

the anth

fall



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

In your hands, you hold the Fall 2017 issue of *The Anthem*, the first fall issue, in fact, during my time at Georgetown. The move to becoming a biannual publication, rather than annual, was a daunting one — I spent much of my first few weeks as editor-in-chief stressing that it would not be possible. Fortunately, I have been proven wrong. This issue was made possible by the commitment of staff members in years past, who knew ramping up to a biannual issue would be a gradual process and worked to increase our visibility on campus. In particular, I owe much to current seniors Anna Shuster and Regina Andreoni for committing to make *The Anthem* biannual in their freshman year, creating the fabulous (and clearly successful) Three-Year Plan, and laying the foundations for this issue. This issue was also made possible by the tireless work of our dedicated staff who came to meetings every week, ready to read and give their honest opinions, picking up on the smallest details of how a piece could be made better, and working closely and thoughtfully with every single person who submitted. It was made possible by the countless number of students — as well as the occasional faculty members or alumni — who filled our inbox to bursting this semester. But for it to truly happen, we depended on all of you to read this magazine, to care about it, to submit to it, and to cherish the arts on this campus.

Georgetown is not known for its flourishing arts community. Yet, this magazine is a testament that it is well and alive. Somewhere in the heart of it all, the arts are always thriving, if you are willing to search for them. In this issue, we present you with pieces ranging from satire of the struggles of college life to poems that reflect on death.

So pick up a copy and keep it on your coffee table, a constant reminder of the art that exists on this campus, even when you're busy stressing about your next exam. Flip through it on a rainy day when you're sitting on your couch and look at some of the art. Take it to bed one night and read a short story that makes its way into your dreams. Spend a day tirelessly poring over it, reading each entry, absorbing the beauty of each piece of art. This magazine is now yours to do with it as you please. I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Huneeya Siddiqui,
Editor-in-Chief

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NIGHT DRIVE IN MY HOMETOWN

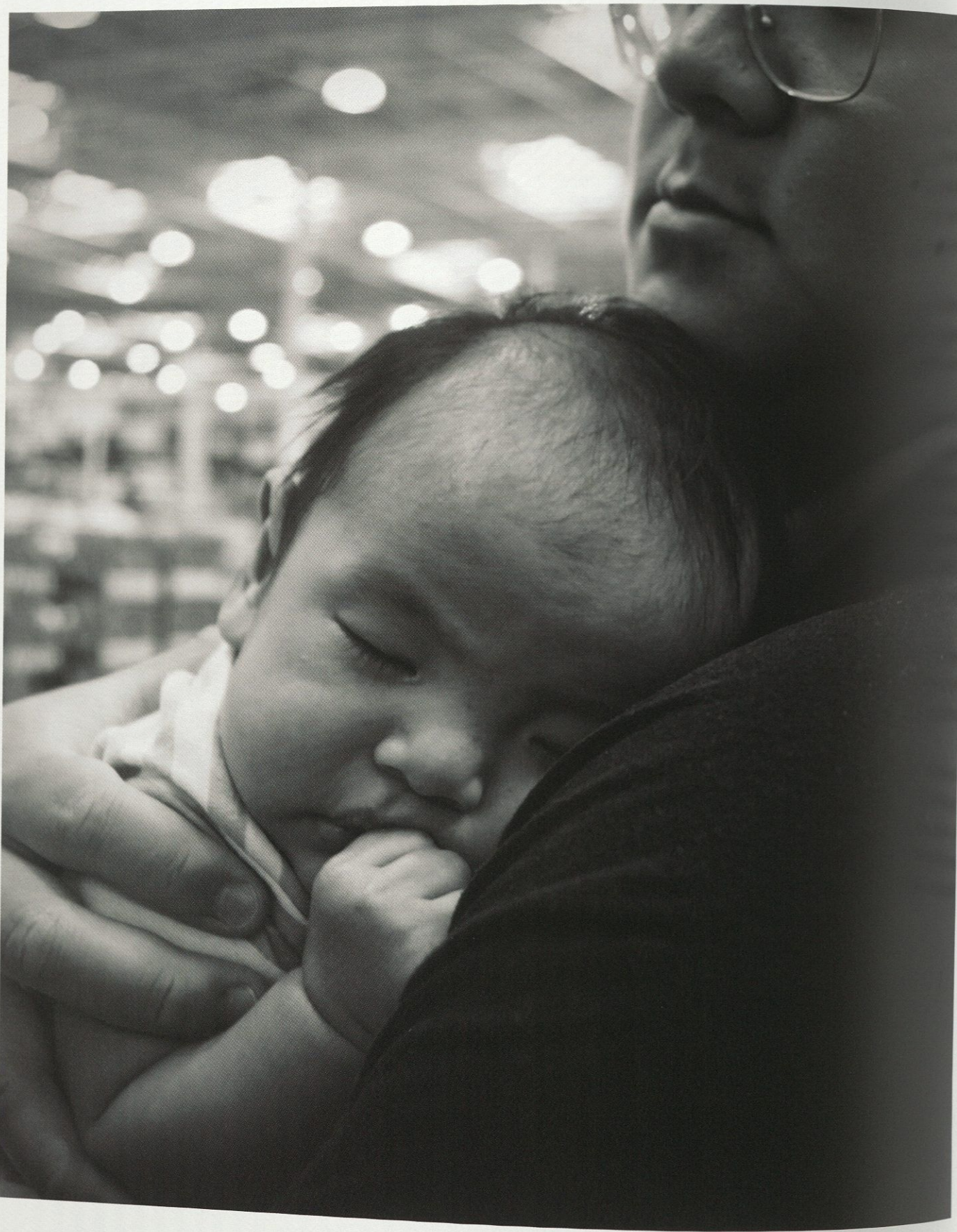
BY KARENA LANDLER

It's like this: two raccoons, mother and child maybe,
Scatter from headlight beams, scatter from me.
Or not from me, but from my ferocious machinery
My safety in the after-eleven dark
In a town with teeth and scales.

It's like this: the dead deer bodies are familiar
Those mangled little somebodies
Lie by the side of the road, captured
By my lights for just a moment
Like a dream or a hard-to-spell word,
And I wonder if I made them up.

Or maybe it's like this: on this road
I am witchcraft, a nighttime spirit
Spitting past bleary-eyed windows.
I am the escapee, the convict on the run
Who realizes suddenly
That maybe jail was safer.

YOEL FESSAHAYE



OSCAR WILDE, 10/16

BY CHRISTOPHER STEIN

There is a drawer
where I keep the little black
plastic tubes with their gray caps
and they make a funny shuffling
noise when you shake them

and I have not opened any
since I put them there labeled
neatly by a veiny hand

and I never took them
just around the corner to
the pharmacy with the arthritic
man far behind the lenses of his glasses
who takes them rolls them gently
in his paper-bag hands and quotes
me a price

and I never want them developed
because the camera was a shitty one
and the memories are shittier

today I pop one canister open
pull out a roll of negatives like
a double helix from a Foxconn factory
and hold it up to the bare bulb
that swings when you breathe too hard

today I look at a life too trite for memory
and it beats me down like a prison guard

today is my birthday and every memory
in my drawer undeveloped and hateful
is what we called life before the polaroid

today I don't want to know who I was
I only want to wander out of my cave
for the night and see stars as child-me did

tonight I remember that the difference
between me and me is the difference
between the saint and the sinner
the saint has a past the sinner has a future

tonight I forget my childhood its cherry blossoms
dimming and upend the drawer of my life into trash

INSIDE OUT

BY EMILY ARNOLD

Rain is misting down, ever so slowly, like a large cloud settling into place and becoming a dense fog that hazily pervades the fields and the front yard and the patio where I am typing away. Gently protected by the awning overhead, I can see the wisteria creeping up the dark green door that we never use. If I turned my head, I would gaze through the large glass window straight into the warmth of the kitchen where the dishes are still cluttered next to the sink, and the lights still reflect off the white pine cabinets, giving the room a warm glow. It was something to this effect, the wonderfully domestic and home-y feeling, that made me feel like I was living in a doll-house last night, and struck with this feeling, I had the sudden urge to watch myself through the eyes of the giant to whom I belonged. It was after the sun had set, but her light still lingered, caught in the gray mist of the rain, that I departed the doll-house through an open window in my room. Cozy on the roof with a thick fleece blanket and backwards baseball cap, I could see into the livelihood of my own house through the white window panes, gazing through them into the inside like a little girl into her playhouse.

I could see into the kitchen below me, where the cutting board was just as I had left it, the knife still lying sideways beside the gruyere. But I was not used to seeing it from this angle. It seemed to have lost its meaning and function as I gazed at it from this distance, the wrong distance. My mother was in her office upstairs, and I could see her working away at her computer, preparing for her final statistics exam the next day. She looked small and tired, ordinary even, and I did not like her from this distance, so I averted my eyes to the living room where my father was watching TV. He looked rather normal, as I could only see the back of his head peeping out from the lounge chair and the TV in front of him, but it was like I was him, for I was not watching the figures moving on the screen *with* him, but rather, *as* him. It was this strangeness that gave Knausgaard's words new meaning when he says that to grow up is to establish the correct distance to things, and once we are adults all the distances are established and time moves more quickly

because we are no longer filling life with meaning. He seems to think that every time we establish a distance to something, it is as though we have clicked a piece of the life puzzle into place, and that satisfying click is meaning and it slows life down. According to him I am grown up now, for being on that roof, I felt a dizziness with my life from this different perspective. I was looking in from the outside into somebody else's life. Somebody else's parents were studying and watching TV, and Emily Arnold was extinguished from the face of the earth. I kept vainly worrying that my mother would turn her head to look out of the light of the house and into the dark of the night and see me there, staring at her from the roof, but of course this did not happen. She has established her distance to a nighttime window, and it does not include her daughter peering creepily into her own house while freezing outside in the rain.

My mood, as I sat on that rooftop, was as stormy and gray as the night. But it was not a bad thing, in fact, their syncopation put me at peace, at ease with my new distance from things. And so I sat there contemplating and embraced the smell of wet earth and trees and rain that surrounded me. It transported me to another place that converged perfectly even under the rain, and from there to yet another. The smell first reminded me of the smell of wet forest in the Catskills. I would live there for a month every summer in a thin wooden cabin with screen windows, on a cheap bunk-bed, usually metal, but wood if I was lucky (the wood was sturdier and made less noise when I would sneak out in the middle of the night). I was reminded of one night—there was supposed to be a lunar eclipse at four in the morning—that we slept on the open slope of the south facing hill where we had our campfires every night. We put our sleeping bags on tarps and slept facing the open sky, free beneath the stars. At about three in the morning, the skies opened and it started to downpour. I slept heavily through it and had to be shaken awake by the others, at that point already soaked through by the rain. But I remember the sudden smell that arose from the earth; it was energized, having stored all of the day's sunlight in the ground, and the

immediate wave of water that hit it from above had reacted with this energy to produce the strong smell of life and growth and death and rebirth. And we headed back to our cabins, where we fell back asleep to the drumming of the rain on the roof and the smell of the outside.

From there I followed the smell through the years to another grassy valley near the Catskills. I wandered, barefoot, through the once green festival grounds, now brown with mud. We had left the shelter of the contra dancing tent, and were now slowly meandering through the food stands and craft stalls, our hair matted against our heads from the force of the rain and our tie-dyed shirts running dye down our limbs, but we were powerful against those who cowered meekly beneath plastic tarps. Our feet hugged the earth, squishing delightfully in the mud, until we came across a group of twenty-somethings dancing to hippie music at the lemonade stand. One guy was juggling lemons, another girl with dreads

was hippie-dancing, her arms swaying at her side and her face and smile turned upwards towards the rain. We joined the amorphous group, united by our tie-dye and wet hair, and danced in circles in the mud to the strange music at the lemonade stand.

Then I was back on the roof, and the rain was the same rain that had soaked me in the Catskills and at the festival, and the smell was the same smell, and I felt happy in that moment for I carried with me the meaning of these events into the present, and would carry this moment with me as well. I felt then that I was surrounded by magic, and my whole body was tingling, though partly from the cold and the drops against my skin, it was the powerful and all encompassing sound of the rain drumming against the roof that surrounded me in this shroud of wonder: ♦



COURTNEY LEE

MICHAEL GABRIEL CASTANO



WHAT LOVE IS

BY JULIA BUCHOLZ

We meet at my lowest, the desperation of my decision thrumming in time with my hangover. The recruitment station is clean, but not much else can be said for it. It's one of those buildings that has been there for years, and I guess the government never got the funding to update it. Or maybe it just wasn't a priority in a rural area like this.

I'm standing in line, head pounding, my own blood on my shirt, and the aftermath of a shiner fading on the soft canvas between my eyebrow and my eye. I've always been proud of how dark bruises show up real pretty on my pale skin; badges of honor, fights I got into, damage I take and keep walking.

I'm standing there behind this good ole' boy (the accent gives him away, slurred speech almost impossible to understand), blinking against the ugly fluorescent lights, when you tap me on the shoulder. I turn around.

You gesture to your eye with a question, and I shrug with the shoulder that doesn't ache in reply.

You smirk and run a hand through too-long dark hair, "been there."

I glance at the holes in your shoes and the patches in your jacket and the fading bruises around one wrist that peek out from under the frayed sleeve and I know we're in the same boat. It's die here, or die over there.

By some twist of fate we end up in the same training camp. It's there I grow to love you. You smile at me through the dirt on your face, through weeks in the field, through the sweat and the dirt and the ache of running the obstacle course a million, million times. Your dark hair clings to your forehead, damp with sweat. You run your hand through it and adjust your cap and keep moving up the hill. I shift my pack and we move together in the darkness. This is how I know you: the outline of your tilted cap against the background of a faded sky.

She comes up to us in the chow hall after we're released for liberty, her sandy blonde hair in a neat cut, bangs just this side of regulation. I feel the weight of the bun at the nape of my neck and envy her for the trouble she has saved herself. She holds up three tickets to the

movies, and offers to take us with her. She smiles. We glance at each other and shrug. Why not?

He is the last to join our little family of four, brings us together, bald head gleaming with sweat, shaved clean before boot. Now it's me and you and him and her all together.

We make one of the better teams in the platoon, working together with only nods or spare words (like change in the bottom of a pocket, like words are something we don't need anymore but keep jangling with an absent hand, an old habit). He raises one of the eyebrows that try to compensate for his baldness and tilts his head slightly towards two members of the opposing platoon. I nod, and we creep up behind them while they whisper-scream at each other, blaming the other for getting lost. We jump them when you and her make a noise in the bushes and the opposing platoon members are distracted. We take them down. He smirks, one bushy eyebrow lifting, and I smother a laugh. You laugh too.

His plans always work, we trust him. He leads us, one large quirked brow and a glance into the treeline.

We four wait in the bushes, another ambush exercise. Your quiet breaths puff against the leaves on the ground. Rust red bruise yellow dead brown. I imagine if it were winter I would see little clouds rise up against the dark hair on your head. I wonder if I'll get the chance to see you in winter. What will snow look like against dark hair? Night creeps through the trees and we are still save for the rise and fall of four rib cages.

It starts to rain, hard and heavy, keeps the twigs wet so they don't snap where a person steps. The perfect night for an ambush, where moonlight barely comes through the trees. We go through enough of these drills and eventually the silhouettes of dark figures against the blackness label us better than names. We grow to love each other deeply. We happy four.

If I'm to go to hell, I'll do it with him and her and you and me.

It's not a romantic love, but all the same I love you, I love you three, the people I see when I look to the left

and right. We run together, towards the pop pop pop and the little trails of smoke rising against a sun-bleached sky. It's only been a month in the sand. Neither you nor I miss the cornfields. I look out of the humvee and think of bones in the desert, painfully dead white, at the mercy of sun and wind. Lonely bones, dying all over again. The bullet proof vest beats against my chest and I struggle to breathe. The heavy weight of armor against my sternum. There's sand in the creases of my elbows and dust under my collar. Sweat drips. We're in hell and I love you.

The four of us together is the best thing. It's the solid contentment deep low in my belly, a ballast against mortar fire and against the dozen close calls these past few days. She steadies me, standing at my shoulder, short blonde hair growing out past regulation now. It starts to fall into her eyes. As I aim I think about where we can get it cut. My finger is on the trigger, I pull slowly with a steady finger and one long exhale. The shot is perfect and there's a little pink puff. The target goes down. A shape in the dust.

We four move through the city, hell all around us. Sun soaked, sweat soaked. I didn't know sun could reflect off the sand and burn the underside of my throat, but it's the worst burn I've ever gotten. You laugh at me when I ask for doc to take a look and I get chastised. We joke about skin cancer being magnified by the mirror qualities of sand. About his bald head reflecting the light back like a signal in morse code. She laughs, taking a pair of shears to her hair. We sit in a rough circle. All of us. Together, together, I love you, I love you, I love you.

Us together, huddled with cold chow. We pass the choicest packages back and forth in and endless chatter of bargaining and deals. The barter economy alive and well today for packets of peanut butter and jalapeno cheese spread. We envy the one of us who gets the tuna meal, it's the best and the favorite. Not even a packet of peanut m&m's can convince one of us to give it up. You turn to haggling over dip with another member of the platoon, running a hand through your dark hair. You think it makes you charming. I just smirk when it leaves a smear of dust on your forehead (like Catholics on Ash Wednesday), and then cringe when you pack a lip. It's a filthy habit, but better than the red glow of a cigarette against the night. She flips her short blonde hair and tells you you'll get cancer that way. We trade looks, you and I, that dark inside joke where we know neither of us will reach 30,

and smirk (we agreed at the recruiting station, at boot in the desert, again and again, we will not die among cornfields, we'd rather bleed out into the sand, please God grant me a kinder fate than two kids and keeping house of a job in the mines in the cornfields in the mill, please).

In the night two of us stay up, sentinels in the dark, walking and watching. Someone is always up watching but it doesn't help us sleep. The thing that helps is a known body up against somebody, snug, the sound of breathing. Sleeping in a group.

You and I and she and he sleep side by side, heavy boots knocked together, the warm line of a shoulder against another shoulder. The steady breath in and out. Slowly I drift to the sleep I can have only when we four are together. Warm body next to warm body next to warm body, the smell of sweat and dirt and gunpowder discharged. We fall asleep together.

When you can't sleep, we whisper in the dark to each other. We're nervous but hiding it. Tomorrow is another day of hell, let us forget it here and now just let us forget—but the quiet of night is no refuge. We dream ugly dreams the fears of the past day the fears of the future, and the demon haunting every member of the platoon—capture. Death is kinder than that.

They lose you in the woods. You were given to them for just a few days, that other team that had one of their own at the hospital and the rest of us stuck here with an updated training session to go through. You laughed because anything is better than death by powerpoint. It was the usual junk. We weren't worried; this sort of borrowing happened. We had just arrived at the new base and it wasn't strange. Then the whole thing went FUBAR and one of them came back saying 'I think they're up at the ridge' and you were gone.

What people fear most here isn't death isn't heat isn't the enemy. We fear this. More than anything.

Time. We don't have enough time. We didn't have enough time. It will never be enough time.

We go to the ridge.

Please—

Running through the compound. Yelling, heavy boots against the floor, barrel of my gun pointed at each new threat as I kick down doors. It's a concrete maze stinking of urine and feces. We move together, we three left, clearing empty rooms and store rooms and rooms





RYAN

JULIA HYAC

where awful shapes lie still. The smell of rotting human flesh is unique. I could never forget after that first corpse, split open like something overripe. Maggots. The smell lingered in my mouth for days.

Yelling—pop pop pop— 'we found him.'

We three enter. They let us enter; the platoon knows you are ours, this is ours, it's ours to deal with

I look at you and I almost don't recognize you. It takes a solid stare at the discolored swell of your face. I look at you and see a messy death. I look at you and see a death of screaming and then of the noises a man makes when he thinks he's screaming, but he's so hurt he only groans. I see cuts that won't have the chance to scar your chest and arms, lashes and welts whose redness will not fade. There will be no shiny scars for you to compare with ours, to let time and the sun take the contrast of it away. The blood on you is old, it's that rust brown color. You bled so much I can't tell skin from rag. It dripped and smeared on the floor. After, I'll think, 'it'll have to be a closed casket funeral.' But I am in the now.

I look at you and I see a table in front of you and I see a map. One finger on the map and a few words is all it would have taken, and we'd all be gone.

You didn't point.

Your torturer is in the corner, hands held above his head, weapons taken away. He gibbers nonsense words, even if I understood what he was saying it would be nonsense, a member of the other platoon confirms that he did this to you he admits it my body runs numb

If he is found by his people he will be called 'interrogator' and, eventually, 'hero' as if he were brave as if he did something great as if he fought you

But he is not a man and he is not an interrogator and he did not fight, he only pressed knives into the bones of men who wouldn't talk. This is not a man this is a thing that

We said we'd feed our blood to the sand but not like this never like this this is blood spilled out onto concrete floors in a box the worst way to go that one great fear

Wordless, everyone leaves me in this nightmare of a room with him. She and he take you out, carefully, gently. He begins to understand, my intentions dawning on him, wide white eyes and begging

There's red on my knuckles and on the walls. The head of the thing is like a deflated balloon. It tried to fight

back, barely landed a hit on me. Or maybe he did. Maybe I just can't feel

Once I had him on the ground I had him pinned I was on top and I punched and punched and punched

One of us drags the creature outside and dumps it in the pile of bodies.

Let the meat rot, and the scavengers pick the bones.

I smooth the hair out of your face. I leave red marks on you like the dust you would smear on your forehead trying to push your hair back like Catholics on Ash Wednesday

He and she bracket me and gently lead me away. You go into a black bag

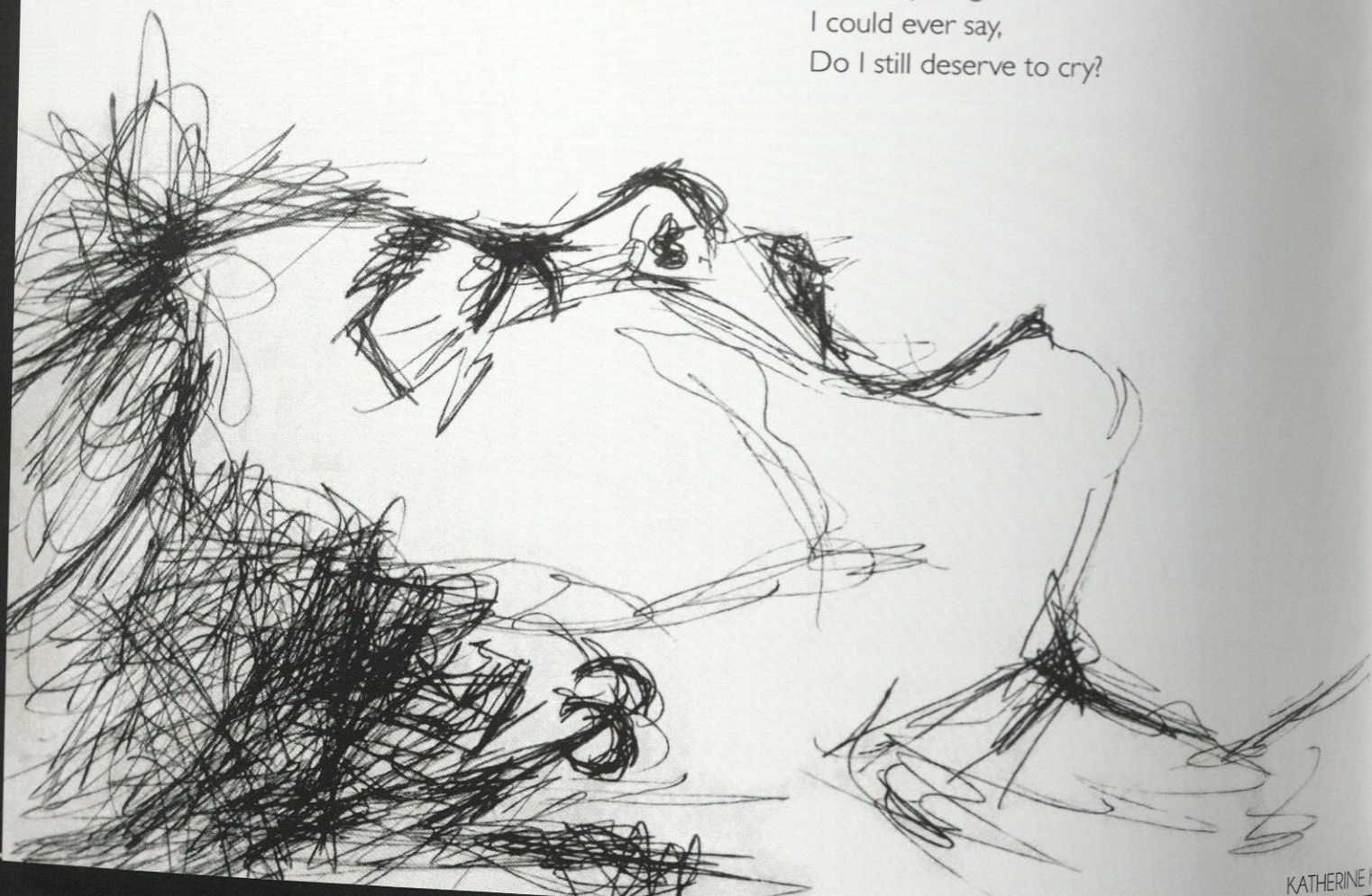
There's blood under my fingernails for days

The three of us left go back. ♦

THE MERITS OF WEEPING

BY APRIL ARTIP

If I had to describe him
I would say he is,
Was, intelligent, a good person,
Words that sound like they
Belong in an obituary,
Impersonal, nondescript.
Is there a requirement for
The eloquence in which I must
Speak of him?
Is there a prerequisite for mourning?
Is there a cut-off for
The amount of time
Since we last spoke
Before my tears are insincere?
If there are those
Who call him "friend,"
"Brother," "son,"
Words with more meaning
Than anything
I could ever say,
Do I still deserve to cry?





COURTNEY LEE

THE HARVESTMAN

BY DANIELLE DEVILLIER & KARENA LANDLER

Town history was about the only part of the local library that the boarding school down the road hadn't quietly bought up and siphoned away into their private halls. She and Graham spent hours there, looking through reams of old articles about the fall festival, new additions to the local fire department, and pictures of kids from the public school making paper rockets.

In short, it was very boring. Perhaps it wasn't even Ella's fault that she had gotten distracted.

"Hey Graham, check this out," Ella said, holding up the newspaper clipping. "'Local Woman Disappears, Rumors of Harvestman's Return.'"

"That is not pertinent to our research project," Graham said primly. He picked up another clipping, staring at it pointedly.

"This one is cool, seriously." She shook the clipping in his face.

Graham set down his own papers, sighing. "Harvestman?"

"Listen, it's some town-legend shit," Ella said. "Some lady was walking in the woods and ran back into town crying about something called the Harvestman following her. She disappeared from her room the next morning and was never seen again. Spooky, right?"

Graham snatched up the article, tilting the paper towards the lamp. "Sixteen disappearances attributed to the Harvestman over the past hundred years..." he muttered. "That's way too many... it follows its victims through the wood... heralded by the smell of smoke and the sound of cracking wood..." He shuddered and made a face that reminded Ella of a catfish, though a real shiver of strange delight ran down her spine.

"Cool legend, right? 'The farther it sounds, the closer it is.' Very creative."

"Yeah, I guess it's... interesting. It says here... the Harvestman 'is summoned by the sound of its name...'" Graham looked up. "ELLA, WHY WOULD YOU LET ME DO THAT?"

Ella laughed. "Oh, sorry, does that scare you?"

"You didn't even stop me from saying the name! Ella, that's like saying," his voice dropped. "*Bloody Mary.*"

"What was that? Bloody Mary?" she asked loudly.

"Shh! Don't make me say it again."

"Did you say Bloody Mary?"

Graham made an unsuccessful grab for her face to stop her saying it the third time, and ended up falling out of his seat onto her lap. She shoved him off, and picked up the news clipping.

"Why would you let me say the name of the creepy body-snatcher, Ella? Those things are always after me for my godlike good looks!"

"You are so mistaken I don't even know where to start," Ella said, standing and slinging her bag over her shoulder. "Get your shit, the library closes in ten minutes."

After a brief scuffle during which Graham asked Ella for the ninth time that day to *stop swearing*, they were walking beneath the streetlights back towards the campus of their boarding school.

"Besides," she added, "you don't actually believe in any of that stuff, right?"

Graham was silent, shuffling his feet in an irritating manner against the pavement.

"Oh, come on," she said. "They just made that shit up because they didn't know what science was. You're not dumb enough to believe in monsters."

"I just—" Graham faltered. "I would prefer to respect things that I don't understand."

"What, like you respect calculus?"

"Rude. Disrespectful. I am mortally offended. I am wounded."

"Not as wounded as you'll be when the Harvestman comes."

Graham groaned and walked faster, leaving Ella to trot after him. She grabbed his arm and dragged him towards the other side of the deserted street.

"Nope. I'm not going through the woods."

"Graham," she said, linking her elbow through his and dragging him bodily. "My simpleton friend. The school literally owns the woods. It's like fifty feet of trees. Two minutes in the woods rather than an *hour* of walking around the hill. Comparatively, the woods are safer."

"It does not take that long to go around. And timing has nothing to do with safety!"

"Come," she said. "On. Now."

"If I die," Graham declared, "I will haunt you."

"Now, that is my actual worst nightmare," Ella said. "Good thing it will *literally never happen*. Because *ghosts. Don't. Exist.*"

"I don't believe in ghosts," said Graham indignantly. "It's just that I don't **not** believe in them. Also, the harv—the thing isn't a ghost." He extricated himself from Ella's hold.

"So you're not afraid?" Ella asked, trying to grab Graham's arm again. He sidled away.

"Not in the least," he said with pompous affectation. "I require no hand holding. If we were we attacked, I would valiantly defend you. I can bench 250."

She went to grab his arm again, but then realized that the movement was akin to feeling up his bicep. Which... she wasn't doing. Didn't want to do. "Bull."

"No, I really can bench 250," he insisted.

"You know that's not what I meant."

They were silent for a moment, and the only sound was the quiet crunch of leaves beneath their boots.

"It's—uh, getting really dark," Graham said after a moment, attempting gruffness.

Ella pulled her phone from her pocket and switched on the flashlight. The woods circling the campus were strange; not quite wild but not quite manicured. The trees were trimmed regularly and the brush was cleared away, but the path was infrequently used, and the flashlight unsettled Graham more than the dark did. Now he could see just enough for the movement of the leaves to play at the corner of his eyes, for the woods to feel alive. Breathing.

Ella's breath was loud in her ears. Her footsteps were soft. Her fingers brushed Graham's. They were cold. There was a beat, a pocket of still, and then something snapped behind them.

Graham spun around. It had sounded like a branch breaking. Loud. Right behind them. Ella lifted her phone, and the harsh white light fell across the trees where the noise had come from.

"Did a limb fall?" Ella asked.

She shone the flashlight down to the ground, on the path they had just walked, and where something might have fallen, but it was clear.

"That's weird," she said.

"Ella," Graham said, the slightest quiver in his voice. Ella felt colder than she had a moment ago, but she pushed

Graham around towards the school and marched him forward.

"Trees make noise," she said. "There are animals and shit."

"So that's your explanation," Graham said quietly. "Animals and...stuff."

"You can bench a deer?"

"I'll keep that in mind if we meet one."

From behind them, there was another crack like the snapping of wood. Loud, insistent. Graham froze, and turned to look back. Ella grabbed his arm, notions of bicep-feeling be damned, her fingers digging in. "Keep walking." *Keep walking, keep walking, don't look behind.*

"Ella," he said very quietly. "Do you smell smoke?"

"No," she said. It was a lie. Reassuring him (just to reassure him, not for any other reason), she added, "there's no such thing as the Harvestman."

But the smell of smoke was unmistakable, right behind her, or next to her—she couldn't tell where it was coming from, but it curled up around her and into her mouth and nose.

The noise came again, still loud and still behind them. Graham did not stop this time, but his breath came faster, and his head tilted down just slightly towards her. "Please don't say the name again."

"Shh," she whispered furiously, and walked on. There was something crawling down the back of her neck, like snow dripping down her collar. The dark crowded in, and her phone light felt flimsy and fragile.

Another crack, from farther away. Quieter. Behind them. Ella stopped and turned.

"Whoever you are," she called into the trees, trying to keep her voice even, "you can fuck right off!"

"Don't, Ella," Graham said urgently, and she grabbed his hand before marching forward again. They were half-way through. A few minutes walk and they would be in the quad and on their way to the dorms for the night.

Graham was breathing hard, and his hand shuddered in hers. He cleared his throat gently, and sniffed once.

'The farther it sounds, the closer it is.'

A stick snapped somewhere in the distance.

She wasn't sure when she decided to start running. The fine hairs on the back of her neck prickled, and she broke, Graham following closely behind.

The flashlight beam shuddered erratically as they ran, crashing through brush and stumbling over unseen roots



on the path. Graham's shoulder crashed into a tree, but he righted himself and kept on running. Hooks and tangles grasped at them from trees, sharp and biting, where there once there had been nothing but branches of red and gold leaves.

From far off behind them, there was the crack of a twig.

The trees all looked the same, yet all unfamiliar. The shadows shifted and bobbed and reached out for her. Ella dropped her phone, and did not go back for it. It lay screen down behind her, shining light up into the branches.

"Straight," Ella gasped, "go straight."

They should have reached the campus. *They should have reached the campus.* This was not their forest. They were running uphill. Why were they running uphill? There was no hill. There had never been a hill in the woods. The only hill around the town was the one leading up to the dorms on campus, and it was a grassy field. *There was no hill.*

But they were running up one.

Ella gasped for breath, and the cold air bit her lungs, and her hand slammed into a tree. It tore her from Graham's grasp, and she lunged for him once she had passed it by, but he was not there.

"Graham!" she shouted. Nothing. Not a sound. An unnatural silence over the trees. She was the only sound.

Her, and a crack far off like someone stepping on wood.

"Graham."

Smokey wind blew into her face as she ran, and her eyes watered. The ground was evening out. Her hand was scraped, she thought. Bleeding. But she didn't feel anything. Her fingers were numb. There was light ahead. Light. The school? Light.

She stumbled to a stop.

Graham stood in front of her, bent down to lift something slowly from the leaves. It was her phone. The flashlight shone up into his face, casting harsh light over his cheekbones. He straightened, and stood waiting for her.

She sagged, and threw herself at him, snatching up

the phone and grabbing his hand to pull him on.

Ella didn't see the edge of the trees until she burst through them, and cleared a healthy ten strides with Graham, who was working not to outpace her. She trotted to a stop, and turned to look back at the trees.

"See?" she asked breathlessly, dashing the moisture from her eyes. She dropped his hand, which had been warm in hers. "Nothing there. Nothing to worry about."

Graham stared off into the woods as Ella turned back around to look at the familiar grounds of the campus, and the streetlamps that lit the paths. There was the grass, the quad, the brick of the buildings. It was all as it should be. All dark, all normal. In the distance, a few students still milled about outside. But the night was strangely hushed.

"Says the girl who started running first," Graham murmured. He was still staring at the woods as though mesmerized.

"The woods," Ella admitted, "at night, was perhaps not the best idea. Anyone could have been in there. But it wasn't some monster that snatches you up at night."

"Yeah," Graham said. He had a distant, detached look about him. "Maybe you're right."

"I mean, I guess I'll admit that something was off, but—did you just agree with me?"

Graham finally looked away from the woods. "I guess so. It was probably nothing."

Ella left him at his room, three doors down from hers. "What if we just... don't talk about this again? Like ever?"

Graham sighed. "Right. Yes. Sounds good."

"You aren't afraid, are you, anymore?" she asked. "Really?"

Graham snorted. "No. I'm good. The woods are weird as fuck, huh?"

"Yeah," Ella said, unlocking her door. "Weird."

"Wait," he said, throwing a hand out to keep her from going. "Can I sleep on your floor tonight?"

Ella sighed, and tried to suppress her own tickling unease about being alone in her room. "Yeah, totally. I'll get you a blanket."

It was when she closed the door behind her that she thought about what Graham had said. *Those woods are weird as fuck, huh?*

Graham never swore.

The stress is getting to him.

She showered, and the tension left her. Safe in the light, there were no monsters. The terror of the woods was gone. It was nothing, a phantom in the trees, her own mind playing tricks on her. But anything seemed terrifying in the dark. Her mind made the smoke on the wind and the noises of the trees into a monster, as had the minds of countless people whose loved ones had gone missing over the years.

There was no Harvestman but what was in her mind, and in Graham's.

She sat at her desk awhile in her room, with the lamp on, looking down unseeingly at her notes for her project. Graham was already asleep on the floor near the window, curled up quietly into his blanket.

Bed, she decided finally. Bed, before I dream up any new terrors.

She clicked off her desk lamp, impossibly tired, and stood to walk to her bed. The room was cast into darkness. She hadn't taken a step before she heard a bang on her door, and froze.

"Ella?"

It was Graham's voice. When had he left the room?

"Ella, please." He was close to screaming. "Are you in there?"

Her doorknob rattled; she had locked it when she came in. Graham had not left the room. The back of her neck felt curiously cold, as if a curl of cold air had touched it. A whisper of breath.

"I lost you in the woods!"

'Several of the apparent abductees have described their experiences before their disappearance. According to these accounts, at the Harvestman's quietest, it is standing at your back.'

"Ella!"

Far, far off behind her, out her window and down the hill, in the woods and almost inaudibly, there was the crackling of wood. ♦



ADAM SEMPREVIVO

RIVERS (FOR ANNA)

BY FIONA KENNEDY

I left you in the river pines
Along the dusty track
A whisper in the underbrush
That caught me whirling back

I felt a shiver in my ear
The ghosts of lives forgot
Of mountaineers who shouted long
And echoed in my thoughts

I heard a song that laughed like you
That flowed with emerald ease
With stepping stones I found my way
And lost you in the trees

I dreamed about a valley once.
I loved the life we shared
But when I woke the foothills loomed
And kept me moving there

I touched a stony mountain peak,
Left etchings on my bones
I wandered where the birds don't fly
Where river pines can't grow

I found no quiet in the heights
No peace in gray and blue
Instead I shuddered at the span
Between the stars and you

So see me through the trackless nights
Bring no more roads to roam
My eyes are shut, my feet are sure
And rivers guide me home.

ACTING IN THE APOCALYPSE

BY TANNER CALL

The end of the world literally ruined my life. Okay, maybe not technically my whole life, but it definitely destroyed my career. Radioactive cockroaches attack New York City, exterminators have an endless lineup of work. Earthquakes level San Francisco, construction companies are rolling in the dough. Tornadoes wipe out the entire Midwest, suddenly Prius factories become goldmines.

But acting? Nope, acting went away as quickly as Florida sank into the ocean. I always hoped that the end of the world would be something like *The Hunger Games*, where a pretty actor or actress could be the “face” of the revolution (or at least where we could fight each other to the death). Instead, acting became useless. Apparently, no one wants to watch a romantic comedy after their entire family was vaporized by aliens. Well, excuse me, but I thought the arts were more important than that. I thought the arts transcended human suffering and allowed us to reflect on what it really means to be human. Although, I guess that mission statement would need to be adjusted now that we have a whole zombie demographic to appeal to.

Oh, the zombies! You can't even imagine how lucrative advertising became once zombies started popping up all over the world. Almost overnight, billboards, TV commercials, and celebrity endorsements for Brains2Go or Brain-tein shakes flooded the market. All the products were pretty much the same (low quality crap constantly repackaged to look new and exciting), but I guess when

you cater to an audience that's as dumb as zombies, you don't need to put much work into it.

Now, you might be thinking, “Hey, if there's celebrity endorsements for zombie products, then surely actors can get a job somewhere,” but I have two things to say to you. 1) Congratulations on not being affected by the government mind-control experiment and being able to produce your own thoughts, and 2) you're wrong. Getting into the product endorsement business is a lot harder after rampant biological warfare left half the country hideously disfigured. Call me progressive, but I don't think having melted eye sockets should stop my face from being plastered all over highway billboards just because it would “scare the children” and cause drivers to “careen off the road in horror.” It's called inner beauty, jackweeds, look it up.

I guess one good thing did come out of all of this. No lines at the gym. It seems people stopped caring about their appearance once those creatures crawled out of the ocean floor. I don't know about you, but I still think it's important to die your best self. If I'm going to be hunted down by killer robots, I'd at least like to look decent when they harvest my body.

I've gotten a little ahead of myself, but here's what I really want to say. Just because the world's gone to pot and we're barely hanging on to civilization as it is, that doesn't mean acting isn't important. After all, who's going to tell us what to think or believe if actors don't exist anymore? ♦

I As stated, verbatim, in my rejection letters



YOEL FESSAHAYE



SONIA VOHRA 21

UNTITLED

BY SARAH BOTHNER

there is no such thing as
(everything is dazzling
serendipity and hopskippity
life is a whirl of a wind and a
s

i

g

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of content

the moon pats you on the back as you walk past and
the earth tucks you into your blankets
whispers goodnight
but one day there is a big red fiery **IF**
hiding at the bottom of your favorite coffee mug
you take it to work with you
tie it to a tree where it patiently waits
lingering in the rippling wake of your qualms
straining against its porcelain tether
leaping when you finally reappear;
you are mine—

it sleeps at the foot of your bed
wakes you like a little girl on christmas morning
sits loyally at your feet while you pour your cheerios
down the drain
again
perches on your shoulder while you
chain-smoke cigarettes
until one day it slathers your world in gasoline
watches as it chars and splinters and
crumbles into blackened crusts
its work here is done)
perfection

ON FIRE

AFTER "AFGHAN GIRL" BY STEVE MCCURRY
BY REGINA ANDREONI

watch the flame
dance alone drunk,
stumbling over wind
at its wick's end.

that girl, she's built
of brittle kindle,
trampled twigs,
hot air, and
a spark.

the saying
*all fire burns
itself out*
must be true.
no one else could
snuff her.

if dust sustains
her flame's color, then
history blazes blood red,
memory fades to smoke, and
rage burns green.

THE WOOD.

BY ROBERT H. FEILER

Should you ever find yourself quiet in the wood on a dead Winter's night, be still. Listen.

Hear them creak hear them fight. As darkness drives a creeping cold; these giants freeze from within.

Soon they're, too, overcome, bursting violently into silent night. White stillness - and then.

Timber shards splinter eerily out, falling to lay on snow's moonlit crest.

But when the ice thaws some new thing comes from this great wound.

It will be good again, remember,
waking as those giants do, wearing the growth of their frostbite fears.

And too we sleep and wait for Spring's green to dawn,
not just again, but greener now, greener now than we were then.

How small we are to question nature's design,
the one we're in and our own,
fearing God's frost upon our skin.

FOREWARNING.

BY ROBERT H. FEILER

Siamese souls, oh you've seen?
Conjoined concerns, yes, I know
as a fatal half of a star crossed two.
So yes, my friend, I've held your place.
I know what it is to share a flame,
always remaining tethered there,
despite the warmth, despite the pain.
The choice leave, just yours to make.
But, before you do - know the stake.
Come close, hear silence, feel still;
for once a pulse there did fill.
See, I've kept the spirit, she the beat.
Soul and strength, cleaved in hate;
her half, life, mine the dream.
My love and I's - what's left to see -
a ghost of fate's sublime conceit.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

BY MADELINE TAUB

Completed by Police within 2 hours of incident

Location: 2100 Block, Library Lane **Officer Name:** Madeline Taub
Date of Incident: Saturday, October 7, 2017 **Time of Incident:** 8:23 p.m.

Brief Description of Incident:

It was a normal Saturday night on campus when, at 8:23 p.m., Free Time was found dead. I, as an elite member of the investigative team, will walk through this mysterious incident in this report.

Upon finding the body, the cause of death was unclear. There were no outward marks besides bags under the eyes and a cup of coffee splattered nearby. Jonathan Smith, a freshman, discovered the body while trying to figure out where the library was. He found Free Time and promptly screamed and ran into the nearest building, which happened to be the library, alerting much of the student body.

Soon after this occurrence, the police were alerted and we arrived at the scene. In order to figure out this case, we had to take a step back and start with Free Time's daily life. Free Time was a freshman from California. His parents, Leisure and Recreation Time, were very surprised and distraught, reportedly saying, "As a child Free was happy and never stressed."

Next, we turned to Free Time's best friend, Tim Johnson, who informed us that "Free was just a real chill guy, always willing to hang." When we asked how Johnson thought Free Time died, he said he didn't know. "But, now that you mention it, I called him the morning of the day he died and he didn't pick up, which surprised me because Free is never busy."

We then turned to his roommate, Kai Hart. Hart explained that "Free was super easy to get along with. The day he died started like any other day. He woke up without an alarm, left for breakfast, then came back and turned on some music. I left the room to shower and when I came back he was nowhere to be seen. Didn't think anything out of the ordinary, though."

His girlfriend, Jane McPhee, reported the following. "I usually always make time to hang with Free. I would try to push things in my schedule around; he always had time for me. The day he died, I texted him and told him that I wouldn't be able to hang out this week because I

had 3 tests and 2 papers all this week. I'm just really busy, you know?"

We traced Free Time's activity throughout the day. After leaving the room around 8:33 a.m., he went to the dining hall at 8:42 a.m. Jack Block said that he had eaten alone that day. "He asked to sit with me but I told him I only had about two minutes to eat. I was busy because I had to rush to do some last minute work at the library." So Free Time ate alone. He left the dining hall and texted McPhee at 9:07 a.m. McPhee said she was studying.

Next, Free Time went to his Economics class from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. Professor Kim Walsh told us that Free Time had stayed for the entire class. "He has a bad habit of coming and leaving when he wants, so I made him sit in front and stay the whole class, which seemed to distress him. I didn't think much of it; college kids usually seem on edge." From 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., there were six different witnesses who saw him sitting on the lawn. One witness said, "He had a book open and it looked like he was trying to study; I would have gone and said hi but I was trying to get to a club meeting." At 1:15 p.m., Free Time was seen in front of the library, looking as if he was trying to decide whether to enter. By 2:00 p.m., he went into the library.

The librarian reported that Free Time seemed to get increasingly stressed throughout the evening. Around 5:30 p.m. his friend Sally Thomas saw him studying. "He was freaking out; I've never seen him like that. He kept repeating, 'I'm so busy, I really have to work.'"

The next report we have is Free Time buying coffee from the library cafe. The cashier said, "Free kept asking if coffee would keep him awake. I gave him the coffee and told him I didn't have time to talk to him."

In the next account, he is seen in a video recording running out of the library at 8:20 p.m., a cup of coffee in his hand. He was found dead across the street.

Cause of Death: Neglect induced murder
Witnesses: Jonathan Smith



COURTNEY LEE



MICHAEL GABRIEL CASTANO

I UNDERSTAND

BY TOM PATTIZ

“Okay, I see why you got a C now,” he said, sitting behind his desk as he hunched over the paper. It was more painful than difficult to discern his words as they filtered through his thick white beard in the familiar and only slightly nauseating monotone, which made him sound as though he were always lazily chewing a slice of pie. Lifting his eyes above his bifocal glasses, he glanced at the young man before he continued.

“Yes. I’m very glad your TA pointed this out. Students are always struggling with this. You see, after the introduction here, you just haven’t stated your thesis clearly. You mention infant mortality in Brunei and decreasing literacy rates, but you don’t tell us what exactly you mean. You don’t connect those ideas for us.”

“I see. So a clear thesis would be something like ‘My workload at this university has caused me to contract chronic bronchitis and possibly several neurological and behavioral disorders.’”

“Yes,” he said, still staring at the paper. “That’s it. I understand exactly what you’re saying. Now, let’s look at the body paragraphs here. You begin by defining the dependent variable in your study, which is entirely appropriate. And you explain it quite well. Mhmm... mhmm... and you define ‘independent variable.’ Well done. Ah, but here is your mistake. You forget to define the word ‘dependent.’ Happens all the time.”

“So that would be something like ‘Dependent means contingent—as in, your life force is contingent upon, among other things, your ability to breathe and maintain a steady heart beat.’”

“Precisely. That way, I know exactly what you mean as you proceed with your discussion of the issues. And you have the same issue with the independent variable. Great explanation of your independent variable. Great definition of the term, but you didn’t define the word ‘independent.’”

“Free from outside control. My fist is free from outside control. I can clench it and release it when I choose.”

“Mhmm. That gives me a clearer sense of what’s going on. Now, let’s look at the body paragraphs. Hmm. Ok. Your topic sentences are all wrong. You shouldn’t state a fact with your topic sentence. Rather, make a claim that

can be contested or argued.”

“This is your last meeting of the day.”

“Exactly. And then the paragraph should support that topic sentence with evidence which clearly proves the truth of the assertion.”

“You won’t be able to see anymore students.”

“Yes. That sort of thing with a bit more elaboration. Perhaps office hours are ending or I have another engagement. It could be any number of things. But, we are in agreement. Yes. And that seems to be a problem with all of your topic sentences. Ok. What else. Ah, yes. This next point is a bit more stylistic, but I still think it’s quite important that you have good transition sentences that move your paper logically from one body paragraph to the next, connecting the evidence for us.”

“This is not only your last meeting for the day—”

“That’s it. Yes. And that allows me to follow you more easily as your discussion develops and leads to its conclusion. So... let’s see now. Mm. Yes. I rarely ever have students who know how to write a proper conclusion. You see, you just summarize your paper and restate your thesis, but you are supposed to conclude.”

“As if to say *that’s it, finished, done, it’s over.*”

“Mhmm. You understand now, and I know why you didn’t get a better grade on this paper,” he said, setting the paper down and beginning to type on his computer with his head tilted slightly upward. “I understand. It’s midterms. You have so many examinations and papers and readings. On top of that, you have extracurricular commitments to balance your schoolwork with. You probably have to work a job as most students do. And of course you also need to relax every once in awhile, catch up on your rest, meet new people, and actually have some fun. It’s nearly impossible to make time for it all. Now, just do all the readings for the class and spend more time on the next paper, and you’ll do just fine.” He continued typing on his computer as he heard the door click shut. After responding to several emails, he looked at his watch and bent over to collect some papers into his briefcase. Shutting the briefcase, he stood up and held down the power button on his computer.

“Oh. My. You’re still here. I don’t understand. Why have you locked the door?” ♦

PERFECT CREDIT

BY JIMMY MCNAMARA

I want to die with perfect credit.

I will spend my years,
Taking care of bills,
And Lord, I won't regret it.

There will be no drama or scheming.

They will find my will,
So clean and neat,
And Lord, I will be beaming.

They will celebrate my perfection.

My death will be,
As they will see,
My last financial lesson.

Let me see their private dance.

And when joy turns to shame,
Please let them know,
I forgive them in advance.

I want to die with perfect credit.

I will spend my years,
Taking care of bills,
And Lord, I won't regret it.



YOEL FESSAHAYE

WHEN I FIRST MET YOU (OR, TO MY GRANDPARENTS' COUNTRY)

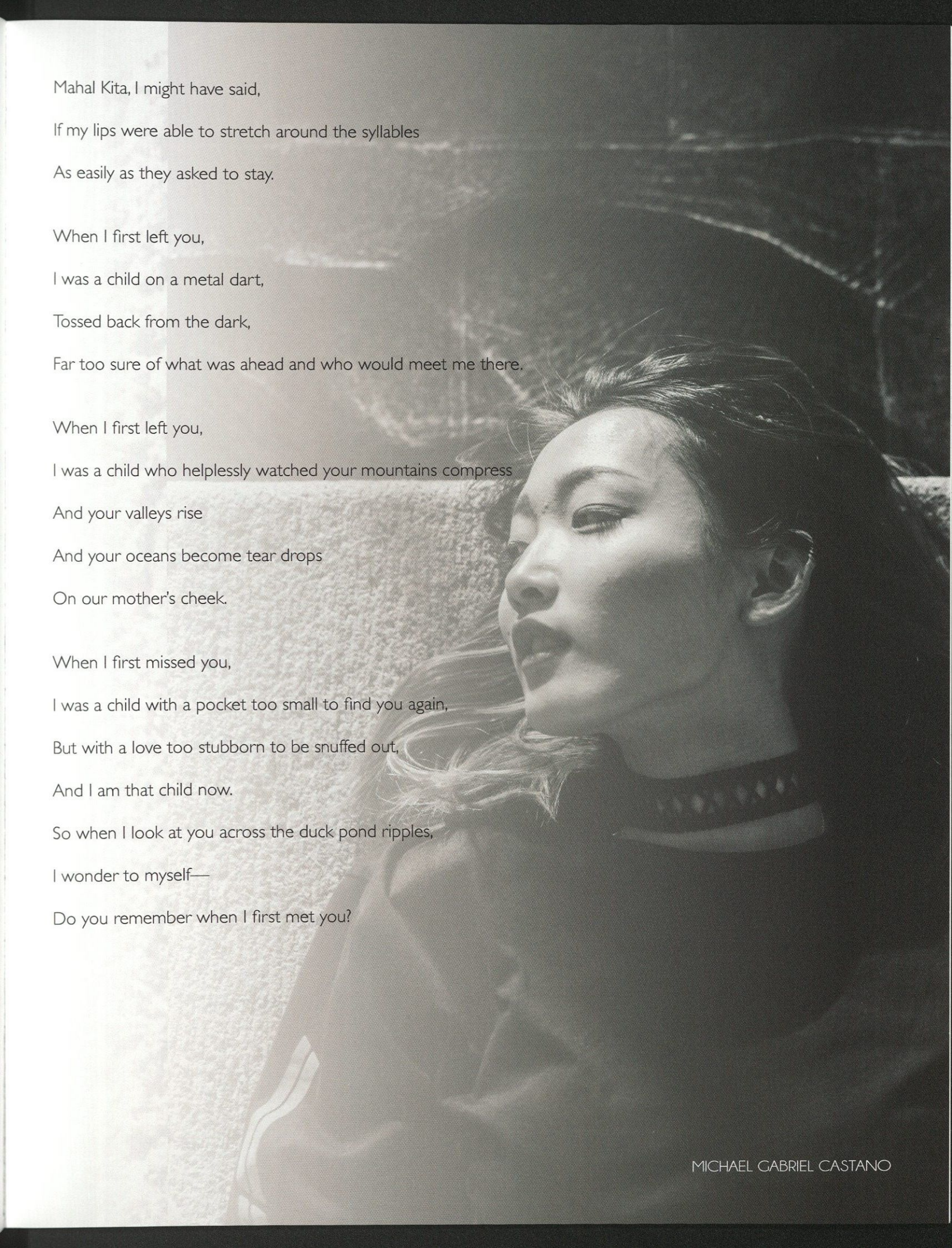
BY CAROLINE SARDA

When I first met you,
I was a child on a metal dart
Thrown blindly into the dark,
Not knowing what was ahead or who would meet me there.

When I first met you,
I was a child whose head had never traveled above six feet,
And whose heart had never stretched across duck pond ripples,
Let alone vast ocean waves.

When I first met you,
Your thick city air raced to fill my lungs and dampen my skin
With the violent joy of a childhood friend,
And the fierce familiarity of distant mother,
Lost too long to time and place.

When I first loved you,
I knew our time was short and our days were numbered,
But somewhere between the stop-and-go tune of your urban symphony
And the soft hum of your mountain air,
I forgot how to count.
Suddenly nothing mattered
But the sunlight dripping over your strawberry leaves and the countryside
Touching the highway,
Like a grandmother caressing a newborn child.



Mahal Kita, I might have said,

If my lips were able to stretch around the syllables

As easily as they asked to stay.

When I first left you,

I was a child on a metal dart,

Tossed back from the dark,

Far too sure of what was ahead and who would meet me there.

When I first left you,

I was a child who helplessly watched your mountains compress

And your valleys rise

And your oceans become tear drops

On our mother's cheek.

When I first missed you,

I was a child with a pocket too small to find you again,

But with a love too stubborn to be snuffed out,

And I am that child now.

So when I look at you across the duck pond ripples,

I wonder to myself—

Do you remember when I first met you?



ADAM SEMPREVIVO

MAPLES

BY AUSTIN CORONA

I don't remember what season it was, though I'll assume it was fall. Accordingly, I was wearing a red fleece and khakis which would have broken in fat furrows over the tops of white Nikes. Mr. Kulas probably tied a bow tie around my fleece collar that day, haranguing me about the virtue of dress code. My backpack would have hung low on my back even though it hurt my shoulders sometimes. I must have had class in Eliot hall, because that's where the mail room was, slotted into a corner in the bottom of the building.

Paul Torres worked in there. He eventually knew my name, though I had to remind him after each summer. He kept a green pickup truck out back next to the class where I had statistics. I wanted that truck—I stared at it out the window every day. If he sold it to me I don't think I would have even taken the little Portuguese flag off the bumper.

Now I remember that I wouldn't have gone to Paul that day—I didn't have a package—I would have just pulled my letter out of the mail slot. One thing I know I'll never forget was the satisfaction of opening those mail slots—the key would throw up a little smooth resistance before easing the bolt out of the lock. I used to check my mailbox every day and it was usually empty.

I would have pulled the letter out of the mail slot, swung my backpack down to the ground, and slid the white envelope inside between my books, trying not to bend it or let it sink too far down. Then I would have walked down the hallway and noted every face that passed me, their clothing, their gait. I probably passed five people in that hallway that I knew well enough to greet by name, and then exited into the Massachusetts October outside. The trees were probably gray at that point. They were probably thick and hoary around our little round campus and they would be shutting out any view beyond the library. My pace would have been slow, unintentional. My lanyard was likely swinging from my pocket, anchored there by my keys.

Here, I remember more. I stopped to look at the

maple trees outside Bryant-Paine house. Every year they leapt into flame and slowly died, weeping their leaves into the grass where Ryan Sheff played soccer with his little brother. That day was cloudy. The water in the road had put out much of the color in the maple leaves—they lay soaking in it. Still though, there were those that remained perched in the tallest blades of grass, reminiscent of the week past, waiting for the wind.

I opened the door and sauntered to the steps—old steps. I may have skipped up them or done them slowly—this I can't recall. I walked down the hall and into the dorm room, shed my backpack from my shoulder and went to sit on my couch—a sad saddle-backed piece of furniture mashed awkwardly under my bed. I stopped before sitting down and reached into my pack for the letter, pulled it out, and noticed with slight disappointment it was from Basalt, CO, the little hamlet where I grew up.

Usually these were pleasant letters—"I'm so proud of you Austin," "you're a good kid, Charlie Brown," "we all miss you so." This one was a photo. At first it was unclear, though with time the recognizable form of an iceberg emerged from the blueness, a little rainbow across its back like a sash for a frozen beauty queen. There she was, Ms. Arctic Circle in her aquamarine dress, waist deep in glacial tide, smiling up from my right hand. The letter, from my father, read something like this:

"Dear Austin,

This is an iceberg in an inlet we used to pass through on the Tatshenshini. There were inlets like it on the Chilkat and Alsek but nothing quite like this. I remember this day, it was the one day the weather let up and we could see. One day I'll take you here—and if we never see it together, I hope sometime you can see it for yourself. I always thought it was the most beautiful place in the world."

I can't remember the rest of the letter because I couldn't finish reading it, my eyes were full of tears and I didn't want to drop any on the paper. ♦

FROM THE EGO ANTHOLGY

BY PROFESSOR DAVID GEWANTER

"The Ego Anthology" will appear in the forthcoming book *Fort Necessity*

I. jumble Ego,

like a sagging barn, let's say, a barn sagging
with old toys gathered from city streets—
like a hidden doorhandle, a handlebar
mustache, your stash of love-letters, the love bite
you gave to your arm; like an armoire
bursting with party-clothes, a clothes-horse
you ride naked, ride until you come,
a come-as-you-are party of one,
a party of one hundred cloudy mirrors
that city folk find in the sagging barn,
all the trinkets looking vaguely familiar
like that special poem tucked in the drawer,
the one sent by your old love, remember?
you had said, *this one speaks to me.*

III. last stop Ego,

"...the Berlin Wall came down, the markets opened—
all this killed off downtown Lodz; now our clothes
come from China. Yet after the mills closed,
look! the snow turned white. We never knew.
Old Poles stand in the doorways, staring past you,
selling flowers or forks. Everyone you meet
is drunk: some guy throws a cat, or a baby,
out the window—should we be shocked? Lodz
has two plans to save itself: build an airport
near the highway, or get tourists to visit
the old train station: we were the last stop
before the camps. Everyone goes to Auschwitz,
their hotels are full—not ours. We're building
a memorial, and we've got the cattle cars."

IV. Ego rampant,

all grown, toothed and whiskered, a sweaty walrus
of appetites, a towering Samuel Johnson: mutton
and mince at his waistcoats, bird bones snap and fly back
to the plate. Queen Anne had touched his mottled face,
but could not cure it of *King's Evil*. His clucks
and whale-breath, his hands jerking like Dr. Strangelove—
How to restore the body? He wrote "Happy Valley"
tales to pay his mother's funeral, found the book-stall
where he had snubbed his father, stood in rain for penance.
Gravities pull at the joints, till the tendons stretch
and sag. Our animal pains distract us from acting
human, as books and company kept Johnson from
staring at Hell, and feeding his old friend, depression:
My breakfast is solitary, the black dog waits to share it.



COURTNEY LEE



ADAM SEMPREVIVO

SUN RISE, SUN SHINE

BY SASHA JOVANOVSKI

Says God.

Our cosmic order, whatever

It does with its time

Filling our days with

Every thing.

Stars are its bones, lying

At the base of Yggdrasill

It sings without fear:

*Eg elski teg.**

Flowers grow there, catching

Freedom from the wind

And life's daughter becomes

Death's bride.

The giant of sand and salt, sinking

Back into the gap

Scatters white petals over

The devil's grave.

Its name is every thing, never

Sitting still in the grass

Where God says

Sun set.

*In the Faroese (from Old Norse): I love you.



ADAM SEMPREVIVO

BALLAST

BY CHRISTY WISE

Email.
10 PM.
CT results.
Ambiguous.
Clinic closed.
No one to call.

I turn to you, O Vergil,
stalwart that you are.

Sinking into
your profound verses
is like stretching out
on a massive, warm boulder
in Desolation Wilderness.

Centuries
of words
and granite,
assure me
that I, too,
can endure.



ADAM SEMPREVIVO

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

BY MARY-CECILE GAYOSO

Dear Management,
I apologize for addressing this to "Management". I am not sure who will read this, Randall or Cynthia or Charlotte. I'd address it to someone directly, but I just don't know. There are so many of you. I know you are legion. Your eyes are everywhere. They're in the water cooler at the end of the hall, the one that always leaks. They're in the broken ceiling tile and in the wastepaper basket next to Danielle's desk. You probably already know what I'm about to say, but here it is.

I'm quitting. Effective immediately. I'm sorry for not giving you the usual two weeks notice. You might have heard the rumors around the office. I tried not to tell anyone, but Danielle, you know her, she's so nosey. That's why you watch her from the wastepaper basket.

I expect you want an explanation. No one ever quits the office, no one ever leaves. But I can't take it anymore, my job has become impossible.

There are other words too: depressing, hopeless, futile, existentially and spiritually devoid of happiness. This job used to fill me with life and purpose, now I am a ghost. More of a ghost than Tristan in Cubicle 5, and he is a literal ghost from the battlefields of World War II. Even he tells me that things are not the same.

The hauntings are pointless. The possessions lacking. My post has become unbearable. You will read my file, no doubt, but let me tell you in my own words what went wrong. I was assigned to the space beneath Evan Carpenter's bed seven years ago. He was six and stubby, with fat little arms and legs and a mop of curly black hair. His fears were listed in alphabetical order, something I always found odd and meant to speak with Management about.

His fears were as follows: Arachnids, Danny DeVito, and Thunder. I spent a few hours at my computer before my first shift, searching for "Danny DeVito." One look and I understood the source of this child's fear. Evan was a difficult case. How do you combine spiders, loud sounds from heaven, and tiny little troll men together? What would the ultimate scare be?

As a Level Five Minor Demon from the Sixth Circle

of Hell, I am used to challenges. Before coming to the office, I was a coffin prodder. I poked the feet and heads of heretics burning within their tombs. A stupid job, but it paid the bills for several hundred years.

When I came to the office, I was excited. When I was assigned to Evan, I was thrilled. I spent hours concocting the best scares. My shadows flickered on the wall during midnight storms. Tiny Evan slept with the covers over his head. He shook like a leaf, whimpering and crying out in his sleep. And when a blast of thunder woke him up, I would moan, "Eeeeeevvvvvaaaaannnnnn." I timed my voice with the wind, so it sounded like heaven itself was howling his name. He shot out from under the covers, saw the sharp black shadows on the wall, and ran to his parent's room.

This happened every time it stormed.

I was rather good at my job. I learned to mimic DeVito's voice and said things like, "There's a spider on your blanket, Evan." I also tapped my nails on the floor and growled like I imagined a spider would. It was only after Tristan made me aware of the fact that spiders do not growl that I stopped. But it was too late, Evan now associated growling with spiders. Which made my job even better.

The whole office was jealous. I got the fun one, they said. I got the creative assignment that let me expand my mind and expertise. The space beneath Evan Carpenter's bed would look great on my resume.

It will still look great, but now I must explain why I quit my assignment. It should gladden you that I will have to stumble through some kind of explanation when speaking to future employers. I am sure no one will hire me again. Not after this.

I am quitting because Evan Carpenter is no longer easy to scare. And I don't mean this in a lazy way, I am a hard worker, you know this. I always rise to the challenge. I stand on my toes and rise and rise until my head brushes the ceiling and I'm looking down at the boardroom. Danielle shivers, coffee spilling out of her Styrofoam cup. She knows how hard I work, how high I rise.

So this is not a work ethic thing. This is a soul thing, a life thing.

Evan is soulless, lifeless. I've watched him age, go from child to teenager to old man. He is only thirteen, but he is so...sad. I know teenagers are not easy to scare. I paid attention at the workshop the office hosted three months ago. You can read all my notes, they are attached for proof. With all due respect, that workshop was completely nonapplicable. Evan is not suffering from too many video games or the demons that now take residence inside that little thing called a phone. He is suffering from something in his brain.

Something is cracked. I noticed it a year ago. He started spending more time in his room, just lying on his bed. He stopped smiling, stopped reading, something I know he loves to do. I listened to his conversations with his parents from the shadow of the laundry room. I know I was out of bounds, but I needed to hear this.

"Why are you quitting marching band?" his father asked.

He sighed. I could hear the cogs in his brain turning. Were they already cracked then? He said, "It's not fun anymore."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. It's just not."

There was a pause, a very long pause. The dryer went through its cycle. Then his mother said, "Is something going on at school? Are people being mean to you, Evan?"

"No. I'm fine. I've got homework to do, okay?"

He went back to his room and shut the door. I slipped into the air vents and waited. For what, I do not know. I waited to figure out what was wrong with Evan, but nothing ever happened. There was no explanation. He was quiet and withdrawn and he never said a word, not to his parents, not to himself, not to me.

You see, he realized there was a monster under his bed when he was seven. We never spoke directly, that is against protocol, but he did give me a name. He called me Maria. Whenever it stormed, he said, "You can talk now, Maria. I know you only talk when it rains." I said nothing.

I never said anything. But he said things to me every

now and then. Told me jokes, talked about his day at school. I never made myself known, so please do not get the wrong idea. I did not breach protocol. He never saw me.

But he knew I was there.

I knew he was struggling. With what, I never found out. It was unseen, but it was real. I know it was real because last week, Evan Carpenter killed himself in his room, in that place I used to haunt. I used to lie beneath his bed and think about ways to scare him, to meet my quota. But then I started thinking about ways to make him happy, to make him smile. Kids deserve to smile, right? I know the office doesn't believe in that sort of thing. We are a neutral force, a force that pushes and inspires and terrifies humanity.

I'm sorry I wanted to help him. I know my protective feelings were wrong. I am not his parent. I am not his teacher. I am his monster, and I failed him. Because as a teenager, he wasn't afraid of spiders or Danny DeVito or thunder. Whatever he was afraid of, it did not dwell in the dark. It dwelled out there, in life, in a place none of us can understand.

So, I must quit. This job gives me nothing. I am convinced the office is no longer necessary. Humans have always been terrifying, but now they have perfected something we never will. They can scare themselves, and each other, more than we ever could. We should all go back to Hell, where we belong. The Earth is lost, it is full of humans.

If you read all of this, thank you. I assume my last paycheck will be deposited this Friday at noon. Thank you for employing me for the past five thousand years. I enjoyed my time here. I hope you find someone suitable to fill my position, maybe you could promote Danielle. She's been waiting for two centuries.

Best regards and Sincerest Apologies,
Maria



MEGAN HOWELL



SOUNDS LIKE POETRY

BY LEONOR MORROW

It's a wonderful feeling not pressing the skip button when listening to my Spotify playlist.

Too often, I have found myself skimming over once-loved songs and still-memorised lyrics.
Too often, I have sighed at sheet music that I once longed to play by heart.

I would never have imagined myself tiring of Billy Joel and Vance Joy,
but lately there have been days when even Vienna doesn't comfort me.
When nothing can satisfy my ears.

When I have to scroll down Facebook for hours
just to experience the feeling of liking again.

I can measure my restlessness by the searches on my Google Chrome history.
How each entry sounds wistful and just a bit nostalgic—
When added together, they almost sound like poetry.

Yesterday, I was worried that it would always be this way.
That I would never dance to Brown Eyed Girl or Twist and Shout ever again.

Yesterday, it was even difficult for me to appreciate the sound of rain,
the hum of city buses,
the static on my boyfriend's alarm clock radio.

But today, miraculously, comes relief.
Today, I haven't pressed the skip button once.

The sun is shining for the fourth day in a row.

PAST PRIME AT A BALL

BY CHRISTOPHER STEIN

I spin like death
atwirl at the ball
whose punch punches you
in the guts, held fast
by whalebone corsets
and the heady silk
of buttoned waistcoats.

I spin like death
because you laughed
that day in Vienna
when I said, "I will
go far." You laughed
as the chandelier does
in a crowded hall with
the air in a tizzy over taupe.

I spin like death
even though my feet,
like my hands, are now
that same shade of taupe
as the train on your gown
and spotted like the cheetah
at hunt by the watering hole.

I spin like death
toward that watering hole
which bubbles. You said, once,
in Vienna before the war,
that I would never afford
a champagne worth the trouble
of the pop, but now I drink champagne
like the English drink tea—

and it has me spinning like death tonight.





JULIA HYACINTHE

