



genesis
the literary & art magazine of IUPUI
spring 2015

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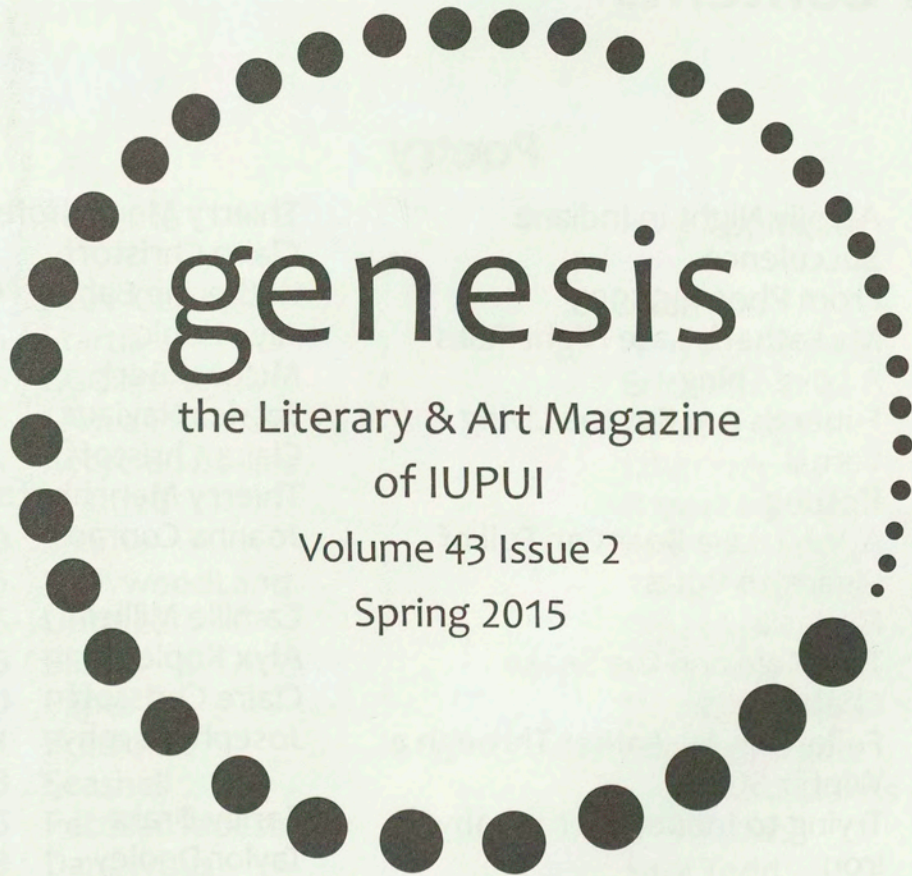
In this issue, you'll find work by students not only of Creative Writing, but also of Philanthropy, Biology, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, and Art. You'll read the work of a first-year freshman and see the work of a first-year graduate student. You'll explore worlds created by students just starting their creative lives and others by students turning their creatives lives in new directions somewhere mid-career.

And there will be bodies—lots of bodies.

You'll meet characters who find themselves stuck in caskets with men they don't know and others who refuse to get into caskets, even when dead. You'll follow characters who chase distant music through a field, and snack on cold hotdogs by refrigerator light. You'll feel the schoolyard thrill of a girl-fight being called out and see things being recycled back into the ground—did we mention that there will be bodies?

As you flip though the pages, take an unflinching look at the real meat of life—raw, pulsing, and alive with its own wonderful consciousness.

Tyler Anderson, Jennifer Nissley, and
Caleb Waggoner
Managing Editors



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of IUPUI

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Table of Contents

Poetry

9-11	A Bolly Night in Indiana	Thierry Menchhofer
13	Succulence	Claire Christoff
14	From Phoenix, 1993	Katherine Babbs
17	My Father's Late Night Talks	Alyx Kopie
23	A Love Thing	Michael Beck
25	Funerals Are For the Living	Jessica Naviaux
26	Vernal	Claire Christoff
28-29	Hotdog	Thierry Menchhofer
31	A Job Like a Beer Can Full of Cigarette Butts	Joanna Conrad
32	Fantasia	Camille Millier
37	The Mole and the Snake	Alyx Kopie
38-39	Chatterings	Claire Christoff
42	Following My Father Through a Winter Storm	Joseph Murphy
44	Trying to Induce Hierophany	Carley Drake
54	iron	Taylor Dooley
55	A Water Bucket With Holes	Dontae C. Hayden
57	Out Clocking In	Sanad Said El-Rahaiby

Fiction

4-8	How to Take the Wagon Towards the Path of Righteousness	Sanad Said El-Rahaiby
19-22	Roses and Bones	Camille Millier
46-52	Block C	Camille Millier
59-64	Permafrost	John Erby

Art

Front Cover Sweet 16

12 Zeus' Galaxies
15 Startline
16 GGGiiirl Fight!
18 I Am a Princess
24 Recycled Bodies
27 Untitled
30 Shame
33 HollywoodLand
34-35 Untitled
36 Blister
40 Paper
41 Breakfast
43 Seashell
45 Peculiar Tapestry
53 Dangerous
56 One and the Same
58 Denial

Amy Applegate

Lifan Fan
Amy Applegate
Erica Parker
Kurumi Kita
Lifan Fan
Danielle Graves
Amy Applegate
Alexis Nunnely
Danielle Graves
Sara Todd
Danielle Graves
Amy Applegate
Alexandra Makris
Brian Laws
Sara Todd
Lifan Fan
Alyx Kopie

Best of Issue

Poetry The Mole and the Snake
Fiction Roses and Bones
Art Sweet 16

Alyx Kopie
Camille Millier
Amy Applegate

How to Take the Wagon Towards the Path of Righteousness



Sanad Said El-Rahaiby

Here's how it goes down. You'll wake up one morning. Fumble around. The last bit of dish water that hasn't evaporated from your shirt will press against your stomach. The odors of garlic, flour and oil linger like an illness. You'll feel the other side of the bed. For some reason you sense coldness has surrounded you (cliché) yet you'll feel her warm body. Her lower back or ass, not her belly or face. But forget about anatomy and which way her body faces. What's important: how she has stuck around.

This surprises you. The memory of your hatred, only a few hours prior—directed towards her, in the form of frantic pacing, paranoid delusions, nonsensical accusations, and, ultimately, one very large and abrupt hole in the wall—slowly seeps into your consciousness. The sour taste of ferment fills your mouth and you're most definitely about to shit the bed, thanks to the hybrid of cheap whiskey and expired potato salad (the mayonnaise kind).

It will hit you all at once. Cliché. You flipped out at some point in the night, got depressed, and your blood turned to briquettes. You'll remember what set you off, but it won't make much sense in the morning. You'll peel off your rank work clothes and sit on the shitter with both elbows on your knees, thumbs rubbing your temples.

You'll think. Scramble. This hangover will soon pass, and you'll regain the last portion of your brain that isn't skewed, and you'll tell Amanda you're sorry, how it was just the whiskey talking, and she'll accept the apology, saying, "I'll *always* forgive you, Dennis." But you'll know that isn't true. She's just enabling (buzzword). Soon enough Amanda will realize that your glazy eyes are half empty and not so endearing.

She will lose interest.

So you will conclude it's not fair to use her as the direct, or indirect, object of your own self-destruction just because you think the world takes a giant shit on you. When in reality, you're just another guy who works at a restaurant. Your self-esteem gets eighty-sixed on a nightly basis, so you refill it with 750 milliliters of the browns and wake up every morning wondering if this is the runniest shit you've ever taken.

You *will* disgust her...

First things first: look yourself in the mirror and disdain the clichés that surround alcoholism—the sympathy from others, the desire for a different tomorrow, you know, one that starts with a spiritual awakening (buzzwords).

Be honest. Your habituated lifestyle has turned you into one giant, gaping, pussy. Time for some courage sans liquid.

Pour all the drink out. Anything that resembles a bottle or can. Even the brandy you bought for that *flambé*, when your grandiosity led you to believe you were a saucier, and the vermouth you used to impress her with extra dry martinis and blue cheese stuffed olives. Hunch your back over the sink. Like the observer of a 21-gun salute, be solemn. Watch each liquid flow. You've heard the tales about people who woke up and dumped their shit down the drain. It sounded respectable, like they had shit figured out. You'll feel heroic or triumphant or stoic. Or some other literary buzzword that implies inspiration was felt by someone. Remind yourself of all her silent criticisms over the year you've been dating. Her concerned looks. Each time you chose the bottle over her. Cliché. Like it was a fair fight.

She could have nagged you. Really fucked you up for all the times she had to pick you up from the job, or when you were too swerved to have sex. But she stayed silent, hoping you'd follow through with your desire to dry out.

Pour out the near empty ones too. You are resourceful—only a cum-shot's worth of liquor could continue the cycle. Tell yourself you're doing this for her.

Get in your car—no, there isn't really a wagon—and drive to work. Find a new genre of music to listen to, like adult contemporary. Yes, this soft-rock-for-a-busy-world is for old folks who wear high-water denims or shirts that say "life is great" while they tap their pinky or wedding ring on their gear shift. Pinpoint the positive in those songs. Celine Dion and Phil-fucking-Collins. These artists avoid melancholy, and if they drift into something blue, there's always an uplifting moment in the song that's a reminder, saying "Hey, I can do this, I can say NO to sadness!" They will remind you of those bullshit scenic posters showing a sunset reflecting off a pond or lake. Serenity. Like your very own Dr. Phil radiating through the airwaves.

Stay away from Elvis Costello.

Tom Waits only depresses you and Jay-Z just makes you want to party. And if you happen to come across an AC song that's a little too upbeat, Gloria Estefan for instance, and your heart rate gets going, and your brain starts to itch, and the only logical solution is to pay a close and thirsty attention to all the billboards that present a beer bottle with an adequate amount of foam, just find a new law to break.

This has nothing to do with morality.

You're doing this for her. Not for anyone else. Not yourself. You're still a crumb bum, oblivious to social conduct. Be the asshole driver. Get in the fast lane and make sure your bumper is nuts-to-butt with the person ahead of you, who's going the speed limit on the dot. They want to keep you from breaking the law. Fuck 'em. Hit the gas pedal. Go 100. This is your new addiction.

And while you're at it, break every rule on the road. They no longer apply to you.

Ignore stop signs. If no one is coming the other way, blow through, and if you make a mistake, it won't be any different than when you drove hammered, like that time you swerved across the median and smashed into one of those orange construction, trash-can-looking things then drove off, with no consequences except for one very concerned girlfriend, who begged for your keys, only to be shushed by drunken machismo. Remember, your breath will be a clean 0.00. Fuck red lights. You no longer have to waste time sitting at an intersection with your thumb up your ass just waiting for a color to change. Look forward to police officers. Tell them the truth, if stopped, for once. Incarceration no longer hangs over your head. This is your reward, your fix.

And if that doesn't make your dick hard, think about your dick that will finally get hard again. Say goodbye to whiskey-dick.

Yes, not drinking will settle the constant struggle for your attention; she'll have it all, but imagine the arguments, your insecurities, the paranoia caused by intoxication, that could have been squashed if you had just fucked her real good.

No more lying on your side, throwing it like a

lazy fool. You're not Al Bundy. You like sex. You'll be able to hold a position, all the positions, longer than 15 minutes without the room spinning. Release your savagery, dismantle the world, restore your passion, feel 18. Be the warrior on a rearing horse holding a javelin, ready to take over some small and unfortunate village.

You'll be king again.

Who knows, maybe you'll hit the gym, be one of those tough guys who are stoked-getting-yoked, and start using new buzzwords like *calisthenics* or *latissimus dorsi*. They will offer some kind of relief to help you tolerate your days spent in a restaurant.

But your newfound clarity will be challenged during the dinner rush when the kitchen guys will slam their craft beers and the servers will slurp on the *sauvignon blanc* and the atmosphere will get real noisy, and for some reason, everything will sound like the uncorking of scotch. You'll think your strategy may need some reworking. She will not be there to help remind you why you're doing this, and your hard dick becomes a mere fictional prop.

And in this moment of limp desperation, you'll notice the only sober person that isn't a teenager is the 40-year-old dishwasher who's been off crack for three hundred and twelve days. He counts. Cliché. You've avoided genuine contact with this guy, because he's a work release jailbird, a creepy ex-crackhead. But you'll figure him a decent candidate for some iron to sharpen iron. So you'll start a conversation with the old man by telling him you're trying to get off the sauce, and he, in a very dignified manner, will release the dish-hose and look into your eyes.

He'll know you're struggling and will reduce sobriety to one golden question, asking, "Well, what caused you to stop, Dennis?"

You'll tell him, "I'm doing it for Amanda."

This will cause him to blab some real deep bullshit—how you're girlfriend may not be able to relate to your struggle, or how you can't do it for her, you'll need to do it for yourself. He'll say not too many people are able to do it alone then he'll start talking about God or some higher cause. You listen to him recite all the clichéd advice arranged in a 12-pack of steps, but it hurts your head and you regret starting the conversation and realize that maybe one of you isn't quite made of iron.

You'll think to yourself, *Who, in this place, has the right buzzword to overcome this awful cliché?*

The shift will end before you find the answer, but you'll drive home sober as birth and see her parked car. And through the front door, head up but body shrunk down, you'll walk inside and find her painting her nails or cooking dinner. She'll look at you like a dog that doesn't know if it's in trouble. She never knows which you is walking into the room, but on this night, she can tell something is different when your body collapses onto the couch and curls into the shape of a nine or a six. You will shake. You'll feel more sensations than you than you have felt in years, and your mind tells you that you have more control, but there is a disconnect. She'll notice. You'll tell her you went the day without a drink and notice extra wattage in her eyes. Maybe it was always there but you were too fucked up to notice it, or maybe it's because she's proud of you. She'll bring you tea with valerian root to ease your stomach and your nerves. She'll hold you. You're just a

baby. It feels motherly. Your dick will get hard and she'll take you to the bed.

But it's not at all like you thought.

She'll do all the work, undress you, and get on top. Lock her hands onto yours. This is the most you've ever felt of her, her skin, her vagina, her soul; this is the most you've ever felt from yourself, like something inside of you has woken up, cliché, like an alignment between the two of you is happening. And the climax will be real. Ending with one big explosion, the ultimate cliché. She'll roll over. Tell you she loves you. You'll tell her you love her. She'll restate how proud she is. She'll fall asleep. You won't.

Restless and sober, you don't expect her to stay awake and suffer with you. You don't want an award. You don't want anything, but to do it for her. You know you're happy. You know she's happy. But here you are, naked, here she is, naked, and there is nothing else to add to the naked and happy pot; this is the best it can get, emotional and physical connection. But it's not enough to eradicate the desire to drink. It's like the turd that won't flush.

You'll stare at the ceiling and wait for sleep to come naturally. The fan will look like a large palm with five fingers about to suffocate you. You'll feel small, insignificant, and quasi-delirious. You won't know who you are.

With the drunk-goggles off, you'll look in the mirror and find all the buzzwords and clichés packed inside your eyes. You'll finally recognize their function. They are no longer just words or anecdotes. They exist inside you. Maybe the crack-head was right: you can't do this alone and it may not work to do it just for her. Perhaps there is a

higher cause, one that has nothing to do with you or her or anything else. Maybe it's about submission. But right now, you like what you see.



A Bolly Night in Indiana

Thierry Menchhofer

The place where my friend grew up
has an enormous back yard. Gardens of flowers
and herbs. A treehouse and barn. And a long
open space that extends to a creek bed. One

night we pitched a tent and, with
the help of her mom, made a fire. Her mom
went back to the house, and we sat by the fire on
lawn chairs, warmed a can of baked beans and took
turns reading aloud from a novel
about a rebellious chocolatier, a repressed
Catholic community

and a band of gypsies. The fire continued to blaze, and the sun
and moon were beginning to switch shifts, when
we heard a heavy bass drum rolling around in the distance and
echoes of cymbals. We read on, occasionally looking off
and wondering where the music was coming from and what

the people were celebrating. It got a little darker
and the music got a little louder. Like the piper in the forest,
it was too tempting. So we abandoned
our fire, lawn chairs, beans, and story
to head east, toward the sound of the music, to end

the mystery. Journeying across the murky field,
flashlight in hand, we came to the creek. We knew we were headed
in the right direction because we could now hear the foreign verses of Eastern song.
With our curiosity still hungry, we crossed the creek bed
by leaping on large broken rocks and then landed

at the edge of a cornfield. Bumping into the shoulders of the
stalks, like walking through a halted crowd, perhaps themselves mesmerized,
we exited the cornfield onto the side of the main road.
At this point we could feel the thumping drums, high-pitched cymbals,
and hypnotizing voice, with words that float in the air. The house
and garage were glowing and pounding

like they were alive. Still unfulfilled, we walked up to the house
and could see dark haired men, women and children dressed
in colorful silks and gold bracelets, dancing in the garage,
and coming in and out at all directions carrying platters
and babies. A young woman walked up to us and
welcomed us to join the celebration

of a young man's birthday. Inside the garage,
she motioned for us to throw our shoes in with the others, and she
invited us to food, beer, and dance. After she made it clear we were
welcome she had vanished. I am unsure if we ever saw her again that night;
but there we were, two curly haired, pale teens in flannels and pajamas.
Naturally, we headed to the

beer table. Still somewhat expecting to be turned away by one of the older members, we were handed each a bottle of beer, and then, standing in the pulsating heart of the night's mystery, we looked around at the joy and culture of the people celebrating. Feeling like we were in a dream, and having come this far, we decided

to try joining the dance. The room divided the dancers by gender. The men have a dance that could be compared to square dancing, and the women spun and twirled, holding hands. They noticed us watching, and so broke their circle

to reach out to us. We set our drinks down and clasped our hands onto their lovely brown. They were all so cheerful and graceful in their uniformed spinning. From time to time we glanced at one another, my friend and I, and with our eyes asked each other,

“How do you know if you are dreaming?”



Zeus' Galaxies
Lifan Fan

Acrylic on Canvas
18" x 24"

Succulence

Claire Christoff

Aloe vera,
baby jade.

Fat peridot teardrops
drip from your stalk,

bursting with cold green medicine,

collecting dust in the sunlight.

Nuggets of gritty food
lay uneaten in your dirt,

white crumbles,

as you crane your fruit away

from the prison of this room,
this broken coffee mug.

You are a bright plastic beauty,
exhaling.

From Phoenix, 1993

Katherine Babbs

In the sepia-tinted hospital room, my mother
told me to look for God in the palms of my hands.
She folded them together like laundry, the silhouette
of her lips against the half-static television screen
muted in the corner. I felt the whispers
of the half-dead echo in the hallway.

At three, I thought my father was a tree
his legs concrete trunks I could climb from the soft
living room floor. When one day he could not
lift me, my mother said it was because he had a knot
growing, like roots on his spine.

But blurred out were words
like *cancer tumor death paralysis*
and truth removed—we did not go
to Arizona to see tumbleweeds.
We went to tear out trees.

The doctor who tore the roots out
had a round chair with wheels
on which he rolled me down
the hospital halls. I asked my mother
if we could trade the stitched-up pieces of my father
for a man who could still lift me up.

Start Line
Amy Applegate

Oil on Paper
12" x 16"





GGGiirl Fight!
Erica Parker

Micron Pens on Paper
5" x 7"

My Father's Late Night Talks

Alyx Kopie

It's 3 a.m. on a Friday morning.
Big hands that smell of chewing tobacco
and grease shake me from my sleep
and beckon me to our living room
where our Christmas tree lights flash red
and green in the dark, illuminating my father's face.
I have my last day of 5th grade
before Christmas break tomorrow,
and my mom is taking me to a puppet
show with my Girl Scout troop.
My father knows this and tells me
all his trouble, how he is going
to be laid off at work, how our Christmas
tree may not bear gifts beneath its branches
this year, and how he and my mom will probably
be divorced by Christmas anyway. He asks me
if that is what I want and says if not then tomorrow
at the puppet show I'll ask her for him.
I will ask if she still loves him.

It's 3 a.m. on Saturday morning.
I am still awake when my father
summons me, once again,
to the living room. This time clutching
an Old Milwaukee he occasionally
brings to his quivering upper lip.
He asks me if I know what sex is in crude,
slurred words. I say "no" and he says
"Sure ya do," says that if I've seen
the elephants do it on the nature program
on PBS, that it is pretty much the same.
The Christmas lights hum, trying to break
the awkward silence that to me sounded
like screaming. He took another gulp
of his beer and smoothed out his pajama pants
with his grease stained palms and pushed
back his thinning hair like it would somehow
help him see more clearly. He took a deep
breath in that felt like he sucked all the air
from the room. And he finally asked me
"So what'd she say?"
And I said, "She said, 'of course.'"

I Am a Princess
Kurumi Kita

Photography, 2-D



Roses and Bones

.....
Camille Millier

Mr. Fayard Hawthorne died on October 27th, the year that I was thirteen. He was the first dead body I had ever seen. I never thought about death much before that. It was just what my daddy did. I had heard all the stories from him. How he applied the makeup to make it look like they were less dead and pumped them full of special liquid to keep them from smelling. He told me stories about how some of them would still twitch in the basement under the fluorescent white lights, while little-kid-me sat wide-eyed in pigtails on the carpet of our living room. After Mr. Hawthorne died, Daddy decided I was old enough to come to work with him. He made sure the first body I ever saw on a slab wasn't someone I had known in their living years.

"Babygirl, you might own this thing yourself one day." Daddy winked a blue eye at me in the passenger's seat while Rob Zombie scratched his way out of the hearse stereo. There wasn't a body in the back, but he always did that. He would say that whoever was back there was on the way to their own party, so we might as well let them have fun early.

"But respect is key, okay?" He gave me the stern father look. "Death isn't a joke."

I nodded, fiddling with the tiny gold heart on the chain around my neck. I had gotten it from my father on my eleventh birthday. I didn't understand the respect-for-the-dead thing. No one I knew had ever died, and thinking about myself dying was even more inconceivable still.

I closed the heavy wooden doors behind us when we stepped into Hollow's Mortuary. The place was empty in preparation for the funeral tonight.

...

He led medown to the basement. Mr. Hawthorne wasn't down there. He'd already been dressed and made pretty and taken up to the fancy viewing room. I guessed that that was being saved for the grand finale. I sat on the edge of the metal table where the bodies go, resting my chin in one hand and twirling a strand of my blonde hair in the other as Daddy picked up and talked about each clean, sparkling tool. First there was a scalpel, to make a small opening to insert the arterial tubes and drainage tubes. He showed me the embalming machine and which knobs controlled the power and speed. He showed me the shiny metal "angled forceps," or bent scary torture scissors. I wanted to see the body. Not only out of curiosity, but also because of the dare.

CJ, you have to kiss the dead man. Molly flipped her red ponytail. Everyone in our small circle giggled with delight, including me. Ever since the time I ran down the street at midnight wearing only my undershirt and a rainbow tutu while Molly and her cousin giggled down from the bedroom window, they all knew I was the only one brave enough, and they'd have an excuse to call me "death breath" for the rest of the year. *Come on. You weren't a scaredy cat when we played with the Ouija board in my basement.* Molly curled her lips into a mischievous grin. *You know you want to.* Everyone else made exaggerated vomit noises. And I did want to. Because Christopher St. Agnes was standing right there smiling at me, probably thinking about the week before when I had kissed *him* behind the brick wall of the schoolyard. I gave him a wink to show him I was game.

...
"Cynthia Jane."

My father's voice made me snap my eyes back to focused and look over to where he held a small jar of mismatched glass eyeballs.

"Are you listening?" He wrinkled his eyebrows.

"Yeah," I said, "but I'm thirsty."

Then I put on my sweetest voice. "Can I go get a pop from the vending machine?"

His stern mouth melted into a handsome smile.

"Yes, CJ. Just hurry."

I hopped down from the table, my thighs sticking as I peeled them off of the metal slab. I hummed a song as I skipped up the stairs, passed the vending machine in the hallway and turned to the heavy, dark cherry wood doors that lead into the large viewing room. I pushed one open with difficulty and stuck my head inside. The high ceiling was lined with chipped gold-painted molding. There were round-back chairs set up in rows, with a path in the middle going all the way up to the front, where there was a giant, glorious, shiny walnut casket. I slipped inside and made my way to the front. As I got closer, the folded white hands came into view, and then the chest, and then the sharp profile of Mr. Fayard Hawthorne.

Next to the casket, a metal stand held a large framed picture of Mr. Hawthorne from when he was living. I compared the picture to his sleeping face. The photo must have been recent, because even in the casket he still looked to be in his late fifties, with just a bit more of a grayish tinge to his skin, but handsome for an old man just the same. I took a step forward to get a closer look. He had grey hair that probably used to be blond, parted on

the side and combed back in an elegant swoop. His cheekbones were high and sharp above the deflated hollows of his cheeks. He was wearing a black tie with a gold tie clip, and a gold wedding band on one of his clasped fingers.

“Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Hawthorne,” I chirped. “Today’s your lucky day.”

I bent at the waist and leaned my face in close. My stomach felt hollow for a second. The lines that showed the age on his face became more apparent. His lips were full but pale and pulled into a round frown. He reeked of the chemicals downstairs. I took a breath, puckered my own young, rosy lips, and pressed them against his. They were cold and still. *Duh*. I had at least expected them to feel room-temperature. I pulled away quickly. I touched my warm lips and looked down at my floral dress and shiny beige flats, half elated and shocked at what I had done.

The inside of the coffin was lined with cream satin. It looked cushiony and soft. Why did it matter if a dead person was comfortable? And why was it so *big*? It looked as though it could fit two people instead of one. Perhaps...a small girl of my size.

Without thinking, I swung one leg over the edge of the casket. Molly wants me to kiss a corpse? I’ll do her one better.

I lifted the other leg and maneuvered myself gently inside, pressing myself next to the tall, thin body.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell Mrs. Hawthorne,” I said as I reached up and slowly pulled down the hinged lid of the casket until the small crack of light shrunk and turned into darkness.

I shivered. “Cozy in here.”

There was no difference between opening my eyes and closing them. I blinked hard in the blackness. Nothing. The cold, rigid elbow underneath Mr. Hawthorne’s suit sleeve jabbed into my rib when I breathed. The thick stench of embalming fluid burned the inside of my nostrils. A stronger version of what I caught a hint of when Daddy came home in the evening and kissed my forehead. I whimpered. The smell was so heavy that I felt like it was clogging my insides and shriveling my lungs. I tried to hold my breath but there was no breath to hold. I gasped for air and frantically groped for the handle, until I realized there wouldn’t be a handle on the *inside*. I tried to push the lid up with my sweaty palms but it didn’t budge. I couldn’t see and I couldn’t breathe and all there was inside this tiny tomb with me was a dead old man that I had just violated. I was going to die in here next to him and get what I deserved. I thought about Mr. Hawthorne—how less than two days ago he may have been in line for a vanilla latte at the Rose Café. Or sitting on a bench at the train station, briefcase set on the floor by his feet while he read a two-month old issue of *GQ*. I realized that one day, I would be standing in front of a coffin much like this one, and my father would be the old man in it. Tears spilled out of the corners of my eyes and down my red cheeks. I banged my fists on the shallow, padded ceiling and screamed. Finally, one blow raised the lid up enough for the crack of light to appear again, and I used all my strength to push the door back up on its hinges.

I sprang from the coffin, falling on my knees just in front of it as I violently gulped in air. I got up, sprinted down the long room and exploded

through the large door. Running for my life. As I rounded the corner I crashed into my father's chest, tears still streaming.

He grabbed me by the shoulders and looked at my face. My breathing slowed and my heartbeat returned to normal.

"CJ, why would you do this?" He snapped. "I should have known you weren't ready for this."

I sniffled.

"I know it's weird to see one for the first time." He ran a hand through his hair and sighed. "That's why I wanted to be with you for it. You should have just waited for me."

I buried my face in his *Lost Boys* T-shirt. The slim black suit would come later.

"I'm sorry, Daddy."

The car ride home was silent before Daddy turned on the radio and nudged me playfully. I gave him a small smile, but then returned my somber gaze out the window. I never found my gold necklace after that day. I can only guess it was buried with Fayard Hawthorne.



A Love Thing

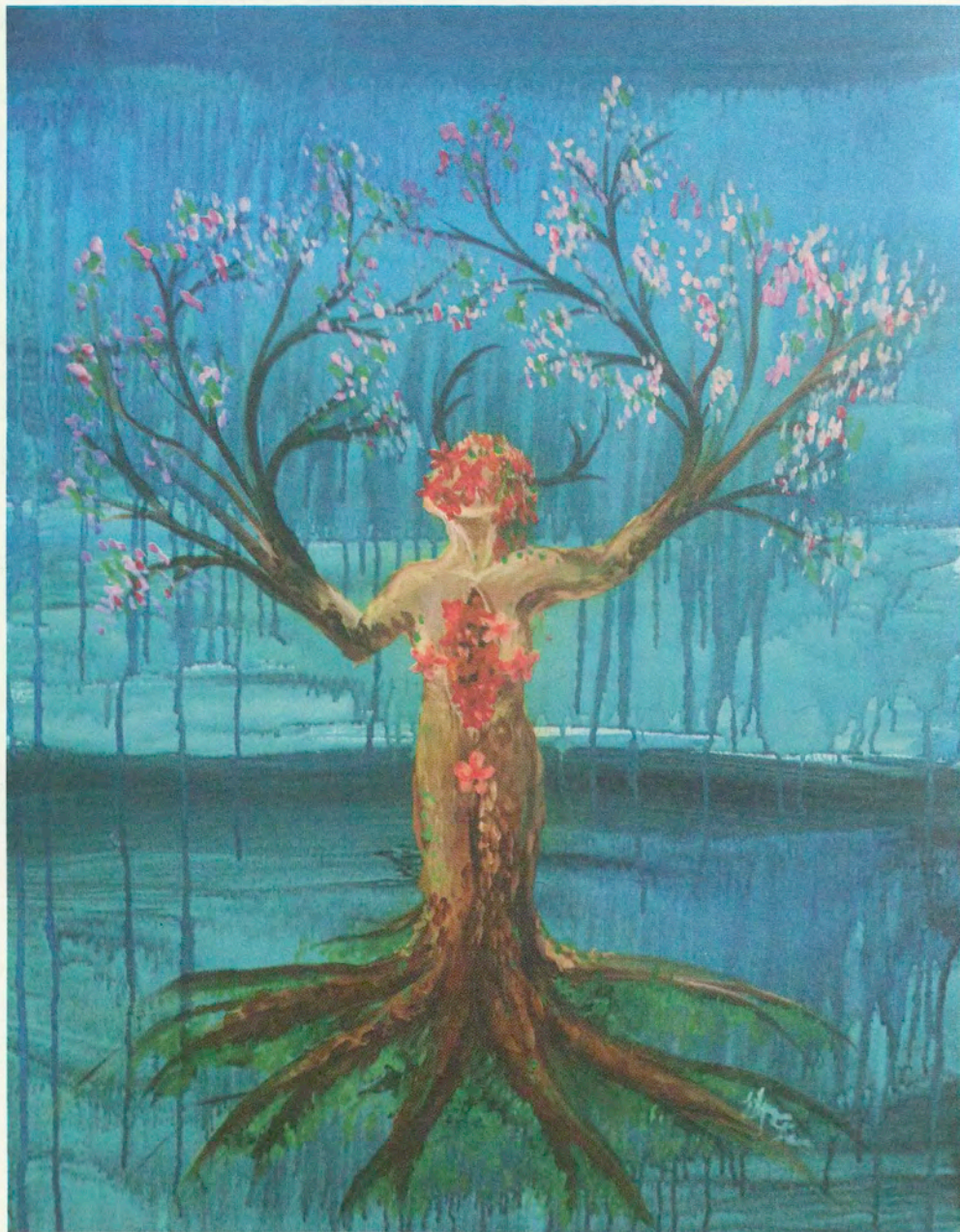
Michael Beck

A Love | Thing

A friend introduced us, it became all about just you and I
You seemed sweet and innocent, but you were just a white lie
You brought me down, always feeding me reasons to relax
But it started out as fun, to just take a quick ride on the horse
It was a blast, at first a frivolous thing, then
Our bond soon became stronger, more than a vow or a ring, then
Boy, oh boy, I think I may be addicted more than a love thing
my sweet brown sugar, my enthralling skag,
I gotta break free, but found my mind and heart consumed
Like thunder in a storm you are all I hear
You keep me awake, my cunning Xanthippe
I want you in my arms, I must escape you,
blessed relief, You are the death of me
you are a never-ending curse,
My God, You've drawn me to your eternal embrace

Recycling Bodies
Lifan Fan

Acrylic on Canvas
24" x 30"



Funerals Are For the Living

Jessica Naviaux

When I am dead
and gone
don't you dare put me in the ground in some locked box,
or burn me to ashes
or set me adrift at sea;
I want to be more than that.

Leave me in a grassy field
where the sun and the rain can caress my skin and hair
until it falls right off
and the stench of it overwhelms even you.

Let the worms and the birds have their fill,
and let the flies gust in black swarms around me,
until what's left of me
churns with a new life within,
one that consumes and repurposes my old one,
until even they have nothing left to take.

Let my bones bleach white with the passing days,
and forget I was anything else but the grass,
the trees,
and everything in between.

Vernal
— — — — —
Claire Christoff

You and I
were born at the crust of spring

with dying stars
and dirt between our toes.

In another life
we are living in North Dakota

and I plant beets and pumpkins
along the railroad ties

and your typewriter sits at the table
where flowers and food should be

and in the distance
a bird cries, prehistoric.



Untitled
Danielle Graves

Yarn and Mod
Podge
11" x 14"

Hotdog

Thierry Menchhofer

I

Some foods stir up memories, nostalgia, and patriotism more than others.
One food that seems to just as much,
if not more than the hamburger,
is the hotdog.

II

The hotdog has been a prominent menu item for ball parks and race tracks.
Whenever there is a work free holiday you are always asked, "hamburger or hotdog?"

III

The food instigates early memories of being surrounded by other 3 to 5 year olds
Sitting at plastic table with our cut up hotdogs arranged on a soggy paper plate
that has been made wet by the ketchup and mustard concoctions.
The reds and yellows swirled together presented a flavorful picture of the Fibonacci sequence.

IV

The hotdog is cooked of course;
but did you know you could snack on it cold?
Right out of the package.
Right out of the fridge.
The lights are out in the house,
except for this illumination beaming from the kitchen;
and your breath smells of raw hotdogs.

V

My brother showed me how a wiener can shake
when he put a hotdog in front of his crotch and wagged it up and down.
It was only a hotdog,
but the sight of it still made me look away.

VI

When I was twelve in the sixth grade,
I sat across from an Iraqi kid in the cafeteria.
Unknowingly, he chowed down on the flesh forbidden by his religion,
a hotdog wrapped deliciously in fried bread.
After he asked a standing adult what it was he was eating,
I saw his face turn white in terror of the shame he could not seem to let pass.
I couldn't grasp the magnitude of the sin that suddenly branded his soul,
but I knew it was because his God had commanded not to eat the flesh of pig...Or is it cow?
...Or is it both?

VII

My grandmother and her family used to picnic by the Speedway track;
and trying to do something normal on a summer day in the park,
they made no exceptions after the second world war.
Her oldest brother had recently arrived safe from the explosions in Italy.
That day at the park became a literal tale of the brother who bit off more than he could chew.
(I don't think they had hotdogs in Italy.)

VIII

I dreamt I was being chased by the dead,
and I was enthralled by the familiar smell of hotdog.
Nearing a parking lot I looked up in the trees,
and there from the trees hung hundreds of naked hotdogs,
like dying leaves, or rosaries draped on tree limbs
to mark in remembrance a holy landmark.

Shame
Amy Applegate

Oil on Canvas
30" x 40"



A Job Like a Beer Can Full of Cigarette Butts

• • • • •
Joanna Conrad

Plastered
with sour sweat,
grease, and soot,
laborers let
their butts burn out
in empty bottles,
poisoned breath
escaping like prayers
from damp and sticky mouths.

Fantasia

Camille Millier

We are leaving tonight.

Out the stone bedroom window, down the twisted ivy and
over the green hill
to the stream where blue kaleidoscope glass
graces glittering stones.

Under the canopy of hanging moss, violet flowers
are closed to sleep for the night.

Where the silver moonlight shines a patch through the trees
onto the soft ground, with blades of grass
flattened from our bodies lying heavy.

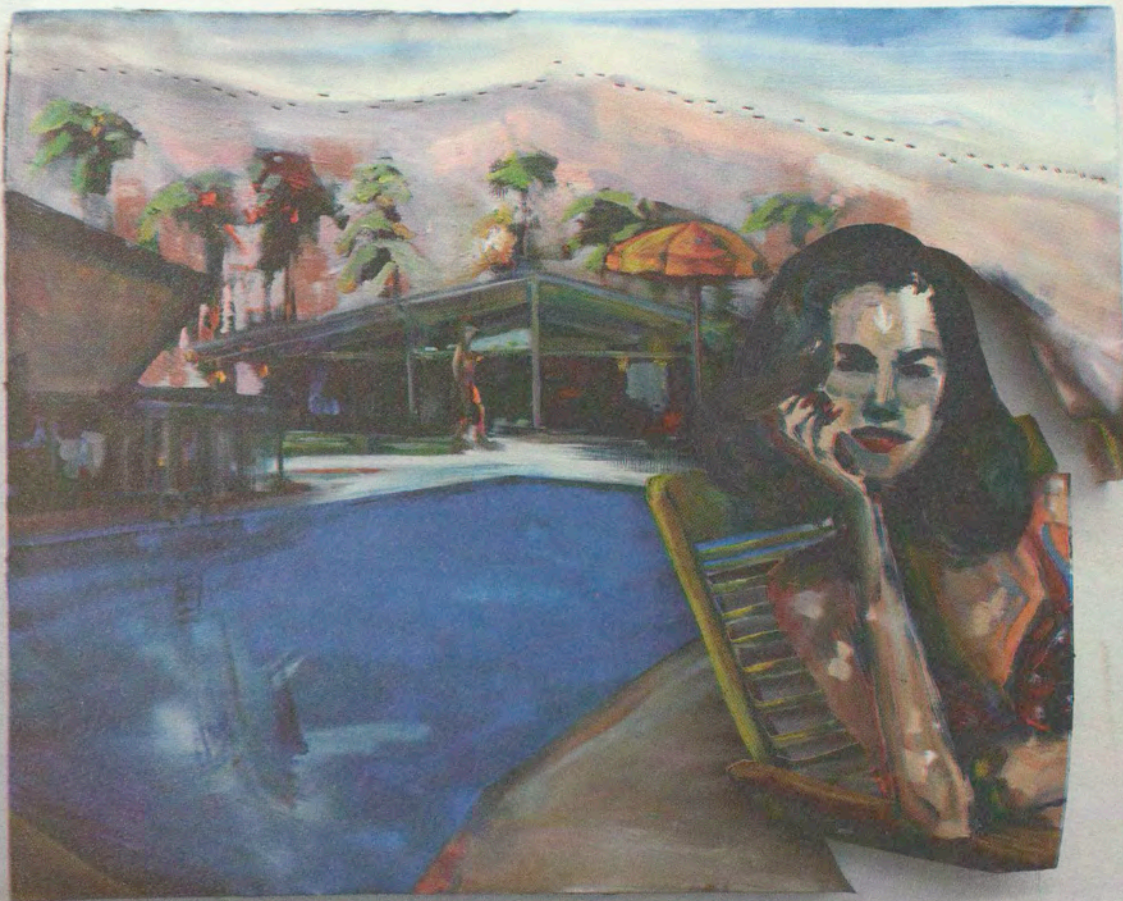
We won't need a candle, where we're going tonight.

The glow of the moths' wings will shine pale light
on our faces, and we can eat the prickly purple fruits hanging above,
and thank Dionysus for the black wine dripping
down at the midnight stream.

We will tell rumors of mighty kings and days long passed,
and of the lions that roamed the valleys when priests wore golden robes,
instead of black lips curled upward behind our backs like
Rumpelstiltskin crouching waiting,
at the foot of a mother's bed.

We are leaving.

Even if only
for tonight.



HollywoodLand
Alexis Nunnelly

Oil on Canvas
36" x 46"



Untitled
Danielle Graves

Charcoal
20" x 7'5"



Blister

Sara Todd

Acrylic on Illustration
Board, Digital

10" x 17"

The Mole and the Snake

Alyx Kopie

Each year before the harvest
of my father's garden
we'd pull weeds from the loose soil
with our little, grub-like fingers,
plucking a sugar pea, green bean,
or cherry tomato for every other
weed we had banished from the garden.
While we darkened our skin in the sun
and dirt, my father was waging a war.
He'd pace through the grass,
running his dirt-caked hands
through his not-yet-thinning hair,
following a labyrinth of mound
that stretched the span of his otherwise
perfectly manicured lawn.
He finally determined the spot
where the maze of tunnels
all came together in a secret
crossroads. While my siblings and I
chased after a gardener snake,
my father unsheathed a metal
contraption from an old birdseed
bucket. I placed the snake into the now
empty bucket as my father stuck the blades

of the trap into the raised earth. I lifted
up the snake with a stick and placed
it back into the bucket, feeling the thrill
of capturing it over and over. My mom
called us for dinner saying, "No daughter
of mine would ever play with a snake."
The next morning we went back to work.
I watched from the garden as my father
unearthed the trap, revealing with it a small
furry creature, still squirming, pierced
through its back leg. He said he had to "Put
it out of its misery," that it was the "humane
thing to do." So he pulled a shovel
from the dirt and hit the poor animal once,
then again, and it stopped moving.
I stood, watching, round tears formed
in my eyes and I quickly turned away,
not wanting my father to see I was crying.
I retreated back to the birdseed bucket
to play with my snake that I had left
there the day before. I peered inside
the bucket but the snake had scorched
to death in the summer's heat.

Chatterings

Claire Christoff

I can see my breath this morning,
freezing in space
like an empty cartoon.

I can see the plume of smoke even better,
resting on winter's eaves
like so many ashy feathers.

A boy holds his cigarette like a joint,
like a teenager,
and the smell of tobacco

and tar
(and embalming fluids, probably)
burning at a thousand and one degrees Fahrenheit

makes me nostalgic.

I am nostalgic for peach-colored summer nights,
for being nine years old,
for playing statues on my old neighbor's lawn

while she drinks rosé with my mother
and grinds the butts of her Newports
into an ashtray commemorating the inauguration of JFK.

My mouth tastes like burnt black coffee
and salty bleeding lips
and the sweet crayon flavor of cherry Chapstick.

Spring will come tomorrow
bearing hard bright fruit
(or maybe next week).

Paper
Danielle Graves

Charcoal and Collaged Paper
33" x 42"





Breakfast
Amy Applegate

Oil on Canvas
40" x 60"

Following My Father in a Winter Storm

Joseph Murphy

In the haze of a four-year-old's memory I see the glaciers
slide by on either side, piled high into snow drift mountains.
A disembodied glove guides me through the mist.
My mouth and cheeks grow humid from my breath,
while icy winds whip emotionless tears into my eyes
and leather fingers pull my wool-covered hand along.

A barely-sentient being wrapped in the cocoon of over-layered cloth,
I bounce behind a solemn black peacoat. The coat swirls
and swirls, cutting a black tornado's winding path through the perfect
white snow. We weave like a new pen scribbling its owner's signature
across a blank page. My boots, fresh as the falling snow,
fail to grip the dead grass beneath and I tumble to the ground.

Cold and wet, I'm lifted between leather palms. I float
above giant white pillows, a miniature organic aircraft over the clouds
and onto the porch's concrete landing strip and through the red terminal door
with the heat of my engine's breath beating at the back of my neck.



Seashell
Alexandra Makris

Watercolor
5" x 5"

Trying to Induce Hierophany

Carley Drake

Copper worn green by time
curls intricately like wet paper
climbing, coiling—
against the bruised heavens
towers spiking,
splitting—

Church bells pealing, marking one more hour
you have not been saved.
The cathedral is ancient
and as magnificent as the sky
it brushes bruises against—

There are warped blotches
in the blushed glass window panes,
smearing the cheeks
of disciples.

With a monument to Mary leering
over my shoulder, peaceful
hands clasped, I can
almost feel
her warm breath on my cheek
against the chill—
I wonder what believers see
in their cathedral. If
their conviction
in a God
makes their precipice for worship
just as beautiful—

(and haunting, haunting, always haunting-)

—as I find it now.



Peculiar Tapestry

from *Boudin: Photographs of
Evangelical Southern Charm*
Brian Laws

Photography
Taken in Alexandria, Louisiana

Block C

.....
Camille Millier

This is Warden Hartwell McCullen of Rosenbaum State Penitentiary trying to reach District Attorney Steve Zenotov. Friday, September 27th, 2163. 10:42 PM. Calling to report an accident involving prisoner 339 and Officer Brett St. John, guard in charge of Block C. Full report with details will be filed and sent to the office as soon as possible. This has been a terrible inconvenience, will need a temporary replacement guard immediately. End transmission.

Thursday, September 26th - 8:52 AM.

Brett St. John exhaled smoke as he leaned against the stone wall just below the stairs leading up to the giant, ancient doors of Rosenbaum State Penitentiary. He sweated underneath the militant green pea coat and matching peaked cap of the uniform in the early fall air. Down the hill a distance, the ocean crashed at the edge of the grounds. The great, stately fortress structure of the prison and the ocean must look beautiful from the water to an outsider. The insomnia was getting bad again. In fact, he couldn't remember a time in his life that he didn't have difficulty sleeping. Even in his blurry childhood. But today was just another day like all the rest.

"Officer St. John!"

Brett looked over to see Alexander Snodgrass strolling toward him, holding up a hand in front of his face to shield his eyes from the sun. Alex was the young guard in charge of Block D. He had dark brown hair and the demeanor and attitude of a chipper character from an old film. He treated every encounter with Officer St. John as if he were

greeting an older brother home from college for the first time.

“Morning, Alex.” Brett dropped the cigarette butt and scraped it with the toe of his shiny dress shoe.

“Gee, am I nervous,” Alex said with a breathless laugh. “I’m getting a new one in today. Warden McCullen said he’s an armed robber. Made away with about two million down in Westmore ‘fore they caught him.”

Brett nodded as Alex continued, before turning to walk up the stone steps while Alex trailed alongside, still talking excitedly and looking at Brett for approval, through the doors, down one hall, and then another. “I bet he won’t be so tough though. Say, it’s not as exciting as your job. That’s a fine gun you have there. I wish I could be on the block with the automatons. You’d never know what to expect.” And then “Okay, see ya later, Officer St. John,” as Brett opened the steel door to Block C and tagged out the night-shift guard.

Block C was the smallest of the prison, with only twenty cells lining the hall and only about five of them ever occupied at a time. There were no cots or toilets or sinks in these cells, just concrete walls. Although they were almost indistinguishable from humans now, the automatons didn’t need any of those comforts. They only required a confined space to stay in for a few days until a government truck came to pick them up and take them to the CTM—Center for Technology and Machinery—to be shut down. Automatons used to have a kill switch on their bodies, at the beginning when they were made of steel pipes and gears. But too many instances occurred in which the switch was accidentally bumped or pushed, resulting in a perma-

nent waste of a perfectly good automaton. Now they had to be shut down officially if they malfunctioned, short-circuited, or wreaked havoc.

Officer St. John walked down the hall and looked into the occupied cells. Printed on the labels outside the bars were the prisoner number, model number, and reason for confinement. *Prisoner 336, model number CV 4.568 X, short-circuit, killed family dog and destroyed home. Prisoner 335, model number CV 6.889 J, corrupted SIM chip, seduced male owner, caught by wife. Prisoner 338, model number CV 8.113 L, malfunctioning hard drive, could not understand simple tasks—did opposite.* And so on.

Brett sat down at his desk, placed at the end of the hall. The job was easy, to make sure none of the inferior beings caused any trouble. They usually didn’t, and he would spend his time reading. He had never had a chance to use the gun. It was a revolver loaded with highly magnetized pellets, designed to destroy an automaton’s main circuit board, or at the very least, wipe the hard drive, reverting the machine to a dull yet docile personality. He was given the gun on his first day, five years ago. Warden McCullen had handed it to him delicately, ran a hand through his own white hair and looked intensely at Brett.

“It won’t be necessary very often, but I’ve had to use one a time or two before. Believe me when I tell you these no-good pieces of tin are strong, and it ain’t worth you or anyone else’s life to clam up in the moment. So if one of ‘em gets outta line, don’t hesitate to take the motherless bastard out.”

• • •

The steel door crashed open and in came Warden McCullen and Alex, each struggling to hold onto one armpit of the automaton between them, who dragged his knees on the tiled floor. The automaton was a male, with curly brown hair that flipped vigorously as he convulsed and snarled. He was wearing a dirty white t-shirt and black jeans. Brett sprang from his chair and helped push the machine into one of the empty cells. The other automaton inmates slowly walked to the front of their cells and watched curiously. Prisoner 338 stood up straight in his gray suit and turned his head to see the action, while prisoner 336 hugged his knees and rocked back and forth on the floor inside his cell, his shoulders twitching up and down from the excitement. Prisoner 337, who had caused a six-car pileup on the highway while driving his owner to an optometry appointment, stuck his arms through the bars and yelled, with extreme volume, "We got a live one!"

The three men panted. McCullen wiped sweat from his forehead.

"Sir, what's the deal?" Brett asked. "You didn't say anything about this."

McCullen caught his breath and sighed.

"It's bad. Just happened. He needed to be contained immediately."

Just then, the new prisoner slammed his body against the bars and made the officers spring backwards.

"Come to my office, St. John."

Thursday, September 26th - 9:05 PM.

"Hey, St. John," Warden McCullen called as Brett

crossed the office door threshold.

"Don't work too hard or you'll become one of 'em yourself."

The warden laughed, and Brett said, "Will do."

Brett carried the newly written label to the newly occupied cell and hung it on the tiny hook. *Prisoner 339, model number CV 5.600 X, strangled elderly owner with rope until dead.*

"Hey." A scratchy voice came from inside the cell. He appeared to be sitting with his back against the side wall, but only his legs and dirty work boots were visible. Brett slowly turned his head back.

"What's wrong, prettyboy?" The prisoner cackled an airy laugh. He appeared in the light as he neared the front of his cell. He extended an open palm through the bars.

"My name is Jamie," the automaton said.

Officer St. John looked at the hand with its shiny white skin, and then up at the prisoner's face. His eyes were still and tranquil, focused on the officer's own green eyes. So different from this morning, when his glass eyeballs were rolling back in their synthetic sockets.

"Your name is Prisoner 339." Brett said slowly, "and you are not to speak to me unless I speak to you first." He turned and left Jamie there, hand still outstretched.

Thursday, September 26th - 11:15 PM.

Brett sank deeper into his leather couch and swallowed the rest of the vodka tonic. His tie was draped around his neck at both sides and the starched white button-down was loosened to reveal a gray-

stained T-shirt. Victoria appeared from the small kitchen with a refill in her hand. She was wearing a tight red dress and her chestnut hair was swept back into shiny rolls. She folded herself onto the couch next to Brett and stroked his strawberry-blond hair. Silver and diamonds glittered on her wrist.

“Are we gonna do somethin’ or what?” she asked. For whatever reason, she was programmed with a Jersey accent.

“No,” he said.

She scoffed. “I’ve just never had a customer who wants me to pour ‘em drinks and sit next to ‘em.”

“Then go,” Brett moaned, closing his eyes and leaning his head against the back of the couch.

She looked at him apologetically. “What’s on your mind, love?”

He looked at her. She was pretty, he supposed. She better be, for the price her owner was charging. Philonels Robertson—the town treasurer who owned over fifty female automatons and sold them off wearing revealing clothing and smelling like a French bath house for \$500 a night.

He rubbed his eyes. “I got a new prisoner today.”
“...and?”

“He murdered his owner.”

Victoria looked confused.

“Sometimes I just feel like,” he thought for a moment, “every day is the same. I do the same thing over and over. I don’t want to become so robotic, mundane.”

Brett knew she didn’t understand. He told her never mind, and kissed her unnaturally firm red lips.

“Same time next week?”

Brett lay awake in bed like every night he could remember. Tonight, he blamed his insomnia and lack of sex drive on recurring thoughts about Prisoner 339. The glassy, empty eyes that stared through him. The eyes that watched the brutal death of its human owner. Brett had predicted it a long time ago—the automatons were going to be the downfall of humanity. The fatal flaw that would develop into mindless evil, created by humans themselves.

Friday, September 27th – 2:30 PM.

Prisoner 336 made a constant buzzing noise in his cell. Prisoner 335 sang softly to herself. Brett sat at his desk, scribbling his initials down the side of the twenty-five page cell maintenance report.

“Hey,” a scratchy voice came in a hoarse whisper from a cell on the left row.

Brett shifted his eyes from the paper up to the source of the sound. After a few seconds, he continued the report.

“Officer St. John,” came the whisper again. It was Prisoner 339. He sounded as if he had an urgent secret to reveal. Brett ignored it.

It came again a few seconds later, louder this time.

“Officer St. John. Hey! Come here.”

Brett’s chair scraped the floor as he forced it back and strode to Cell 5, where Prisoner 339 stood, hands wrapped around two bars like a child at the zoo. Brett stared at him in disgust and expectation.

Prisoner 339 scanned the officer’s chiseled face and made a grin that evolved into a high-pitched, insane laugh.

“What do you want, filth?” Brett snarled.

“Jamie,” Prisoner 339 responded.

Brett laughed.

“I will not call you by name like an equal.”

“Suit yourself,” Jamie hummed, “but we’re more equal than you know.”

Brett told the prisoner to shut the fuck up, and turned to walk away when his arm was caught with a crushing grip through the bars.

“Wait, listen,” Jamie pleaded. He licked his lips and his eyes darted around before settling back on Brett’s face. “I want to talk to you. Outside of this cell.” He suddenly looked concerned. “Trust me, it’s something you *need* to know. Please.” Jamie loosened his grip and gently let go of the officer’s arm.

Brett glared at the prisoner, and straightened his own rumpled jacket. Jamie’s automaton eyes looked desperate and pleading. Brett decided to humor the prisoner with a little metaphorical game of wit, which he would most definitely win against a lowly, scum-of-the-earth creation. It could be entertaining, if nothing else. If anything happened, he had the gun at his hip.

“You get five minutes. Later tonight,” Brett said.

Jamie’s eyes darted. “Thank you for trusting me, Officer.”

Brett turned around and gave the automaton a sharp look.

“I don’t trust you,” he said coldly. “I’m just bored.”

Friday, September 27th – 10:15 PM.

Brett lit a cigarette and stared across his desk at the disheveled automaton sitting on the chair opposite

him. Jamie was rocking slightly, rubbing his hands on his knees.

Brett exhaled smoke.

“Talk.”

Jamie watched the officer smoking for a few seconds before speaking.

“You’re a man of your pleasures, I see,” he said.

Brett took another drag and quoted a favorite vintage *film noir*.

“What else is there in life, I ask you?” Brett smiled, partly impressed by his slight to the automaton.

Jamie smirked.

“You know, it’s funny...” he trailed off. “I’ve always been intrigued by the concept of being human. I mean, as I sit here and have this conversation and I wonder...what’s the difference, *really*, between a human and an automaton?”

“I’ll tell you the difference, my friend,” Brett said. He reached into a bottom drawer of his desk to pull out a clear glass and a bottle of amber liquid, expensive brandy labeled year 2105. He poured the alcohol into the shallow glass and lifted it, as if giving a toast.

“I, for example, can enjoy this brandy. I can smoke cigarette, I can make love to a woman.” He looked Jamie in the eyes. “Furthermore, I’m capable of a higher level of thought and consciousness than you could even *try* to understand.”

Jamie leaned forward, not breaking eye contact.

“Actually, Officer St. John,” he said “they’re beginning to adapt automatons to be able to partake in human pleasures, such as food, drinks.”

He looked at Brett. “Want me to prove it?”

Brett slowly poured another glass of brandy and slid it cautiously across the desk, staring suspi-

ciously at the machine opposite him.

Jamie tipped it back and poured it down his throat, letting out a sharp sigh afterwards. He set the glass down and looked at Brett. Brett watched in horror.

"I'll still never understand the appeal, so you got me there," Jamie said about the alcohol.

"Unfortunately they still haven't mastered the sleep or sex thing, though." He shot the officer a mischievous grin. "Tell me, Brett, do you *actually* do those things?"

"I have insomnia," Brett quickly answered.

Jamie laughed hysterically.

"Officer, I disagree with what you said earlier. In a way, I have a level of consciousness that *you* will never be able to understand. Because I know things that you'll never accept."

Brett clenched his fists, digging short nails into soft palms.

Jamie continued. "You and I. We're actually very much alike." He smiled in reminiscence. "I knew from the second I first saw you."

"Shut the fuck up!"

Jamie laughed. "It's clever, really. To create such a perfect prison guard, programmed to hate his prisoners."

Brett shook his head back and forth violently, as if trying to stop the input of sound and words flowing through his brain.

"You really are a magnificent creation," Jamie said.

Brett reached across the desk and grasped Jamie by his dirty shirt collar, pulling him close with extreme force. He talked in a harsh, breathless voice into the small gap between their faces.

"I am not like you. You're a useless, filthy piece

of metal covered in rubber meant to look like the human form," he growled. "You're a perversion of nature."

Jamie looked at Brett's still, focused eyes, and then began to laugh the same high-pitched, insane laughter he had on the first night in his cell. Just then, he pulled the officer over the desk and slammed him onto the concrete floor. Brett fought back, with equal force, bringing Jamie down with him. Within two seconds, Jamie was standing, pointing Brett's own gun at the officer's chest.

"I just want you to see."

The gunshot echoed through the long hallway of Block C.

The magnetized bullet drove through Officer St. John's chest as if it knew it was on a mission. It traveled through skin, metal, and through the fundamental hard drive. The information was destroyed—Brett's first day at the prison, the pixelated memory of a red-haired mother driving them to the grocery store, the conversations with Alexander Snodgrass, the hatred for automatons, all fizzled out like a broken firework. The bullet continued and obliterated the main circuit board. Nothingness.

A few seconds later, Warden McCullen crashed through the steel door, his tie blown over his shoulder. Alexander came through after him, looking frantic and nervous. They both beheld the scene in front of them. The warden turned and walked in a panicked circle while pulling on his disheveled white hair. Alexander looked like he might cry.

McCullen kicked the bars of a nearby cell and the

the sound rang out through the hall. “God damn it,” he yelled “They said this wouldn’t happen!”

Alex collected himself and jumped into action, grabbing Prisoner 339 hard by the back of the neck and forcing him into an open cell, angrily yelling something about the motherless piece of trash. They regrouped and both stared down at Officer St. John—his handsome pale face motionless with eyes closed, just above the open cavity in his chest where twisted metal shone. The last tiny flame went out with a final electrical *pop*.

Friday, September 27th – 10:38 PM.

Warden McCullen sat down in his dark office rubbing his forehead. He shakily lit a cigarette and sighed smoke. He pulled the transmission machine across his desk, picked up the receiver, and began to speak.

Friday, September 27th – 12:02 AM.

McCullen watched as the Center for Technology and Machinery professionals closed the final seal on the large, rectangular wooden box. One of them muttered something about how it was a shame—a waste of one of the most advanced experimental automatons of the age. “Yeah,” the other replied, “They haven’t even started adapting them for the market yet.” The first man carefully taped the label to the lid of the box.

For disposal at the CTM.

Model Number: CX 10.650 J

Fatal gunshot wound - unrepairable.





Dangerous
Sara Todd

Drawing on Illustration
Board, Digital
15" x 9"

iron

Taylor Dooley

i taste iron in my mouth
the insides of my cheeks and lips picked raw
nervous animal scratchings of teeth and tongue caged in
i taste iron in my mouth and feel pinpricks in my skin
settling in all my physical signs of stress and anxiety
because as much as i try to hide my doctor can still see
the outbreaks of reddened skin betraying me
and the tiny lacerations in my soft pink cheeks
and the cracks and wear in my back molar teeth
revealing sleepless nights and sleepless days
with purple packed bags and exposed eyelid veins
and volcanic eruptions revealing emotional fault lines
best left undiscovered and lost to time
so yes, i taste iron in my mouth
because i need to be reminded of what i'm made of
comforted by the constancy of continued existence
there is an insistence to pick at what i know to be real
the iron in my veins, knowing it'll eventually heal

A Water Bucket With Holes

— — — — —
Dontae C. Hayden

Saturday

My favorite time is bonding
with my sister.
Early morning at a local café,
we sit in the front
next to a corner window:
a first-class view of the patrons
coming and going.
The high sun stretches across
our spread of breakfast.
Our conversation flows
like the catchy rhythm
of a jazz tune.
This is my sister,
my closest kin, so I confide,
“Loni, I lost my virginity!”

Sunday

After family dinner, I hang around
the kitchen helping Ma
and Aunt Carol
scrape plates, rinsing
and placing them in the washer.
No sounds but the clinking
of dinnerware
and the cadence of breathing.
That’s unusual for Aunt Carol and Ma,
so I ask, “why are y’all so quiet?”
A quick glance between the two,
one I was not to see.
Ma answers, “I was just thinking,
I hope you used protection.”

One and the Same
Lifan Fan

Charcoal on Paper
22" x 42"



Out Clocking In

Sanad Said El-Rahaiby

It's a strange fascination,
an obsession some fable
the impression dirty people
work in the kitchen tall tales
saliva dribble dashes of hair,
a touch here a touch
there unwashed hands
covered in shit. Well we are
some dirty fucks.
But not with our craft,
our lifestyle is unsanitary,
our sanity found through vices
Mgs of sweat orange amphetamine
power, chalky white pebbles
of painless bliss, smoke
em if you got em—
plywood tan and stop
light green—degenerate drinkin
at its finest, bourbon
blacked out brown

cheap vodka clear our lifestyle
is unhealthy, treating each other
like shit the kitchen fucks
the dining room— egos grope balls
silver backed alpha males pounding
pussies and chests with helmet fists
chauvinistic kitchen men talk
about who fucked and sucked,
using the word banging
(the verb and adjective)
server's yoga pants spandexed ass.
The dining room
fucks the kitchen
waitresses steal hearts
left hand gripping tips
right hand red
holding someone's throbbing muscle
Relationship found
ending bad:
Sinatra song.



Denial

Alyx Kopie

Plastic, Paint, Faux
Grass, Tobacco, Skoal
Container

3" x 3"

Permafrost

.....
John Erby

The door still hasn't opened. It's locked from the inside. I'm sitting in the garage, like a schmuck, one sleeve reeking like whiskey because liquor makes me clumsy. On one of my first dates with Colleen I spilled half a fifth of Makers Mark on my pants and stunk the whole night. But, despite the smell, her eyes stayed lit up like the prettiest Christmas ornaments on my *nonna's* tree.

...but she don't look at me like that no more.

She don't need to, because now we got Lola. Lola's my life now, and she hates it. The bitch is jealous of her own daughter. When I used to beg Colleen not to leave, after spending hours getting called every low-down name in the book, she knew it was because I loved her. She would threaten to leave me every day and I'd put up with it, but the light in my eyes has dimmed too. Now she sees it fade back into my head along with the rest of my rolling eyeballs when she calls me a dumb, lazy "Eye-talian." The only time that light fires up is when she threatens to take off with Lola, and she knows it.

Colleen wants me to want her, despite her every attempt to make me feel like less than a man, and now she knows that the only thing that scares me is the thought of some other son of a bitch tucking my little girl in at night. I'll be goddamned if I gotta wait until the fuckin weekend to see my daughter and have her tell me stories about what some *pompinara* is doing around my house with my family. Fuck that. I'll put up with it. I'll tuck my tail between my legs. I'll play my part. *Figurati*, I've been through worse.

It's been an hour now and the door still ain't moved. Three more shots and four more cigarettes and she ain't budging. Sooner or later, one of us is gonna break.

I can't just keep sitting here. It's colder than a penguin's *stugots* outside, but at least I got better scenery than a dirty garage and a door that ain't opening. Plus, it feels good to stand back and take a good look at my hard work—a clear driveway after a blizzard. Twelve fuckin inches of snow and just about every other *jamoook* around here is parked in the street, but not us. I've been goin out there every hour like fuckin clockwork, and shoveling the whole damn thing only to look behind me and see the freshly cleaned cement covered with another quarter-inch of snow.

It's fuckin discouraging, I'll tell ya that, to watch your effort and sweat covered up by the same shit you're cleaning—like an old lady I seen on TV, who spent her life-savings on a store, trying to mop up water during a hurricane. *Figuarti*. I put on my boots and coat and hat, and I drag my ass out there; the whole time thinking of something my old man said to me as a boy. He said, “What's the difference between getting four inches of snow and a foot? The difference is, if you get four inches of snow, by morning that's just what you got, four inches of snow. If you get a foot of snow, by morning you got nine inches of snow covering up three inches of ice.”

I used those words to push me to pick up that goddamn shovel again and walked back outside in whatever the fuckin temperature is; I ain't for

sure. The fuckin rooster thermometer only reads to zero. Every time I go out she's yelling, “You're just wasting your time! It's just going to keep snowing, dummy!”

I know it's gonna keep snowing bitch! That's why I'm doing it. That's why I got goddamn icicles hanging off my beard from the sweat freezing before it drips. She acts like I'm enjoying being out here; like I'd rather be alone outside in this shit than inside with her where it's warm and cozy. Maybe I would, but regardless, she's jealous of everything. She'd get jealous of the clouds if I spent more than a few minutes looking at 'em. I don't know. Maybe she's right. Maybe I am a dummy.

Well, we've got a long ass drive way so I got to take breaks here and there. I ain't proud of it. I know I could stand to lose a few pounds, but that ain't the point. So I was on the fuckin porch, taking a break and having a cigarette. Colleen was inside with Lola, glaring at me through the window. She keeps pointing to her wrist like she's wearing a watch. I know what she means. Lola's been itching to go sledding for days now and I promised we'd take her to the park. But that ain't what Colleen was hinting at, well, not specifically, fuckin junky. She just wanted me to come deal with Lola so she could get high. She loves breaking my balls. I love making her wait.

It was so peaceful outside; as quiet as I can ever remember. Don't get me wrong, I love my kid more than anything God created, or man has plans to, but peace and quiet don't come easy in my household. So when I get a whiff, I take as big a

drag as I can.

The mayor had called it that hour. Our city was on red alert. To live in New York, and have the authorities get caught with their pants down when you get hit with bad weather is quite the fuckin thing. Where did these jack-offs grow up? They don't know it snows in the winter?

Anyways, we're in the fuckin red. That means no traveling for any reason unless it's an emergency. So you don't hear no car horns, no bus breaks, no garbage trucks, no nothing.

It was completely, perfectly silent. The only sounds were tree branches cracking under the weight of the snow. It was like an opera. Like nature's goddamn orchestra, or poetry or something. I would've invited Colleen out to enjoy it with me, but the only sight she finds beautiful is her own reflection in a spoon.

But now, a few hours later, it's about ten degrees colder and the wind is a son of a bitch, so I figure I'll just deal with the garage until she's done throwing her little hissy fit and lets me in the damn house. Driveway does look pretty damn good though. I open the side door and who do I see sitting in my chair, tying off? My wife, my junky, the love of my life, the pain in my ass. *Che palle*.

I should've listened to my parents. They wanted me to marry a nice Italian girl and settle down near the old neighborhood. For their generation, they'd come so far. To have an apartment, or better yet a nice Brownstone, surrounded by your own people, that was the dream. God, it was beautiful at Christ-

mas time. Everybody put candles in their windows. It looked like a fuckin Hallmark card, I shit you not. I should've stayed and been a candle maker and made millions. Oh well, *figurati*.

I should have listened to my old man, but I didn't. I met Colleen in '84 and we were married by the next summer. I swear I couldn't tell you if my mother's tears at my wedding were from happiness or sadness. Colleen was Polish Protestant, swore like a sailor, and broke a fuckin beer bottle over some mooly's head the first time I seen her. I was in love.

Needless to say, my parents wasn't too fond of Colleen, and she didn't exactly make much of an effort to win 'em over. It was the '80s and coke was everywhere. I was supposed to set an example for my little brother Joey and I was high all the goddamned time. My parent's always blamed Colleen, but it was me that got her started.

At the time, Joey was 17 and I was 21. Our older brother Vincenzo Jr. would've been 24, but he died four years earlier. One weekend my parents went out of town to visit my Aunt Rita and Uncle Carlo, leaving us boys home alone. I left to hang out with my pals, met some girl, and didn't come back home until Sunday morning. And when I did I was only inside fast enough to change clothes and run back out to play basketball. Nobody knew about Vincent until Sunday night when my parents got home. I was in the shower when I heard the screams. I go sliding out of the bathroom and run in to see my old man cutting Jr. down. I look over and Joey's sitting in the living room watching the TV like nothing's going on. Ma's screaming her head off and the

old man's yelling at her to shut up, pounding on Vincent's chest, and yelling at me, asking me how long was he up there. I tell him I don't know so he asks me when the last time I seen him was, and while I'm stammering around the fact that I ain't been home all fuckin weekend, from the living room, Joey calmly says, "Saturday. He's been hanging there since Saturday."

A year or so later, I asked Joey about that weekend, and he said he couldn't remember much; like he blacked out. He said he could only remember how quiet and still everything was – the little he remembered was in slow motion. He said he saw Jr.'s feet first and then his church ties that he'd knotted together to make the noose. What Joey remembered most was the hook Jr. had drilled into the ceiling to hang from. It was one of ma's flowerpot hangers. The one she'd accused Mrs. Moretti of taking four months earlier. Jr. had been hiding it for four fuckin months.

He didn't leave a note. Joey noticed that too and thought about writing one, but our parents knew his handwriting. He said he thought of everything but cutting him down. He didn't know why. He just stood there and everything in his world just froze.

A kid goes through something like that and he can't rely on his big brother to be there for him. I was too busy chasing ass and being an all-around selfish little prick. Once I met Colleen, nobody else mattered anymore. We fought like rabid fuckin dogs, but I couldn't get enough of her. We'd just moved to Yonkers in '86 when she found out she was pregnant. She got an abortion and never told

me. I found out because the dumb *puttana* put the hospital papers in an old shoe box. I found em a few years later when I was looking for Lola's baby pictures. It would've been a boy. My son.

A little slap on the arm, a flick of the syringe, and in goes the needle. Now, Colleen's got a giant shit-eating grin on her face. Her head rolls around on her neck then slumps right and back down. It used to be fun. It was recreational or whatever. Now, she needs the shit just to get through the day. Lola's taking a nap, she tells me, followed by her yelling to shut the fuckin door and that Boobie, her dealer, is on his way. I tell her, for the hundredth time, that I ain't gonna allow this shit in my home no more, and she says, for the hundredth time, that if I don't like it, then she'll take Lola and move far away somewhere where it won't bother me. Now this is normally the part where I start yelling how that ain't never gonna fucking happen, and that if she tries some dumb shit like that I'll kill her. And normally she'll let out a little giggle, like what I'm saying is funny but so insignificant that it ain't worthy of a full laugh—what a bitch.

But this time I don't blow up. I keep my cool and shrug that shit off. Because, normally, that would be about the same time that I'd turn around and see Lola standing there crying, and it makes me sick to my fucking stomach. Colleen would always reach out for her, but Lola wouldn't move. What she seen wasn't her mother. It was just a corpse that looked like her.

Figurati. I don't give a shit. I got the big TV inside and Miami Vice is on. Those two jackoffs can freeze

their asses off in the garage because they ain't bringin that shit inside around my kid. I get a pot of coffee going so I don't look hammered when Lola wakes up. I go change into some warm socks and clothes, and splash a little water on my face. This ain't bad, just watching some TV by myself. Somethin don't feel right though. Somethin's off—like one of those puzzles where you gotta find the differences between the rooms. I felt it in the garage and I feel it now. She *de-feng shuis* everything.

I glance around the room: TV, VCR, old TV that the new TV is sitting on, the Nintendo...where's the Nintendo? You gotta be shitting me! That's where she went this morning when she said she was visiting her mother. She pawned my goddamn Nintendo for dope money.

I'm pissed, right? So, I go over and fling the door open fast so she can't interrupt me while I'm yelling at her. I probably should've just opened it normal. Something about the suddenness of what I see breaks the time barrier.

Colleen lying on the floor with foam and shit coming out of her mouth. Her eyes are wide fuckin open, staring right at me. You can imagine what I look like lunging to pick her up and dragging her inside; the fuckin dog jumping all over the goddamn place while I'm sitting there Indian style with her head flopping around in my lap like a fish that don't realize it's already dead, smacking her across the face with one left hand, trying to wake her up, while I try to dial 911 with my free hand.

You can imagine how comically sad this scene is—like something out of a Tarantino movie. You can imagine all you want, but none of that shit happens.

I don't move a fuckin muscle. I just stand there. Everything's frozen. My brain goes into hibernate mode and I can't even muster a reaction—no helpful ones, at least. I soak in the scene, the side door I left cracked just to piss her off, the record player, the shitty little TV, the card table with her Marlboros, my Walkman, an empty ba...

That's what was wrong before. The baggy was empty. She'd just copped two days earlier and her supply usually ran her a week, and then she mentioned Boobie who usually comes by on Fridays, not Sundays. She shot at least double her normal dosage. *Che cazzo?* What was she thinking? She had to know what would happen!

Now I know what Joey meant, but I ain't got the words to describe it, so I ain't gonna try.

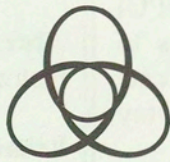
After God knows how long, I take a step back, close the door, and lock it. I gotta do something to get Lola outta here. I don't want that distorted face I just saw being her last memory of her mother. I'll take her to the park like I said then swing by my aunt's and get her to watch Lola while I go but I promised Lola and kids don't seem to give a fuck about the cold anyways. So I wake her up, get her bundled up, make a few phone calls, grab the sled, and we make our way to the park. She tells me that momma said we'd have fish sticks and ice cream for dinner. I tell her that sounds like a great idea.

Halfway down the street and I see Boobie driving by. Fuck him. He can deal with the cops when they respond to the anonymous tip I called in. I look down at Lola hopping in the snow like a rabbit. She's a spitting image of her mother, from the blonde hair to the green eyes, but her temperament reminds me of my ma. God damn it, Colleen! She could've got her shit together; hell, we both got issues we gotta take care of, but we could've done it together.

Was I that bad? Was this life so bad? Life with me?

Figurati, I mumble to myself, and Lola asks what it means. I tell her that it's Italian. It means Don't worry about it. Life goes on. It ain't the end of the world.





Contributors

Amy Applegate is a senior Painting major at Herron School of Art and Design. She plans on pursuing either her MFA or her MA in Art Therapy after she completes her undergraduate degree.

Katherine Babbs is from Spencer, Indiana

Michael Beck is a humble jokester.

Claire Christoff is a sophomore studying English with a concentration in creative writing. She enjoys breakfast food, felt-tip pens, and rooms with a view.

Joanna Conrad is a mother, an aspiring librarian, and a graduating creative-writing student.

Taylor Dooley is currently a junior at IUPUI majoring in Philanthropic Studies and plans to do what she can to help. She lives with two cats in Irvington and writes poetry as a means to stay awake during class.

Carley Drake is a freshman at IUPUI studying English.

Sanad Said El-Rahaiby - After finishing his English degree, he plans to pursue a career in advertising, or he may find himself working on a golf course with a permanent summer's tan in South Carolina while pondering water and oxygen.

John Erby - Dedicated to Madeleine Sarou Erby.

Lifan Fan is currently a student at the Herron School of Art and Design. She is currently in her foundation year and deciding between painting and drawing and illustration as a major. She likes art, cats, and playing ultimate Frisbee.

Danielle Graves - Currently a junior at Herron School of Art and Design working on a Bachelors in Illustration with hopes to travel the world and teach art to others after graduation.

Dontae C. Hayden is an English Creative Writing major. She's been a part time student at IUPUI since 2009. Dontae works at Indiana Department of Workforce Development full time. After years of aspiring – since childhood – Dontae is finally working towards her dream of becoming a professional writer.

Kurumi Kita is an international student from Japan. When she paints, takes a photo, or makes a fashion accessory, she is often inspired by her favorite music and dream/daydream.

Alyx Kopie is a sculpture major minoring in art history and creative writing.

Brian Laws is a 1st year graduate student in the Applied Anthropology program at IUPUI. Most of his photographs detail notable locations and daily events of Southern life in Louisiana and Texas.

Alexandra Makris is an undergraduate at Herron School of Art and Design who is part art history geek and part painter. Her favorite subjects are trees.

Thierry Menchhofer - Adventures in the South and out West, as well as recognizing my roots in the Midwest, inspire my works of poetry and prose. P.S. I lost my nose in a book. If you happen to find it then you should probably read that book.

Contributors

Camille Millier is a junior at IUPUI studying Creative Writing and Film Studies. She wishes to continue writing and travelling after college. Adventures are the best inspiration.

Joseph Murphy is an English major with a creative writing concentration at IUPUI. His writing interests are non-genre specific and he enjoys authoring poetry, non-fiction, and fiction alike. In literature and writing he is searching for the meaning and humor in life's smaller moments.

Jessica Naviaux is 20 years old, a graduate of Avon High School, an ex-Fazolis pasta chef, and a Biology major at IUPUI. She writes poetry in her free time and hopes to continue to use it to frustrate her mother and her friends in the future.

Alexis Nunnelley is a Painting major at Herron School of Art and Design.

Erica Parker is an independent artist based in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is anticipating graduating Herron School of Art and Design with a Bachelor of Integrated Studio Practices in May of 2016. Her focus is primarily drawing and inking, with moderate experience with lithography and screen-printing. Erica plans to migrate towards the west and continue to expand her studies after graduation.

Sara Todd is a Drawing & Illustration student at Herron. She has been creating since she can remember and she will keep making art all her life because it's what she loves.

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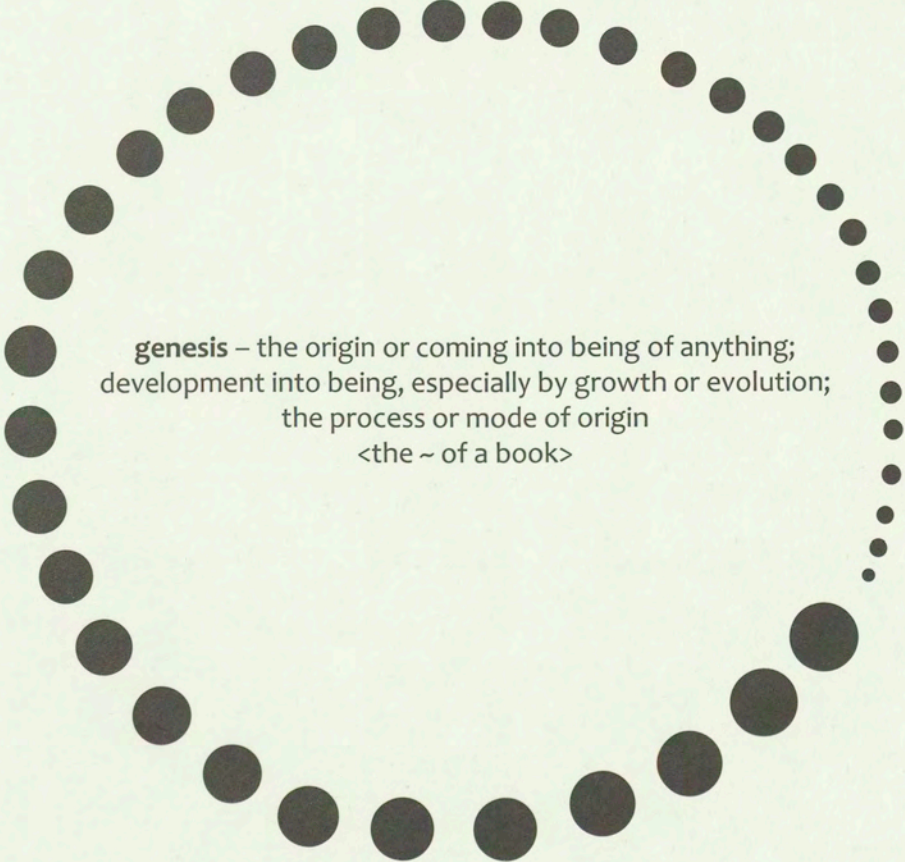
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