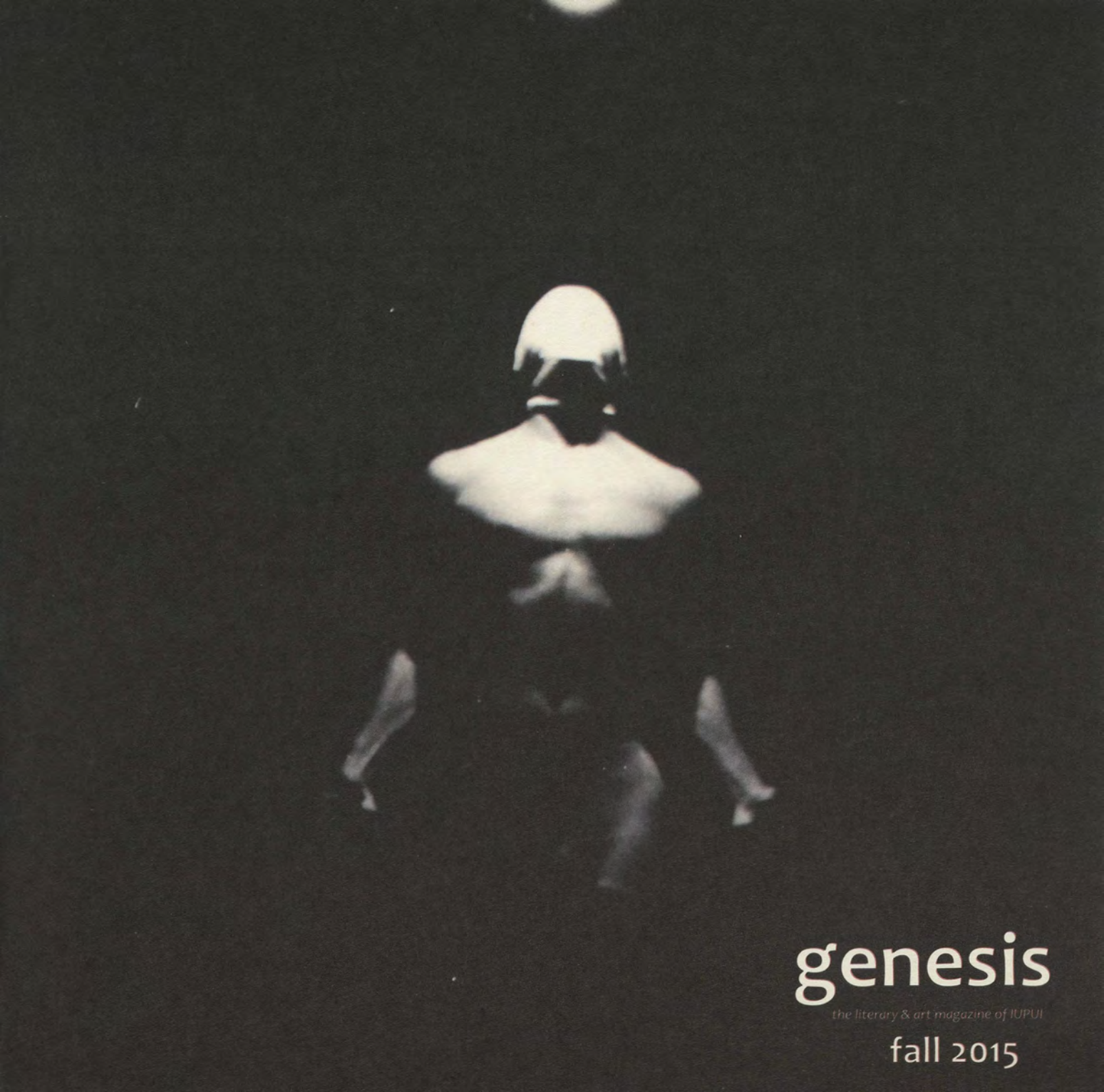

genesis

the literary & art magazine of IUPUI

fall 2015

| Staff |

Editors' Note

Dear readers,

As much as it's anything else, *genesis* is a celebration of our wonderfully diverse campus community. In this issue, you'll find work by mothers and fathers and seniors and sophomores and teachers and painters and art historians and lovers and research assistants and pizza cooks and so, so much more.

The work in this issue is just as varied as its artists are. From giraffes to lions. From visual abstraction to verbal concrete. From the lilting beauty of the classic tanka to the sublime belligerence of the Craigslist ad. The uncommon, the offbeat, and the strange come together in this collection, face each other on the page, and prove once again that our differences can bring us together.

If you need any proof, just turn the page.

Read on. Write On.

Tyler Anderson, Mark Luechtefeld, and Caleb Waggoner
Managing Editors

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the Literary & Art Magazine
of IUPUI

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Keegan Cooper

Last Chug of Whiskey Before Tying the Knot

They found the bottle on the lawn chair next to the tree.
Your cover's blown. Someone's been drinking.
Last conversation you had was with your dad.
You mentioned your plan to move in with me.

Used to charm the birds from their nesting places,
calling into the trees from the backyard jungle gym,
shining from above. Bowl cut, olive skin,
subtle smile fixed to your seven-year-old face—
where did you go?

Forever bound to the branch in matrimony,
your honeymoon among Elysian green.
Beautiful, isn't it.
Anniversaries we'll never see.
Future children who'll never grow to be.
Severing the rest of your life from your family.
You really tied the knot this time.

Hang above that forest floor for a hundred years
while the world changes around you,
until everyone who knows you dies.
Part of you will never leave.
But every holiday I'll hold the rest of you when
I pick you up.
Just ashes in a box.

Alexandra Makris

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." Romans 12:21

Watercolor and Paper
5x11"

Carolina Castoreno

At the Knee

I couldn't breathe! The mustard-colored walls of the drab camper inched towards the middle of the truck bed, the tight space shrinking more and more. My father assured me that it was a safe way to travel—six kids crammed in the back of his work truck enclosed by a camper. He was hauling us all to Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota to live for a couple of months. He said we didn't know how tough life could be and that we needed to get back to our roots. But we're Mescalero from the Apache nation, not Lakota from Rosebud. Still, he insisted that we accompany him on his quest.

We traveled endlessly on the fourteen-hour trip, which seemed eternally longer, my siblings and cousins appropriately singing the song that never ends. I clawed at the barely opened window like a caged tiger at the zoo, thirsty for fresh air and a cooling wind. Sweat flowed down my reddened face, sticking to stray hairs from my matted braids that my sister, Nicole, had piled on top of my head. She laughed at me all through Illinois, but somewhere in Iowa she took pity on me, peeling my hair off of my cheeks and running her fingers down the length of my arm in a tickling fashion. I hugged my knees close to my chest, burying my face in the space between, while she whispered in my ear "focus on the scenery."

Looking up I discovered fields of soybeans and corn stretching to the horizon. The rows were like long legs of someone racing alongside the truck. I wanted to escape and join him. My running buddy kept me distracted for a few miles at a time, but we'd pass by patches of trees or cement walls rimming the highway, and he'd disappear. Then my heart hammered against my chest again, my face itchy and my palms soaked with fear. "Daddy, please pull over! I can't breathe back here!"

"You're ridiculous!" my father barked. "Stop being so dramatic!" He dismissed my anxiety as a call for attention. I have always been reduced to "ridiculous" and "dramatic" for not wanting to be like him, for not wanting to stay in one place for long, for wanting room to breathe.

I was sure I was dying and wanted my mommy to rescue me. In my hysteria, I wondered if I'd ever see her again. Perhaps once my father finally found himself or at least came to terms with the divorce we'd go back to Indiana. I just knew I wouldn't survive that long. I had never been to South Dakota, but I knew I hated it. The agony I endured in the back of that truck assured me of that. I knew my mother wasn't

thinking of me when she allowed my father to take me on that trip in the first place. What I didn't know is why my father needed me there at all. He didn't need me any other time. I was too different from him and too much like Mom.

The truck rolled to a stop, and I could hear the gravel crunch beneath the tires. I lifted my head to peek out of the dusty plexi-glass window. A surprising rush of relief overcame me at the sight of South Dakota. I scrambled out of the vehicle, my tangled mop of hair tumbling to my shoulders like the mane of a wild beast being set free. How could I hate this place? It was a beautiful land with precious air. I could breathe!

My first steps onto those golden plains were like man's first steps on the moon. The earth was virginal and foreign, untouched by skyscrapers and highways, without a trace of cement anywhere. Soft breezes, crisp like apples plucked right off the branch, streamed through my nostrils. I thought I was breathing real air for the first time, no hints of smog. The grass, tall and blanched from the sun's rays, reached my seven-year-old waist. When the wind swooped down from the mountains, it sent ripples through the blades as if they were made of water. I wanted to swim in that grass and drown in the fresh air.

Dad had only talked about how "tough" Rez life was, kids going without coats and sometimes meals, poor health. He never spoke of the glorious patch of warmth bestowed upon the Lakota by *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit. The sea of grass, the copper-colored clay glazing the banks of the creek, and the pungent fields of sage drying in the heat…the essence tranquilized me. But in town I saw what he meant. Old car tires, rather than trees, lined the streets. Broken-down vehicles dotted the yards of lopsided trailer homes that had sheets for windows and wooden planks for doors. Rez kids ran shoeless on scorching pavement playing cowboys and Indians. "I don't want to be Indian!" one shouted. "We always lose!"

That's all outsiders ever see of the Rez. It's poverty porn. In the eyes of the privileged, the American Indian wears two faces: the headdress-toting, bow and arrow-wielding savage from the Wild West and the poor, alcoholic charity case from government land. Mission groups frequent the reservations, offering coats, toys, and Bibles but never an open-mind to another culture's ways. Even while on the front lines, the good Christians look down from their pulpits, passing out their donations at arms-length from the safety of their church bus. At seven years old, I knew nothing about it. I just wanted to run and play with those kids, proud to be the little Indian girl against their cowboys.

Despite the troubling reality of Rosebud the town, it didn't taint the pristine wilderness of the plains for me. I didn't need Mommy to comfort me; I had nature. While the rest of the family slept in the tipi every night, I curled up in a blanket near the fire underneath the stars. The sky was the deepest blue I'd ever seen, without the haze of city pollution, and occasionally a shooting star would rip through its canvas with-

out disrupting its composure. These nights, lying on my queen-sized, pillow top mattress in my suffocating apartment, I long for the openness of those South Dakota skies.

One morning as my sibling and cousins still slept, I awoke to the sound of my father stirring the coals beside me and clanging his tin coffee pot to begin a fresh brew. I startled him as I rose from my den of blankets. He smiled, a gift I was rarely treated to. "You like it out here, Mija?"

"I do, Daddy. It's beautiful out here," another rarity for me, an actual conversation with my dad.

"Do you know what is happening tomorrow?"

"No, we're not leaving, are we?"

"No," he laughed, slicing open a package of bacon he had pulled from the cooler. He moved the side of his muscle shirt to reveal the scar on his chest. I was familiar with it and its twin on the other side. "You remember how I got this?"

"Yeah," I said, biting my lip and remembering the horrible story. "The Sun Dance?"

Before I was born, my father had brought my mother and sister to Rosebud to participate in the very sacred ceremony, known to many Natives as the Sun Dance. But my father had described to me how they pierced his flesh with hooks, connecting him by ropes to a tall pole. The image gave me nightmares.

"Daddy, please don't! I don't want to see you hurt!"

My father sighed and continued to prepare breakfast for everyone. "You know, Carrie, I wish you could stop being so scared of things and start trying to understand a little more. That would make me so proud of you." As soon as the moment had begun, it ended. I would spend a lifetime hearing my father tell me how one day I will make him proud.

After breakfast, we went to the Knee. We entered through a gate with a big arch, adorned with a cross at its bend. Ribbons of red, black, white, and yellow, representing the four directions, danced on the warm gusts of wind. I recognized the large stones as graves, and I instantly clutched Nicole's hand. We were walking over dead bodies. The words "Massacre at Wounded Knee" were scrawled across a rusty sign, along with the history of that hallow ground. The biggest stone in the yard read "Dec. 29 1890," and a list of names spanned the length of each side.

I traced the carved numbers with my finger, unaware of the gravity of that date. But I felt something, not just the humidity. My father told us the story of the great battle and pointed to the hill overlooking the flat landscape that housed the mass grave of Indian ancestors whose bodies froze in the snowstorm following the bloodshed. A pool of outrage stirred inside me that day, and I collapsed in tears. The power of the Knee washed over me, cleansing me in a way, and I prayed for understanding. It felt so much more real and genuine than kneeling in a church pew reciting the same chant as everyone else: *Our father, who art in heaven*...etc. God wasn't in a

church, and she wasn't in heaven. I didn't know what to believe about a god or gods, but to this day I've never had a prayer I spoke in a cathedral answered for me. I did, however, that day at the Knee.

We drove back towards Rosebud, each of us contemplating quietly over our personal experiences. Sitting in the front seat to avoid another panic attack, I gazed out the window and noticed my father had taken a detour. We drove through the Badlands, stopping for a few moments to take in a view of the sun descending behind the earthly mosaic of jaggedly eroded buttes, rugged spires, and yawning canyons. I raced Nicole through the valley between two pinnacles, and I climbed the one to my right and waved to her as she climbed her own. The new sensation of calm breathing returned to me, as I inhaled the rustic exhilaration and exhaled with the notion that I was truly free up there.

The next day, my father arose early to begin his preparations for the ceremony. I'd already stolen away to the sage field before dawn arrived, plucking enough to fill my Care Bear-decorated tote bag and formed the leathery stems into bundles. As I approached camp, I saw my father fan out his buffalo hide and kneel facing the sunrise. He motioned for me to join him.

We didn't speak. I pulled from my bag the prettiest bundle of prairie sage and handed it to him. He placed it in an abalone shell, adding a braid of sweet grass, and began to pray in our Native tongue, N'dee (Apache). I didn't have to understand the words to know that he was praying for our family. He didn't have to understand me to know I was trying to enjoy the morning with him. When it was over, he patted me on the head and hugged me around my shoulders. He never did say he was proud of me, but I no longer needed him to.

Years later, I live in a world that stifles my spirit, where I am constantly struggling for air. Churches and rosaries never helped. Sitting through a mass would rebound me to the back of that stuffy truck. It smothered me. I traded my bible and altar long ago for an abalone shell and a bag of natural prayers. When I can't breathe I turn to my sage and sweet grass, and I pull out the postcards of South Dakota that were intended to be sent to my mother, but I kept for myself. My seven-year-old cursive writing squiggled on one side and a scene from each of my Reservation memories painted on the front of each. I burn the sacred herbs, take a knee, and inhale the intoxicating essence of freedom.

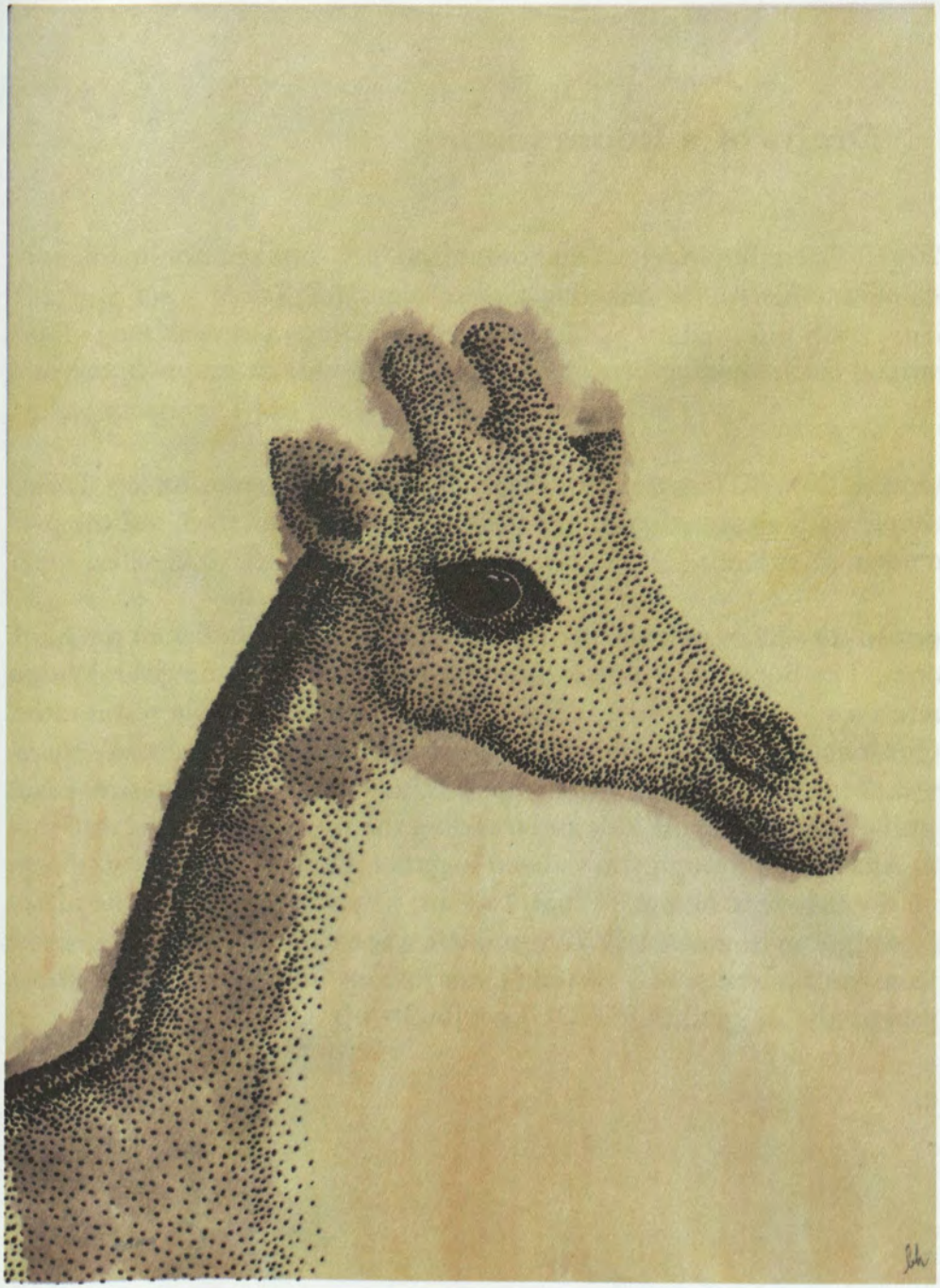
Carolina Castoreno

Doubting

Sunlight streaming through stained glass
turning the lifeless faces inside
to somber shades of scarlet and violet.
Smoky streams of rose and frankincense
wafting down each pew, watering eyes
settling on the pages of each missalette.
Restless toddlers choking on the essence
as they struggle to sit pretty and quiet for mass.

Father smiles and raises his hands.
"Padre," he is esteemed by his parish
but the word does not roll off my tongue
so easily, not with the same enchantment.
His tongue stumbles over poorly spoken Spanish,
his r's colliding hard against his gums
trying to conceal his Midwestern English accent.
Yet still I kneel and rise at his command.

Altar boys yawning as they bow and ring
the copper bells that have lost their luster
once lyrical, now as dreary as the hymns
from the off-key choir, declining in a breathy *Amen*.
Prayers uttered in droning sighs and listless mutters
Do I even believe? Where's the beauty in this grim
mourning of faith? Living only for a decaying end
or what they were told the hereafter may bring.



Brooke Henry

Giraffe

Watercolor, Ink,
Acrylic Paint, and
Dura-Lar Film
9x12"

Brooke Henry

Drafts of a Room Listing

Looking for a housemate, 20's/30's, employed, clean and organized, non-smoker, non-male, non-control-freak, non-egotistical-emotionless-lying-cheating-assface-named-Ryan.

Hiya! I'm a chill young divorced chick looking for a gal-pal to stay in my huge empty house and get drunk with me!

Looking for a female housemate, 20's/30's, employed, clean and organized, non-smoker. I have a 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom house with a view of the river – the nice part of the river, not the part where all the drug deals go down…

Looking for a female housemate, 20's/30's, employed, organized, and friendly, to live in my spare room with attached bathroom. The house is in a great location with a view of the river. Within just a few minutes walk there's a subway station, a business plaza full of delectable restaurants, and a dog park that's great for long walks at sunrise where you can observe your husband's suspicious lack of sneezing, eye-watering, or itching, even though he's told you a thousand times that he's allergic to all animals, and talk about having kids and traveling the world and all this stuff that he keeps saying is "*way in the future*" even though you've been together a long damn time and now is *way way* in the future from the first time he pulled that. I mean, why would you even lie about that stuff? Do you think it's just going to go away?? If you don't want kids or pets or to ever be more than 50 miles away from your parents, why wouldn't you just *say* that to begin with so we can both avoid all this shjqbhgpasdfghl;;;;;;;;;;;;QNNGU] gge]bu9='n][H=[BU9

Looking for a female tenant, clean and organized, driven, the type who dreams big and then really goes after her goals, preferably a college student, but not a partier, but not antisocial, who knows how to live in the moment but work toward a brighter future, to live in my spare room and be the daughter I will never ever have goddammit ryan

Looking for a female housemate, 20's/30s, employed, organized, frindy, to livein my spare room w/ attached bathrom. Great location w a river view and restaurants and subway station nearby. Rent is like 500, but if you just buy me wine thats good too

Looking for a roommate, pref. female, pref feline, pref. like 60 of em haha crazy cat lady jokes im so loveable w my self deprecating humor

Looking for a male housemate whos down to get into some edgy-romantic-comedy ish if ya know what i mean, hey hey heyyy

*

500/month utilities included private room w/ bathroom, w/d. 2 blocks from Waffle House, subway stop. No smoking. Pets ok.

Brooke Henry

Ozma of Oz

Digital Painting

Alex Nieten

Holding Cell Tankas

Scared shitless in this
little box, too scared to shit
even if I could,
no privacy in this can—
just freezing seat and cold eyes.

Second stint in here,
first public indecency—
drunk, I wet the grass
instead of my pants, wonder
if the food'll be the same.

Bologna on white
becoming a weekly meal,
and the damn *Pirates*
of the Caribbean loop
floods my brain every hour.

Head rests on my boots—
a rough pillow that reeks,
then on the cold bench,
dreams of the bottle await,
that damn bottle, sleep sets in.

Heroin withdrawal:
my dry heaves scare that pothead
in the dark corner.
I flash him my track marks for
some laughs as he cries for mom.

Sarah Bahr

Purples

Peer at your reflection
in the smooth skin of the eggplant
your father would never eat,
in the peppers that grew in your small garden,
in the glob of Heinz ketchup
you attempted to drown your green beans in.

Snuggle close to the threadbare fur
of the one-eyed dinosaur,
whose arms you clasped tightly around you
every night before going to sleep,
to the right head of a Dragon Tale,
a fleeting vision of the street sweeper
with the graveyard of stuffed
animals in its grill.

Clutch the wiffle ball scoop with which
you plucked the scratched plastic
ball tossed by your mother from the air;
study the swirling surface of the rubber ball
before it cleared the backyard fence
for the 19th time and splashed
once more into the middle of the lake.

Gulp the 44-ounce Fanta cherry
and blue raspberry gas station slushies
you and your sister downed
with your father's blessing,
rushing home to scrub your lips raw
and shine your stained teeth
before your mother could discover
your secret sin.

Listen to the late-night crackle
of the sizzling explosions that sliced
the sky once a year in July,
to the rustling of the glued, taped, and tied
array of streamers that dragged the street
behind the caravan of another
year's homecoming floats.

Marvel at the swirling particles
that stained the porcelain toilet bowl
after your sister learned
that vitamins don't flush;
stare transfixed at the bruise-
like beds of your nails
after another Indiana winter.

Try to see the allure of an amethyst ring
glistening in the glass case at JC Penney
when all you can think of are one-eyed
dinosaurs, eggplants, and the murders
of hundreds of thiamin lions.

Danny Chan

Even in Darkness We Breathe

Brenda parked the Prius and approached her dead father's 10'x15' storage unit, her canvas flats soaking up the gravel and oil-slicked rain. Brenda spotted dark sneakers propped up against the unit, dripping rainwater molasses-slow, the left shoe with frayed laces, duct tape around the right one's arch to hold together its sole. The rain had puddled in potholes, the asphalt pressed like poorly kneaded dough, thumb-printed in patches. Her car's suspension took a beating—a dusk-lit sky made the overabundant holes unavoidable.

He left this mystery in his death—the unit, nestled in the back of the canopied facility on the west side of Grand Valley, near a two-pump gas station and an abandoned market. The unit was paid for each year, in advance, and had been for over a decade. After he died, Brenda found the statement in his mail pile, three weeks stagnant and gathering dust, and the mystery continued from there, thanks to several unreturned calls from the facility owner.

Her father built a tiny cabin north of Toronto, 45 kilometers from life, from traffic, in a forest of white pine and aspen, where single-engine planes weren't audible through its density. On her way to the unit through Toronto she processed the logistics of hosting an estate sale for the things she'd undoubtedly discover: pianos with worn ivory up and down, brass trumpets and their rusted spit valves, reels of film and vinyl recordings and violin strings. The cabin made for a perfect place to compose and record his scores, to gracefully lay them overtop unedit-

ed film. But it was not suited for visitors, thus, an impossible location for an estate sale.

She reached toward a glint beside the sneakers and lifted it with her delicate fingers: a padlock, uncut, no blemishes to indicate a struggle. *Fuck, although...* A robbery would prevent her from digesting the sordid logistics of it all, sifting through his things, planning—*oh God, all the planning!*—to re-home everything.

Brenda was never good at planning, at logistics, unlike her father, who had reached for reclusivity when she was a just a child and had finished building the cabin by the time her first year at the New School ended. Brenda got her English degree and found a boyfriend and got engaged and started a novel set in the Aokigahara and broke off the engagement and cared for two stray cats and started working for a publishing company that paid her in what amounted to stale muffins and couch change and stopped her pursuit of publication and got evicted and moved back home to help her dying father place wood in the furnace and reach for plates. At thirty-years-old, she'd stopped writing and felt lost, daydreaming instead of pulling words through like thread, waiting for her father to die.

The storage unit door was cold to her cheek. Her ear and palm pressed against the aluminum ridges, slowly as to not shake its frame and alert *it*. She heard shuffling, like the slapping of just-showered feet against concrete, then a whipping snap like a shaken wet towel. Again, *fuck*. Of course *it* was another person, not the family of squirrels doing laundry behind the metal door like she'd hoped. Her father's advice would buoy between her ears: *man up*.

Brenda listened and held her breath, realizing the person inside had begun snoring by the time her toes became chilled. It was surely a man, she concluded, and one probably much older than she'd feared. The snores were phlegmy and cratered at odd intervals. She noted the similarity in this man and her father's sleeping patterns before he'd died—the infrequent breaths, the aggressive exhalations, the silence. The silence was the worst part. Each time her father became still and silent she would pick up the phone and prepare to dial his hospice nurse. Then he'd relax and begin it all again—a sleep routine developing for more than year, since the last Christmas they'd spend together. Brenda was mounding up firewood in the basement's furnace when he took his final agonal breaths underneath the wooden beams and frost-covered skylight. She wondered if he'd cried out as she bathed in sounds of crackling wood.

The intruder's snoring loudened, its reverberation behind the thin metal like canyon echo. She'd hoped for an avalanche or rockslide, but knew to *man up* meant more than prayer. In a swift movement, Brenda held her breath again and swung the door up and open, the garage pulley swaying and barking low creaks. And she gasped, not due to fright but rather an oddly surprising joyfulness, an enjoyment of sight. The inside of the storage unit was sorted and decorated: cleverly placed furniture along the walls hung fishing line and hooks, simple tools, a net

made of old plastic soda yokes; a staircase-type ladder to a raised bed, its base made entirely of shelves filled with novels; framed photos hanging on twist ties and twine from the garage door along the top railings, almost like ornaments on a Christmas tree. It was a home.

The snoring had stopped. Just silence under the diminishing growls of the door. Her eyes moved from furniture to what could be, to any sign of movement, to an old man, maybe a woman, hopefully not a child. She squinted and looked into the dimness, the garage door dripping rainwater on her wrists. In the back, atop the raised bed, she saw a shimmer from an eye, a frightened diamond of light. She croaked a call that sounded less like her own and more like her father's, but more uncertain.

"Hey, you! I see you back there, you son of a bitch. I just called the cops." *Lie.* "And my dad and his dog—his mean, vicious-as-shit dogs—are just around the corner, and they'll be here soon. To fuck you up." *You don't know who he is and what he can do, so man up.*

"Now, okay. I'm coming down. So don't—let's just stop." He mumbled toothlessly and Brenda felt disgusted with herself, but she was still fearful of this stranger who'd taken up residence within her storage unit. The man clawed out from a tattered quilt, his bare feet swinging down from the makeshift bed and onto the bookshelf. He plodded down each step, using his crooked hands to balance in the shadows. Brenda could almost hear the bones crack like crinkled plastic.

"Just go slow—slowly." Brenda thought to put her hands up like a fake pistol, her fingers clasped together and pointed at him, her thumbs like hammers cocked back. She was set to embarrass herself if it weren't for the encumbering purselet and padlock in her hand.

"Now, I'm an old man. I don't want any trouble. Let me just grab my things. I'll leave." He made his way out from the dark, bare naked, a bushy salt-and-pepper beard where his squished face should have been, gray hair down to his shoulders. He slapped his feet toward the back of the unit, toward a drying rack made of hollow sticks and fishing line, damp clothes dripping from the top and into a rubber basin. "I'll leave, I swear. I don't want any trouble."

Before her father decided to leave and ditch family life to live alone, he made clear his grievances neatly if not obscenely during nighttime adult-chatter. Ten-year-old Brenda, awoken by the family cat in the morning, found her parents sitting somberly around the kitchen dinette set. They began using the term *separation*. Her father had felt unable to work in the space provided to him, bogged down by the "this and the that"—the overproduction and sporadic studio time slots and clumsy musicians who upstaged him. Her mother would rather have spent their nights at lavish parties, thousand-dollar gowns flowing to the floor and lipstick-smeared cheeks and wine by the bottle to make sobriety feel like the unusual state of mind. Her mother, in her hazy state, told him to take what he wanted that morning and leave her the house. He obliged her

over time. They'd never divorced, but the separation severely divided the family once he transitioned from once-a-week to every-weekend to full-time hermit who "loved his music more than his family."

Of course, he wasn't completely isolated in his own world and stuck between layers of primitive logs with soot up to his elbows as her mother suggested. Her mother had never set foot
on the land he'd bought in 1995, and obviously not in the modern cabin he'd built with modern tools. *It has goddamned solar panels!* Brenda told her mother over the phone during her first college break, just a few months before they printed the obituary and held a funeral and wake and invited everyone to attend but her father. Her father wanted a green burial for himself, a spot in his backyard, a large burlap tarp wrapped around him with rope from Hardy's Hardware and some sort of tree saplings "or some bullshit like that" planted in the soil on top. He told Brenda his wishes the week before his death. Instead she took the life insurance money and paid for the 20-gauge steel-shelled casket with off-white silk lining, and a plot close to her mother, because she liked the idea of sticking it to her father and to her mother's family.

Brenda watched the old man cower toward his clothes, the outline of his ribs like pens under tan-colored cellophane, his bony feet stained with dirt and blood and scarred by blisters. He reached for his socks with his thin fingers. One fell and smacked onto the floor. She started to wonder what her father would do in this situation: a naked man, foggy in the head, being forced out into the cold. *He'll find his way. Stand your ground.*

The old man struggled with the wet clothes, no exchange of words except his grunts and a bulk of wet coughs. Brenda watched him from the side, glancing instead over the unit's contents. She saw the hanging pictures sway, indistinct human figures framed and cascading down the railing toward the back of the unit. She saw a tiny battery-operated light placed on a small breakfast tray, next to a stack of books, blanket, and backpack. She saw the cherry-wood armoire, its corners cushioned by styrofoam. She saw the empty liquor bottles piled up in the corner behind medicine vials, cans of food, and a propped-up shotgun.

She panicked and backed up further into the light toward her car. "How long have you been here? How did you get in?"

"It wasn't locked. I swear, I'll leave you be. Just let me—let me grab these things and just go." By then he had most of the wet clothes on and began to reach for his bag, passing the gun. "I'm just an old man."

"But how long have you been here?" Brenda watched with care, her hand fumbling inside her purselet—on her keys, on her phone, on her Tic-Tacs, on her license and credit cards.

"I don't know. You're the first person I've seen in a long time." He fastened the bag around his wet sweatshirt and pulled out his light and a book, shaking it with inquiry. "Can I take this to

finish?"

"Just take what you want."

"I learned to never tell someone that. That's how you get taken advantage of." He placed the book and light into his bag and swung it gingerly behind his back. "Not saying I am, but it's a life lesson I learned when I was younger. Your age, maybe." Brenda watched his glinting gaze bouncing out from the dark, looking her up and down. He waddled toward the armoire, toward the cans of food—toward the shotgun.

"Hey, don't you move!" Brenda started to shake and pulled back on the Prius's door handle, her fist now clenching chapstick and her father's prescription refill note.

"You can have the shotgun. It's 20-gauge, good for fishing in low tide or getting a bird or squirrel, but that's about it. Too noisy, too." he said, packing cans of peaches and tuna into his bulging bag, stuffing it behind a box of flu medicine. She thought about the bottles of Xeloda and Taxol and 5-FU and Abraxane and other chemotherapy drugs sitting on her father's nightstand. *I should help him. No, he'll be okay on his own.*

"Just take the food. Leave." Brenda was now the one cowering away from a 70-year-old man and his pneumonia-ravaged body.

He shuffled back toward the opening and pointed at the drying sneakers. "Just got these left." He bent down before an answer and sat on the unit floor to fasten them onto his feet.

"How long do you think you've been here? Really?" she asked.

"A while. What's today?"

"Monday."

"No, what's the date? November?"

"December. December 14th. Monday."

"You said Monday already. I suppose I've been here since last November." He pointed back into the unit—his home—tying the last lace with a large loop. "But I thank you for letting me use it. Last winter got cold. I almost froze off my fingers." He lifted his thumbs in the light and showed the grayed, pruned digits before tightening his laces and standing.

Brenda loosened up, her shoulders and knees less wooden. "It was my dad's, not mine. He stuck all his stuff in here and I had no idea this even existed." *Don't speak to him.*

"Oh, he died?" He looked up with menacing sincerity. "Thought he had some big, nasty dogs coming?" A smile, toothless but genuine. He stood on his unbalanced frame like testing stilts, and began his heeled creep toward the inner fence. "Oh, one more thing." He wobbled back into the unit and untied a hanging photo of a man and a boy—him and his son, both wrapped in tinsel, hanging holiday decorations on a wall. Brenda could almost hear the angelic music in the background, smell the burning logs from the furnace. "Last I got of him," he said, placing the picture deep into his bag.

The last Christmas, after Brenda moved in post-eviction, she told her father that it felt like her words were stuck in a funnel *up there*. "You're clogged," he said. "But you don't need a plunger, you just need to eat better, healthier." *Dad, that's gross.* She knew he meant indulge in more

important things in life, things about which she'd care enough to write, not the drudgery of editing technical copy as a freelancer or lining the cabin with Christmas decor—which her father said was a waste of time and effort—or even helping him clean up after his barking coughs. *But you are what I care about.* "Don't be silly," he said. Then they watched a movie and he commented on its score. He waggled his finger and said "It gives emotional resonance to life. That's what is so superb about this right here." They watched the first of three acts before she noticed her father work through his breath for the final two, his medicine in rows next to his bed, her hand on the phone as winter covered the cabin's skylight bare-white.

The old man waved to Brenda with a crooked wrist as he vanished behind the last unit down the line and toward the inner fence. Brenda slid down the side of the car and sat with her mouth in her hands, the wet concrete like ice through her jeans.

Once back inside the unit, Brenda climbed the bed's stairs and peered over the stranger's wrinkled quilt. It reeked of wet dog, like old sweat and mildew. A quaint twin mattress set up inside a few topless pallets, the sides removed near the wall to hold the bed in place, blankets made of duct-taped jackets and a standard down-pillow with no case. It looked comfortable to Brenda, and she felt uneasy knowing she'd evicted a man homeless like she'd once been. *It wasn't his. But it wasn't yours either, Dad. Not for years.*

She bent down into cardboard boxes, her shaky fingers folded the flaps open, the seams half-disintegrated from time. Inside were old photos: her parents' wedding, rice frozen in-frame along with porcelain-white smiles, Brenda popping out from her mother's belly in the laced wedding dress; Brenda's first day of school with her backpack dangerously close to pulling her backward and into the driveway; her father celebrating Brenda's birth, a v-cut stogie dangling from the corner of his thin, pale lips, her uncle popping champagne corks into the ceiling. These photos Brenda had never seen—the photos in her father's house were mostly of him accepting awards or performing with the symphony orchestra or working in the studio with his four-piece crew of "talentless" musicians.

Brenda turned. A hanging photo bounced off her forehead. She rolled the twist tie between her fingers, noticing a line of stringed Christmas lights intertwined with the railing. Following the lights along the ceiling, Brenda realized the hanging photos on the ceiling would become hanging photos on a wall, like any other home, the bottom with a battery-operated switch at the end. So she closed it, the door barking those low creaks again. With the lights switched on the photos were no longer obscured by shadow, the silhouettes of faces and bodies lit through greens and reds and whites.

She swiped her fingers along the photos, left and down, then back up and circling again. Her favorite was of her father holding Brenda's tiny infant hands in his own palm, his wavy gray

hair slicked back. She'd never seen any photos of her as a child in his cabin, and this one made her place her thumb on his chest, pumping it like tapping contemplative keys at a keyboard. The old man built his home and lived the last year of his life with a family of strangers. He'd likely made his own memories with the photos and decided why they were in storage and not inside a house somewhere in Sunnybrook.

The Christmas lights cast shadows on the back wall as Brenda stood straight and threw open the storage door, flooding the unit in an eerie dusk. She stomped to her car and sat inside until the windows fogged up. She shuffled through her purselet for paper, settling for the back of a receipt, and swiped her pen voraciously in distinct lines: *Please, stay. It's yours, not mine.* She placed the paper on the old man's pillow, weighed it down with a leftover can of peaches, then left, leaving the strings of lights on and the door shut behind her, but not padlocked. No dutiful lock needed.

Brenda drove her Prius past the units and bent-up fence she'd last seen the old man, and then up and down the roads near the storage facility, peering around in the dusk for the stranger, hoping to maybe spot the red sweatshirt or the duct-taped shoe shine in her headlights. She thought she saw him creeping along a patch of woods near the abandoned store, so she followed the blurred frame of a body with high beams, first a few meters, then approaching a half-kilometer, but it wasn't him—just distracting specks of new rainfall on her windshield that paced with her car like contrails. She came back through the gas station and thought to question the attendant inside, to see if he'd seen a man wobbling around on mini-stilts. But she came to terms with losing him.

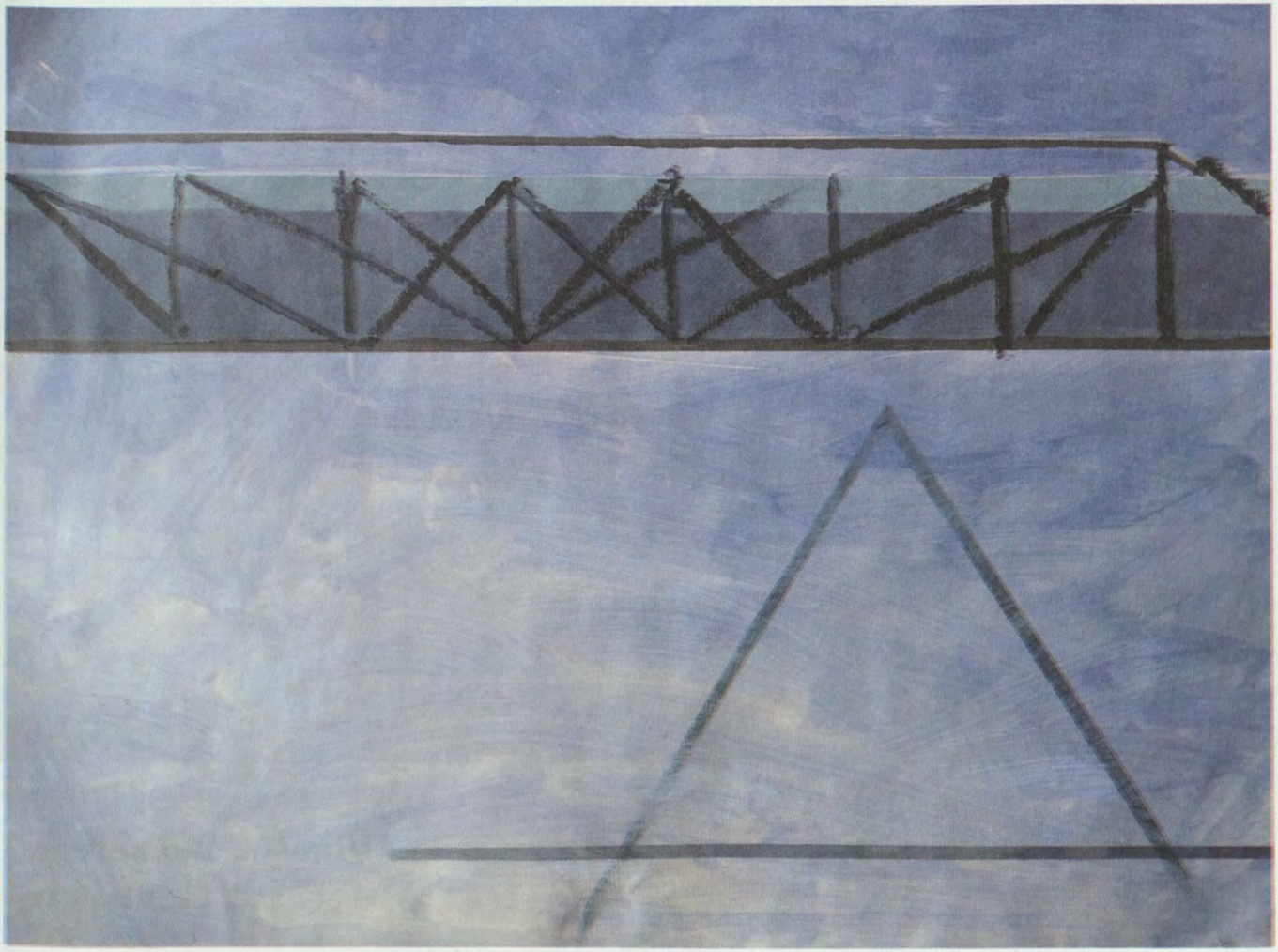
Brenda drove back through Toronto, up north past the trees with their bare branches straining water. She thought about the logistics of her father's things and decided to follow in his footsteps and set up payment for the unit yearly. And that night when Brenda felt at odds with herself, when she wanted to discover something important about which to write, she sat on her father's—now her—couch and watched the last movie they'd started. When act one ended, a new film began, one in which she'd never seen. It progressed through the loss of love and the climax and seamlessly followed the story arc up and down. The finality of the film began as such: the blurriness as the camera focused and then clarified on a single detail, a single point on a wall, the music swelling with overturning bass, the plucking rhythm and final cessation as it gave way to an electric current. An evolution of emotions, then limitless reverie. It was altogether content-less yet full of *more*. And then she'd pick up her unfinished novel and write her words into the night with the ground toads chirping and the brush swaying along and the this and the that.

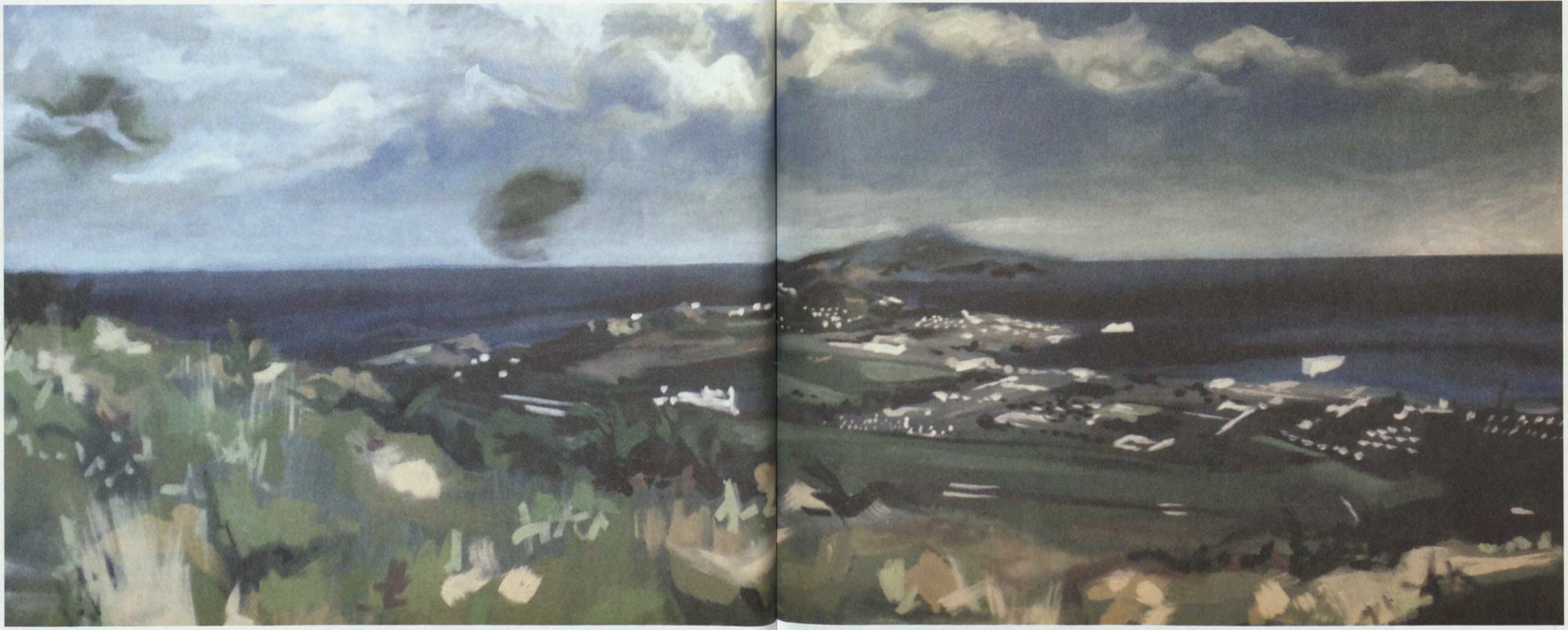
Lynnette Sauer

After a Walk

Oil on Gessoed Paper

24x18"





Lynnette Sauer

Sofa Stone Hike (View of Basseterre)

Oil on Canvas
50x20”

Lynnette Sauer

After Jan Breughel

Oil on Canvas
35x45"

Christina Rikkers

3:04 A.M.

Stacks of mugs litter plastic counters,
tea stains dripping down handles and glass.
The fridge is mostly empty save for a split
pineapple pepperoni pizza and a sour
half-gallon of milk. Books stack
every surface, once tall trees, now
a forest of words rooted in kitchen chairs—
bills like fallen leaves in autumn.
The green clock flashes *3:04, 3:04, 3:04*
and in the next room the TV shut itself off,
growing tired of John Williams scores.
I am on the couch, curled under a throw
with my neck bent, and he is on the floor,
cheek pressed to the thrift-shop oriental rug.
The only sound is our measured sleep.
Tomorrow, the only trace of me will be
tire tracks in melting driveway snow,
but tonight we are fine.

Rebecca Franklin

"Everything is Everything"

I said from the edge of the bed,
rolling a blunt.
The ink scrawled into my skin,
the tight braids
against my scalp,
speak louder.
I lick the edge
of the tobacco leaf.

A beat flows in the background.
Cowrie shells chime
with the sway of my head.
My lyrics move
through the speakers
and evaporate on walls,
each rhyme builds towards
the chorus of my line.
I light the stem.

In dregs
of chest hair,
between *Mother* and *F*ather
my gold chain
rises,
smoke brews in my lungs.
I exhale what
could be voiced.

I look at her.
The words,
fermented and distilled
year after year,
have aged.
I can say no more.
The joint's hot coal reflects
off blue sediment settled in her iris.

I smile at her smile.
Everything and
all things hidden,
kept silent,
filtered out
by smoke and sound and eyes and ink and sin.

Rachel Dupont

Slipping Through the Threads

While I'm the only one of my siblings who doesn't play a musical instrument of any kind, I'm also the only one of us who was named after a musician. My dad named me after Stevie Ray Vaughan. Dad's favorite guitar player, Stevie died in a helicopter crash almost exactly a year before I was born. My dad wanted to call me Stephanie Rachel, but my mom hated the name Stephanie, so they compromised with Rachel Marie. Instead of calling me Stevie, they call me Ray.

My birth itself was a compromise between my parents. My mom wanted four kids, my dad thought two was enough; they already had the picture-perfect nuclear family of two parents and one boy and one girl. They settled for three; my mom knew before she was even pregnant with me that our family wasn't complete; someone was missing.

At the time, my dad was suffering from clinical depression. He was stuck in his own head, and both of my parents felt isolated from each other. His recovery coincided with my arrival, and while I'm sure the cure wasn't instant, I like to think that I played a big part in it, that I was better medicine than Prozac.

Immediately after I arrived, my mom had to have a medial procedure done, leaving my dad and a very tiny me alone in a room together for two hours—quality time that neither of my siblings had at birth, time with Dad in which we silently learned each other. In a way, these first hours shaped the relationship that we've carried into my adulthood.

This became the way of us—this unspoken connection, this deep understanding of each other that neither of my siblings quite shared with him. Our relationship is by no means superior to the one he shares with either my brother or sister, but it's different, unique. Chris is the oldest, and the only boy; he was trained to be the responsible one, the one looking out for his sisters. Being the oldest himself, my dad had high expectations for Chris and the man he would become. Liz is the middle child, the one my dad worries about the most, because his own middle sister, Alison, ended up such a mess, falling in love with men who treated her badly and eventually seeking solace in twelve-packs of cheap beer. His fears weren't too far off; even as a child Liz always ended up with the toy that got broken. Once when Dad gave each of us light-up bouncy balls he had picked up on a business trip, Liz's ball turned out to be

the one that didn't light up. Everything she had ended up malfunctioning.

Me, I was always his baby. Raybob. The one who sat back and watched while Chris and Liz made their mistakes, went through rebellious stages and bad relationships. Chris, a sensitive but popular guy who was addicted to being in love, dated every girl he met before he finally married his best friend. Liz, like my Aunt Alison, became an asshole magnet, dating guys who didn't see how precious she was, how kind and gentle and smart and deserving of the entire universe. She made my dad's worst nightmare come true when she married a man who got her pregnant but didn't bother to sweep her off her feet first.

And I stuck around long after they were gone. When they were off on their own, I was the one who reminded him to eat lunch and shower when he was working his engineering job from home. I was the one who knew he'd get so absorbed in his work that he would forget about his basic necessities, and I would nag him back down to earth. I was the one who could coerce him into doing anything for me, because he couldn't say no to me. "How do you do it?" Liz asked me once, after I'd talked him into driving me two hours away to Cincinnati in Grandpa's truck to buy bookshelves at the Ikea that was nearest to our home. "None of us can get Dad to do what we want like you can."

Maybe it's because I'm okay with badgering him, and I'm not afraid to annoy him. In fact, being the youngest, I thrive on annoyance and attention-seeking, and he somehow finds it endearing—unless I catch him in a foul mood. Even our bedtime routine is annoying. I smear on as much lip balm as I possibly can and then kiss him on the cheek, and then even after I've gone to my own room, we continue to yell goodnights at each other across the hall.

"Good night, Dad."

"Good night, Ray."

"Hey, Dad?"

"Yes, Ray."

"Good night, Dad."

"Good night, Ray."

"Wait, hey, Dad?"

"What is it, Ray?"

"Good night, Dad."

Sometimes this goes on for several minutes. Somehow it never gets old to me.

I was sixteen when Dad bought a motorcycle—not a loud, roaring Harley-Davidson, but a beautiful Kawasaki Vulcan 900 cruiser that purrs like a sewing machine. My clean-cut, software engineer geek of a father on a motorcycle? Chris and Liz and I were all more than a little surprised, speculating on whether our dad was going through some sort of cliché midlife crisis. My mom was unconcerned, cavalier. "As long as he wants me on the back of the bike, and not some young hot tramp, let him have his midlife crisis."

She was right—the only competition she ever has for that passenger seat is me. Chris and Liz moved out too soon to be part of this phase, so motorcycle rides became another part of our routine. No doubt some people see me on the

back and think he is riding around with some tramp; little do they know it's just a dad and his baby girl.

I find solace on being on the back of that bike, riding through the country back roads of southern Indiana. It's my favorite part of summertime Sunday afternoons. Usually we stop for sushi, because it's the one food my mom won't eat, but we love. Sometimes we look for a little coffeeshop we've never been to, but mostly we wander, as far as we can into places that are as green as we can find, rich with trees and lush grass and as far from civilization as possible. "Can we ride twisty turnies?"I ask him, meaning, *can we take our time, ride around curvy roads with a view, not hurry home just yet?* We stop in the middle and "shoot the shit,"as he is fond of saying. He checks in with me, asks how I'm doing, what's been on my mind, and I tell him my secrets. I tell him about whatever man has been on my mind—but none of them have ever invested this much in me, none of them have ever taken me on dates quite like this. And this is another of our secrets: that he regrets, every day, the choices that my sister made, and worries that he didn't do enough to show her how important she is. So when he feels compelled to remind me, before it's too late, I don't stop him.

Part of the ritual, for me, is the deliberate leaving of my phone at home. I don't think he even knows that I do this. In fact, I take nothing with me at all, no purse, which I usually don't go anywhere without—I always have my journal, my pens, whatever book I'm in the middle of reading. But not on the bike. I keep emergency feminine supplies always in the pocket of my riding jacket so that I have no need for my bag. I have no sense of time, no knowledge of what's happening on social media. It's not time to read or time to write. Just time to think, and breathe, and see. My only obligation is to keep myself from falling asleep on the back of the bike. The fact that I am even capable of doing so when I often can't fall asleep in my own bed is, to me, another testimony of my unconditional trust in my dad. Sometimes I stare down at the road beneath us, as each grain of pavement stretches out, until it looks as though the earth is comprised of infinite threads, pulled taut on a loom. The threads slide together hypnotically, and I play with the idea that maybe we'll slip through them, bike and all, and end up on another road, in some alternate universe.

Rachel Dupont

Slow Deaths

We sat on the back porch of Elisabeth's house, watching the heat lightning off in the distant blue-grey clouds. Her house was positioned on the outer edge of the neighborhood, so the view from the front depicted a regular suburban community. But the view from the back was widespread fields, allowing us to feel like we were out in the country, dwelling in farmlands. The illusion of isolation.

It wasn't unusual for me to be spending an evening at Elisabeth's. Nor was it unusual for her brother Wyatt to be there as well, sitting on the back porch smoking a cigarette, careful to stay downwind from me so that the smoke wouldn't blow into my face. Elisabeth poured a couple of glasses of apple cinnamon moonshine from the Mason jar on the patio table. One for me, one for her, none for Wyatt. He didn't drink anymore, or at least, not around me.

We didn't really say much, just watched the distant storm. The evening glowed in a soft purple, and the cicadas hung their symphony on the trees, as invisible as if they were in an orchestra pit.

Elisabeth tilted back her glass, swallowing her last swig of moonshine. "I better go make sure the nematodes are inside," she said, the nematodes being her children, Pammy and Elliot.

The screen door snapped shut behind her, and Wyatt and I were alone. I sipped from my glass, the moonshine spicy and sweet but ending in an acid burn at the back of my

throat. Wyatt breathed in the last hit of his cigarette then pressed it out on the concrete patio, and placed it on the edge of the table to throw away later. I never really liked that he smoked, but at least he was conscientious about it.

"Did you see that one?" I said, still looking up into the clouds. "It seemed closer than the others."

He shook his head. He wasn't looking at the sky—or at me. His lakeshore blue eyes skimmed around, looking for a safe place to land. "Listen…" he said, and I knew he had something to say, but it wasn't about the lightning.

* * *

He had been in love with me from the beginning, when we'd met two years before. He had just returned from the war, nervous, lost, prone to drinking to calm himself down. I knew how he felt; he wasn't brave enough to tell me back then, but I could see it in his eyes. This man who faced the possibility and proximity of death every day overseas was terrified of a twenty-something woman two-thirds his size.

But when he finally said what it had taken him two years to say, I had no answer. This isn't true at all—I'd had two years to think about it, and while he was mustering the courage, I was making up my mind. But still, I said nothing.

When Elisabeth came back onto the porch, I seized my opportunity and stood up, my glass still in my hand. "I have to go, Elisabeth," I said, but I was looking at Wyatt.

I reached the screen door, but then I stopped, and to Elisabeth I said, "We'll talk tomorrow," but this wasn't meant for her either.

* * *

I went to work as usual the next day at the daycare in the Presbyterian church on the north side of town. The weight of Wyatt's confession sat heavily on my chest as I worked in room 26, the toddler room, with Sarah. Sarah was twenty-two and majoring in early childhood development. She claimed to be passionate about working with children this age, though you would never know that, based on how she only looked up from her phone to put the occasional toddler in time out.

I spent the morning wiping snotty, crusty noses, stopping Broox from biting Sam again, ordering Riley to stop hitting Lucy with the toy school bus. Sarah warmed up lunches in the microwave while I changed morning diapers, one after the other, a hand wash and a new pair of gloves between each.

But all the while I was ever aware of Wyatt, and I could see him in my head—at his own job, doing some kind of union-related manual labor which I don't understand. My silence last night was most definitely giving him panic attacks. As I spoon-fed Corbin his yogurt, I knew Wyatt's lunch was probably go-

ing untouched; he was probably spending his break chain-smoking and wishing he hadn't sworn off alcohol.

Sarah and I cleaned up after lunch; she diapered the toddlers again, I sprayed down the tables and chairs with bleach water and scrubbed at drying peanut butter and jelly, swept Goldfish crackers off of the floor. We laid down eight little blue cots, get everyone settled and blanketed, turned the lights off and the white noise machine on. We patted their backs two at a time. Sam, Will and Lucy fell asleep first, Riley and Olivia needed their stuffed animals and pacifiers before they would lie still, Corbin was quiet but wiggly, Broox fell into a restless, congested snoring and Sarah and I both hoped his cough wouldn't disturb the others. Caden was the last to fall asleep, fighting as hard as he could to keep his eyes open, but I stroked his forehead with the backs of my fingers, starting in his hair and slowly moving down the bridge of his nose, almost hypnotizing him until he could no longer fight it.

The room became quiet, cold from the stillness, and I had almost three hours to think.

* * *

I had known what my answer would be for several months, long before I finally gave up on his ever asking.

But Wyatt might have changed my answer, if only he had known how to ask.

His timing was perfectly awful, and he knew that. He knew that there had been another guy, Ben, who was Wyatt's complete opposite—uncalloused, naive, spoiled. Deliciously and stupidly confident in himself. Ben had never seen war, had never known terror or long hard days working under the desert sun until he was weak, shaky and vomiting. He was an idealistic English major who grew up in the safety net of wealthy parents, a lawyer and a dentist. Everything he had was a result of someone else's hard work, and now all he needed to get by was his charisma and strong jawline, and that full head of dark curly hair.

He was good at winning anyone over but bad at both commitment and goodbyes, so when our romance fizzled out, I was left to figure it out by myself—a sensitive introvert with an inherent need for closure, and he didn't have the decency to put me out of my misery.

All Wyatt knew was that there had been a guy, that there wasn't one now, and that I was upset and vulnerable. He also knew that if there had been one, there would be others, and his time was running out.

But the answer was quite literally in the question. He could've guaranteed himself a yes if he had adopted some of Ben's stupid confidence, paid no heed to the possibility of rejection, and said, "That guy's a bastard who doesn't deserve you—I'm going to take you to dinner and show you how you ought to be treated." I have a weakness for confidence; it's why I have a tendency to date assholes. Tell,

don't ask—give me a minute to put on my favorite dress for you.

But that's not who Wyatt is, and his pride is concealed in a fragile ego. Instead of risking rejection, he tends to err on the side of indifference, pretend like he doesn't care that much in the first place, so a "no"isn't going to affect him. His approach was anticlimactic, resistible. "Listen, I hope this doesn't make things weird, and you're free to say no and I won't bring it up again…."

My own brutal honesty makes me grimace.

* * *

The toddlers woke up, and I took care of afternoon diapers while Sarah spread out graham crackers and sippy cups of water, and when they all finished their snack and we had cleaned up, we began the trek out to the playground to combine with the two- and three-year-old classes.

Sarah stood by the fence with Kimber and the other Sarah, and they complained about how much they wished it was six o'clock. The other Sarah divulged her boy drama as usual, as if Alex and Zach and What's-His-Name were in her life mostly for the sake of giving her something to gossip about. I sat on the bench with Brittany and Cathy, our groups segregated as if we were in high school, in which case, Brittany, Cathy and I would be the decidedly unpopular girls.

We surveyed the area and chatted about the weather as twenty-something little kids rode the swings on their bellies, hid in the tube slides, played on the giant wooden structure modeled to look like a 1930's automobile.

But then we slowly began to notice as a significant number of them congregated in one of the wooden play structures, some spectacle having caught their attention. Cathy got up from her place on the bench to take a look, and a moment later, she announced that the kids had found an injured baby bird.

Brittany and I followed her, and Kimber and the Sarahs momentarily ceased their gossip as this new development caught their interest.

I pushed through the crowd of little ones to see the poor thing lying on the floor of the play set. It was young, but it had been hatched for quite awhile; its wings were covered in coarse blue feathers, still fragile and new. Its leg was caught in the crack between two wood planks, possibly broken, and it spread its delicate beak and cried out in terror and pain.

All at once, the six of us began scooping up the kids, one by one, moving them off of the play structure so we could figure out what to do with the baby bird without them crowded around. The area was almost clear when the other Sarah picked up two-year-old Brinley by the armpits, and maybe Sarah was too careless or Brinley was too oblivious or both—but either way, as Sarah pulled her out, Brinley kicked a sneakered foot at a perfectly awful

time, and snapped the baby bird's neck.

But it didn't die.

Its eyes and beak widened in as if it were gasping in agony and shock, and it writhed ever so slightly. It seemed to cry out sharply, but I don't remember if that's right and it seems impossible now. But if it could have cried out, if it could have wailed and moaned in pain, it would have. And then a bright rose petal of blood dripped out of its mouth, not a lot of blood yet so much blood to something so tiny.

There was an uproar of children and teachers, little voices announcing, "Is it dead? Brinley killed the baby bird!"

Brittany and I stood quietly staring at it, while the other teachers herded the children away, and someone called the office to have our boss come down.

I knew the best thing would be to kill the poor thing and end its pain, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. I also couldn't just leave it there to die like that. I pulled some clean tissues out of a box that one of the teachers had brought out, and I scooped the bird up into my hands. It was so lovely, so delicate. The rose petal still dripped from its beak and its eyes were tiny pockets of ooze. It breathed heavily in my hands for a few minutes before it finally died, and all I could do was hope that picking it up had somehow eased the pain I couldn't bring myself to put an end to.

My boss, Laura, came out with a maintenance man, who was holding a trash bag intended for the bird. "I'm going to bury it,"I said to Laura. I didn't ask permission. Laura turned to the maintenance man and said, a hint of quiet mockery in her voice, "Rachel is going to bury it, because she loves all of nature."

I took it to a bush far away from where the kids could see, with nothing but my bare hands to dig a shallow hole, and I buried the bird as gently and tenderly as I could manage with my fingers still trembling. Later in the evening I would go and see Wyatt, put him out of his misery, bring an end to this. But all I could think about was the shallow grave I had dug, and that it wasn't deep enough, wasn't packed firmly enough; some animal would come along and dig it up, and undo everything.

Read On.

Write On.

Contributors

Sarah Bahr is an IUPUI sophomore studying English, with a concentration in Writing & Literacy, and Spanish with the goal of eventually becoming an editor at a newspaper, magazine, or publishing house.

Carolina Castoreno is a senior at IUPUI majoring in Multicultural and Diversity Studies with a minor in Creative Writing. Her passion is to write with a cultural voice that tells contemporary stories as well as those of ones who came before her.

Danny Chan lives in Indianapolis, Indiana with his wife and child. He has previously been published in *Wilde Magazine* and *Leaves of Ivy*.

Keegan Cooper is a graduate student, research assistant, hopeful romantic.

Rachel Dupont is a senior at IUPUI, majoring in Creative Writing, with a focus on fiction.

Rebecca Franklin is currently a graduate student in the English department working towards her certificate in teaching writing. She is also an adjunct English teacher at Ivy Tech Community College. She has published in *genesis* once before as an undergraduate in 2010.

Brooke Henry is working on an Illustration major and a Creative Writing minor, hoping to work on concept art, children's books, and indie comics after graduation. She loves animated movies and hates searching for roommates.

Alexandra Makris is an undergraduate Art History and Illustration major who has a deep interest in the connections between faith and art.

Ryan Manning is a Photography major at the Herron School of Art and Design. He enjoys being creeped out by odd phenomena in life and in fact considers himself to be an odd phenomenon.

Alex Nieten writes and makes za, sometimes blending the two.

Christina Marie Rikkers is a junior pursuing an English major with an emphasis in Creative Writing, a minor in Writing & Literacy, a certificate in Paralegal Studies and a minor in Fairy Princessing. She was formerly published in *genesis* in fall 2014. Still writes altogether too much. She is still not a robot.

Lynnette Sauer studies Painting at the Herron School of Art and Design and graduated from the Kelley School of Business in May 2015. She's interested in an interdisciplinary approach to learning and art-making, and plans to pursue a career in the museum field.

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