophy student holding his own. I could name you every Super Bowl champion for the past two decades. I probably remember a lot of the losers, too. I've bruised my hand watching the playoffs from hitting the table in frustration. I've, regrettably and embarrassingly, taken part in superstitious ritualizations, once not moving from the couch for 45 minutes simply because nothing bad was happening to my team. All this from a person who spent five years teaching freshmen about logical fallacies. Fanaticism is what it is.

2. I am six-ish and my godfather, Uncle Al, gifts me a football kit of sorts. It contains, wrapped in bits of plastic and smelling of newness, the following items:

- 1 regulation-size football (measuring four undersized, six-year-old boy hands long)

- 1 bit of measuring tape (I have no idea what this is for)
- 3 small but brightly colored orange cones (removed from the kit once, placed back with care, and never used)
- 5 brightly colored orange placards with the numbers 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 printed on them in black (never to be placed in terms of exact yardage but instead on my understanding of the word long)
- 1 instruction manual (most likely read cover to cover during school out of boredom)
- An assortment of other supplies (now forgotten)

My small frame doesn't keep my godfather from insisting multiple times that I can write my own ticket if I can kick a ball twice the size of my head through uprights miles high. Kickers can be small. He exhausts me with his lessons. I use the kit three times and the football a little more. I brought it once to a friend's house, and we ran down the sidewalk wearing oversized helmets obscuring our vision and too-big shoulder pads bouncing haphazardly around our necks. I can't keep up and decide it's much too much work to join a team.

3. My parents have always fought over the remote, bouncing the television between crime dramas and sporting events. Judge Judy and football were not necessarily worshipped, but watching them was something to be done together if they were

was something to be done together if they were on TV.

We know that the living room and backyard tenets of Americana seldom shift and morph. The Norman Rockwell atmosphere has dissipated and the girls you date in high school mark spiritual instead of religious on forms, but familial interactions remain consistent regardless of political leanings or regional dialects. Where families used to huddle around the radio in the evening, they now congregate for weekly absolutions at the altar of a flat-screened god who forgives Johnny's math grade if he repents with passing pigskin on the front lawn, a hallowed kirkegård where the stone that marks the resting place of Dad's dreams of stardom is out of bounds and the iron gate opening to the kitchen and Mom's enormous Sunday bounty is the end zone.

Families always play touch football on major holidays, and the South, a region offset with its signature differences in dialect, religion, tradition, and tea recipes, surprisingly opposes itself in a rare meiosis, adopting either Auburn or Alabama with equal fervor. But, as long as each player drops to his knees to show thanks for his talent to an almighty God, grits through the pain of broken limbs, and salutes the rocketing F/A-18 Hornets flying over as the Star-Spangled Banner trumpets through the loudspeakers, he is recognized as an American man – a gladiator on the battlefield of American traditions.

4. I often asked my father who was playing when he watched football. Dad was retired by the time I

started school. It meant a lot of time playing catch and having him there for Little League games, something a lot of guys I knew didn't have growing up.

Dad mostly played basketball and baseball in high school and he boxed in the Air Force, winning a regional golden gloves competition. But human males have competition hardwired into their DNA, so Dad's channel surfing stopped on any sport regardless of what teams were competing or their level of skill. He would watch the Little League World Series as much as Olympic curling or the NBA championship.

"St. Louis and Washington," he might answer. The problem with this response is that I only knew the teams' mascots. St. Louis and Washington might as well had been two feudal lords haggling over a contract.

I'd say nothing or utter an "Oh." I'd sit and watch for a while because it was something Dad watched, but I'd get bored and go off by myself to play with Hot Wheels or fight imaginary monsters in the front yard with a sword-stick.

If Dad was ever upset that I wasn't going to become the next great sportsman, he never showed it. I think he took what he could, though, like when I pushed back and kept the entire Little League team from dunking me in a fountain one year or came home excited because I won a game of dodgeball in gym class after being outnumbered. It never occurred to me to be the athletic son of a father of three daughters. Instead, he got the son who was more at home reading an outdated set of encyclopedias than practicing his batting stance. I think he recognized this. I don't

believe I could have been something like a fashion designer, but I could have done a lot of 'un-manly' pursuits, and Dad would have been proud of me because I was his boy. I don't think a lot of guys have that growing up either.

5. Baseball became my sport. You had to be tall to play basketball. You had to be big or fast or have legs like a Roman god to kick footballs up and up for miles and miles to play football. But you could be a short, pudgy, and slow Midwest kid and still play baseball if you could field and get on base. My godfather took me to my first baseball game, the Oakland As versus the Chicago White Sox. I still have the tickets in a scrapbook. We left in the seventh inning to beat traffic and listened to the rest of the game on the car radio. I must have been ten then and could hardly stay awake for the final call.

I always prided myself on Chicago winning that night, like I was some kind of lucky charm. When I turned out to be a Cubs fan because of my proclivity for hopeless causes, my godfather took me to Wrigley Field, its sprawling greenness of legend and ivy causing my first ever episode of breathlessness. He and I snuck down to the season ticket seats in the eighth inning, the Cubs ahead comfortably, to watch Tom "Flash" Gordon sweat in the bullpen, and I had my first hot dog with sauerkraut on it. My godfather couldn't understand why I couldn't like his team, the Yankees, but I was young and wanted to create my own identity. Adopting the things everyone else ignored would grow into an infrequent habit

of mine—all the more reason to be surprised that I didn't distance myself from football, with its cold, modern stadiums, as it eclipsed baseball as America's new pastime.

6. On one of our Chicago sojourns, we walked near Soldier Field. Al asked me if I wanted to go up to the stadium and touch it.

But it's just a building of stone and steel. It's not imbued with any special powers. The spirits of past games and the American soldiers that provide its namesake do not dwell in the sidewalks and walls of the stadium. Now, as a grown man, I see the place as a chapel for others – a place where the disparate join up in a common voice, to share in pain and awe. That others may pause and sense the reverberations of history through its beams still seems to be a sad observation because buildings are so much more impermanent than soul.

But at that young age, I saw a building too far away and probably dirty. So I didn't go up to touch it.

7. Fantasy football is really Dungeons & Dragons for jocks. I've played fantasy football twice (and Dungeons & Dragons hundreds of times). The first time was in a friend of a friend's league that had a spot open up right before draft day. The second time was a few years afterwards when I wanted to experience the weekly analysis again and signed up for a public league.

The problem with public leagues is that a

lot of people sign up for them, get busy with life, and forget to sign back in to actually compete.

They don't know anyone in the league, so why bother? My second place finish felt a bit empty that year because

Fantasy football is really Dungeons & Dragons for jocks.

seven out of the ten people quit by mid-season. I came to the sudden realization that hours were wasted looking at esoteric statistics for no benefit whatsoever.

8. One Christmas my foster brother, Marlon, gave me a PS2 with the NFL-endorsed football game, Madden, as my first game. I call him a brother because he's the closest person I could actually call 'brother,' but the family dynamic is an odd one. My parents never actually adopted him, claiming that the nuns running the orphanage suddenly locked them out of the process. It could have been cold feet on their part as well, but I've never probed too deeply into it. It was a story that was before my time.

Marlon, twenty years my senior, floats in and out of my childhood memories, moving to various places to try get-rich-quick schemes and date women. At this Christmas, he had just married and bought a house, and I think spending the money on such a Christmas gift was a way to further establish himself onto something stable. In the following years, he would have adopted his own son, gotten a divorce, and found some reason

contentious enough to not speak to the parents for years. My sister is closer to him than I am, but it's not because I suffer from hereditary stubbornness. It's more likely that an age gap between two people only connected by social chance instead of common interest is too much to overcome.

I've had this game for more than a decade and still play it. When I first experimented with it, I was impressed with how sharp its clunky polygonal shaped players were and how real it seemed. Now it's a freeze frame of video game progress – something we had to live with until we got to something better.

The problem with playing a somewhat unimaginative and repetitive game for 12 years is that none of my friends, who don't like sports simulation in the first place, are up to playing an outdated game where their opponent will put up 160 points. I have played against a human twice out of 200 or so games. I run maybe two or three different plays. I really think playing it is more like eating chips in front of the television. You're not hungry for it, but it's there.

9. My godparents also divorced. I was a bit upset about this because Mom forced me to take a family visit to Michigan instead of going to another Cubs game with Al. It turned out to be our last opportunity for sport spectating.

Al had cheated on Kathleen. It all didn't matter too much to me. I wasn't the one betrayed, and I saw no reason not to maintain a relationship with both of them. I was getting older, probably between 14 and 16. I had opinions on what was right and what was wrong, but I also had opinions

on Dr. Pepper, the promise of fishing in Minnesota, and the occasional sport pilgrimage that always seemed to bring the home team a victory. I haven't talked to Al since then, and I wondered a lot if he thought I would be disappointed in him. But, then again, I'm not the NFL kicker he wanted me to be either.

10. I went to my first football game in 2009, finally making it inside of a stadium at 21. It was in Indianapolis and I got to see my team, the Denver Broncos, get manhandled by Peyton Manning for my birthday. (I always liked how fans take possession of their teams. "We didn't defend against the slot." "We shoulda put in the second-string quarterback. He's our future.")

A higher-up in one of my academic programs took me and another guy. I took a camera because it was my first game. About five minutes into it, I got a tap on my shoulder. A very drunk woman behind me noticed I had a camera. For the next 60 minutes of football, she'd scream for Brandon Stokley to be put in because she had a crush on him. She asked me to take some pictures of him for her and gave me her email address, offering me a discount on my next set of tires. I think her husband, who worked at Tire Barn, wasn't too fond of this. I sent the pictures. I did not get a discount, but I did receive one of the worst headaches I have ever had that day.

The other guy who went with me also happened to be awarded a scholarship by the higher-up who took us, and my cynical nature wondered if the game was more of an interview than a friendly gesture.

11. Football yawns open to reveal its storylines like weekly soap operas. The Cincinnati wide receiver looks to redeem himself. The Bear-for-life linebacker isn't extended a worthy contract from Chicago. Tim Tebow spends another week as Tim Tebow.

This can't be the reason I look at box scores. I have promised myself to abstain from drama queen behavior. The players do, too, mostly. They respond to provoking questions with the most banal responses.

"We just have to train harder."

"The other team just wanted it more."

"We'll address it this week in practice."

But in the age of reality television and manufactured feuds that gain traction immediately on social media, sports fans' eyes are glued to ESPN like stay-at-home parents and daytime television. The player-philanthropist just doesn't grab the ratings like the ex-con.

12. The fastest score in Super Bowl history happened 12 seconds into Super Bowl XVIII, or 15 A.J.E. (after John Elway). I adopted Elway's Broncos as my team during the 1997-1998 season, much to my sister's dismay who remains through a half dozen geographical upheavals a zealous Bears fan. The Green Bay Packers were favorites to beat the Broncos in that Super Bowl, led by the indomitable Brett Favre. It was the first time my underdog won.

This past year, the Broncos benefitted from yet another Hall of Fame quarterback in Peyton Manning, the dismantler of defenses and annihilator of birthdays. Unfortunately, the Broncos

hadn't anticipated being a road team for the Super Bowl. Their opponent, the Seattle Seahawks, had a notoriously loud following dubbed the Legion of Boom, or the 12th Man. Their noise was so great it caused a miscommunication on the first play of the game, leading to a botched snap and Manning's surprised face being plastered all over the Internet before the first minute ticked off the clock. The Broncos had surrendered a safety, and I felt that I knew it was over.

I was silent from the first play until the third quarter. With the 'Hawks up 29-0, I decided to take a bath and wonder why I even bother watching football in the first place, an isolated and silent 12th man.





Vessels of Sound
Andrés Marcial Coba

Mixed media on canvas
90"x 34"

Faces of Skid Row

.....
Alyssa Ruble

No soul belonged in that wretched place. I had been to Los Angeles once before as a teenager on a short-term missions trip. Our goal was to serve the homeless on Skid Row, a collection of streets stretching fifty-four blocks running North and South from 3rd to 7th, East and West from Alameda to Main. I hoped my heart would grow for them, that I would somehow find my calling within those streets. Instead, their condition frightened and repulsed me and in order to live with myself, I had to forget about them. Five years later, and I was back with the same mission, hoping to remember this time.

Taking the bar of soap in my hand, I stepped into the old tile shower, as I had many years ago. I grimaced at the cold water biting my scalp, sending hair-raising chills down my body. I gasped for air, shaking. I couldn't believe I had the nerve to come back to these god-forsaken streets. Scrubbing my arms and moving to my chest, belly and legs, I glanced at my fingers and frowned at the dirt still remaining. Caressing my knuckles and gently kneading soap through my fingers, I began to cry, hoping none of the other girls on the outreach team would hear me. No matter how much I scrubbed, I couldn't get the stench out. I smelled "them", their sweat, their abandonment, and their hopelessness. And there I was, trying to scrub myself clean of it all again, as though I hadn't matured a day past sixteen years old.

We rode the outreach bus to Skid Row earlier that morning. The lively streets and bumper-to-bumper traffic dissolved into stillness, an eerie silence blanketed us as we rode forward. My gut felt as though it was corroding as the large bus

laced out of higher society and into abandoned streets. Once the driver let us out, I stepped onto the sidewalk, and instinctively felt as though I needed to be close to someone. I wanted to warm the cold fear growing, spreading inside me. It didn't matter that I had been here once before or that I was now five years older. The putrid smell of alcohol, body odor, fluids and rotten food frightened me to the point of nausea, just as it did when I was a sixteen-year-old girl.

I glanced down the street to match the stench with sight. Los Angeles, despite its promise of fame, beauty, success, wealth and splendor had eaten these people alive, then vomited them back up and left them deserted here. The Hollywood sign gleamed over the city, laughing at these poor unfortunates. They were left with nothing but what they could carry with them, their addictions held tightest of anything. And I, along with fifty others, had been charged with the task of scouring the streets to talk with them, pray with them, and direct them to a free lunch of grilled hot dogs and chips.

We were broken into groups and set to work almost immediately upon arriving. I nervously walked down the streets in attempt to start conversations with residents of the infamous Skid Row. I didn't know what I could possibly offer, or how to poke holes in the dark blanket suffocating them, and now me. In silence, I sunk to the back of the group and followed our group leaders, who treated the clamor of threats, catcalls and cursing in the streets as white noise.

Unable to make eye contact, I kept my eyes peeled to the broken, uneven sidewalks

littered with crushed beer cans, soiled napkins, and dirty, wadded up, articles of clothing. The midday California sun beat down on my back and my dark, coarse hair absorbed its heat. I felt single drops of sweat pour down my shoulders and chest. Eventually, streams of perspiration raced from my hairline, over the contour of my face, down my neck and into my chest, then dropping and pooling at my belly, soaking into my dark cotton t-shirt. For a moment, I recognized the shy, sweaty girl walking these streets five years ago. How did she forget about all this?

Sleeping bags littered the streets like red, green, and blue synthetic flowers in a sad landscape of steaming black pavement and jarred, cracked concrete. Torn and ragged cardboard signs scrawled with black Sharpies claimed residency. They rested against brick walls, buildings and tents as though it were prime real estate.

Creativity was a pre-requisite to survival in these streets, and some did very well for themselves. Shopping carts created structure and storage, tarps gave shelter from the rain and secured privacy, and small communities along streets were formed to ensure security. Their watchful eyes bore holes into my chest, wishing pain upon me, as though I were trespassing on private property.

Forced to look up, I saw the bright whites of her old eyes protruding above high cheekbones. Deep, black sparkling irises shone in their center, smiling. She opened her mouth to speak, revealing infected gums that must have surrendered their teeth long ago. Her skin was chapped from dryness and rosy pink sores covered her arms, surrounded in ringlets of white. All her be-

longings lay on either side of her and she burned incense in an empty Pepsi can and glass bottles. Black smoke swam out and around, dissolving into the air she breathed. The smell was pungent with whatever she was burning and the natural scent of human stench. I fought against my nose to keep it from turning up, as I didn't want to offend her.

"Things are gonna' be differen' here soon," she assured us. "Soon as they read my letter. I'm gonna' be a sen'tor. They can't ignore me. They can try, but they can't ignore me. I wrote 'em a letter last week. Should be gettin' it this week. You think?" Cringing inwardly at her delusion, I tried to give an agreeing nod, which anyone with sense would have seen straight through.

She joked about politics; as though we were guests at her annual dinner party, the sleeping bag a long cherry wood table and beer cans, extravagant tea china. The flies swarming and buzzing about her dirty, matted head did not exist. Her laughter, so heavy and loud, pressed up against my chest and constricted it, as though it possessed all the weight of sin and death. She didn't know she was crazy, and I couldn't bear the thought of knowing the whole world and I were keeping this secret from her.

Suddenly, our dinner host got quiet. "I think I'm going to go to sleep now," she said, and slipped under her sleeping bag and tarp. We wished her well and walked away. I wondered if she would remember my face, our conversation and her letter to the government when she awoke.

Abandoned shops with barred windows contained the wanderers, sleepers, drinkers and

ramblers to the streets. What they would have given to seek shelter in the cool, dark corridors. It was as though the street had exhaled its last breath many years ago, leaving behind darkness and decay for these people to feed on. Morale was low, as natural shame and decency had left most of these people. Only empty, hollow bodies remained with their natural urges. It hadn't rained in days, yet small puddles on the road lay boiling in the sun, and streams ran downhill. I tried not to think of the urine now soaking on the soles of my shoes. Making conscious efforts to evade the grasp of the gags lurking in my throat, I breathed slowly through my nose.

A large man stood in the entryway of a park in a grey sweat suit, mindlessly doing jumping jacks. It was a particularly odd scene, this man completely unaware or unsympathetic towards the fact that he was directly in the park's entrance, as though it was a circus and he was the main attraction. Sweat soaked through his sweatshirt, leaving pools under his breasts and at his belly button. His face was dripping. His eyes were bloodshot, focused on something that no one else could see, and I knew he had no intention of resting until his heart quit beating. Of course, what did he have to lose? No one gave him a second glance.

Behind him, young children playing "invisible football" stepped around a man passed out in the grass, their parents unconcerned for them entirely. I leaned over the man to see if he was still breathing, and was relieved to see the subtle raising and lowering of his chest. We told a few men where to go for a free lunch and listened to their stories, as their children went about unsupervised

until we played a round of football with them.

“Okay, ready?” I asked. The boys looked at me with eager smiles and gave quick nods. I cupped my hands in a “C” formation, as though gripping a football. I took a step forward, giving a grunt as I threw the ball. Screams and laughter bounced off the brick school building behind them as the boys raced for it. The winner was arbitrarily decided by who was first to reach the wall.

The short and scrawny boy jumped up and down, “I caught it! I caught it!” He held up his empty hands and we celebrated with him, as though he had just won the Super Bowl.

We realized the time- we had to make it back to the bus.

“Bye, guys! We loved getting to play with you, but we have to go now.”

“No!” screamed the scrawny boy. He began to sob. “Don’t leave! Why are you leaving?” My heart felt as though it had been wrung out.

“Because I hate this place!” I wanted to answer.

Instead, we silently turned to leave, waving them goodbye. Both the boys ran up to us and spread out their arms, attempting to create a wall to block our escape. I, gently brushed them aside and kept walking. We heard the young boys’ cries for us down the block, telling us to come back. Their screams swallowed up the empty spaces, the silence, and the countless counterfeit smiles. They seemed to echo off the walls of brick buildings and down the alley. Despite what they told us, I knew nobody in this place was “ok.” And I knew I wouldn’t be either, after this.

There is no safe landing for these people, no place for them to run home to. No soft reclining couch with their favorite Americana quilt to rest on, and no welcoming smells of warm cinnamon and vanilla. The microwave doesn’t beep for them and their pocket never buzzes with a message from a friend. They don’t feel their body exhale and relax upon first lying down in bed at night, or the crisp, cool sheets giving them shivers. Nobody longs for their scent, and they have no one holding them at night. No one caresses them, squeezes them tight, or tells them it’s all going to turn out.

They are forgotten entirely.

As our bus pulled away, the reds, blues, and greens of the sleeping bags bled together into a confusing mix of gray, until the past two hours became a numbing blur. I exhaled silently, letting my shoulders fall, and leaned my head against the smudged window the entire ride home.

Still scrubbing my hands in the icy water, I heard the cries of the young boys playing football. They echoed through the shower, like wolves in the moonlight, like the screams I’ve always imagined come from those in hell.

I stood there, watching the dirt and water swirl down the shower drain, knowing the memories could not wash out this time. Not ever. With a towel, I dried my remaining tears as I longed to be able to dry theirs. No soul belonged in that wretched place.





Contributors

Andrés Marcial Coba- Born in Quito, Ecuador. Painter and draftsman who studied under the tutelage of several artists in Ecuador and Indonesia. Earned his bachelor degree on Systems Engineering at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador and currently studying at the Herron School of Art and Design MFA program.

Jacob DeHart - Socrates once said, "Let him who would move the world first move himself." Like Socrates, he too wants to find his role as one who moves themselves forward in this world.

Melinda Dubbs hails from Fishers, Indiana and is earning the MA in Social Work at IUPUI. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Tipton Poetry Journal, Prairie Margins, Glass Mountain, and Nanoism, among others. Her poem "Indiana Night" placed first in the 2012 Melba Geoffroy Poetry Contest.

Rachel Dupont is a junior at IUPUI, majoring in Creative Writing. Her hope after graduation is to continue to write fiction, and possibly continue on to achieve the Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing. She has measured out her life in coffee spoons.

Andrew Kimmel is a graduate student studying philosophy and English. He is also a cat whisperer.

Krystiana Kosobucki is a senior double-majoring in English and in Philosophy. She delights in stories, conversations, singing hymns, travelling

anywhere, and the unexpectedly beautiful. She plans to go to grad school for literature and spend the rest of her life talking about stories.

Alexandra Makris is an undergraduate at Herron studying Art History and Illustration. She loves being in art school because she is free to be a people-loving introvert who loves Doctor Who and My Neighbor Totoro.

Ronni Moore is a student in the school of Science studying Biology and Chemistry in hopes of becoming a dentist. She has a passion for photography and her favorite photographic subjects are athletes.

Tanisha Neely is a writer, literary artist and social critic with an incurable case of wanderlust. At her core, she is a resilient woman on a mission to improve the human condition through a body of work that entertains, educates and equips us to survive and enjoy this crazy and unpredictable world. The southern California native now lives amidst the cornfields of Indiana.

Christina Ridders is a sophomore pursuing an English Major with a double emphasis in Creative Writing and Writing and Literacy, a certificate in Paralegal Studies and a minor in Fairy Princessing. For school, she writes. For fun, she also writes. Definitely not a robot.

Alyssa Ruble is a sophomore at IUPUI, studying to be an English major.

Contributors

Angie Therber is a junior high English teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School in the Irvington area of Indianapolis. Recently having completed her Certificate in the Teaching of Writing, Angie plans to doggedly plod toward a graduate degree in English, shamelessly pilfering inspiration from her students, husband, and five nearly grown children.

Beth Wade is a senior English major from a small town called Wanamaker. She has been enthralled by writing since she was a kid and never plans on putting down her pencil and paper.

Jeremy Weddle is an IUPUI student who likes to go into abandoned buildings and take cool photographs.

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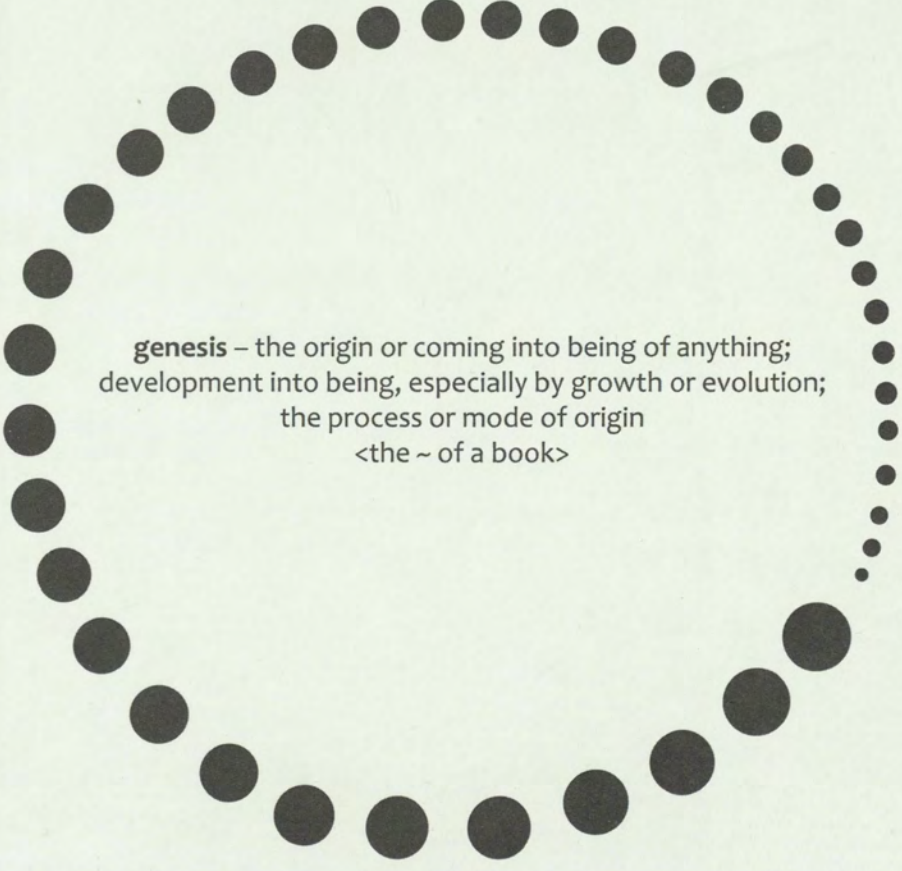
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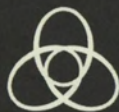
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