

# Litmag

2017

University of Missouri—St. Louis

Cover Art: *Skin* by Emilie La Breyere

**UMSL**





# faculty advisor's note

On behalf of the English Department, we welcome you to the 2017 edition of *Litmag*.

Coming together during a remarkably mild winter, when the city of St. Louis barely felt the presence of ice or snow, the 2017 edition of *Litmag* is anything but mild in the range of stories, poems, and visual arts it offers our readers. The student editors who produced the journal this year worked diligently to cultivate a collection that demonstrates both a reverence to literary tradition as well as a postmodern aesthetic, showcasing artistry that celebrates formal verse, literary allusion, and vintage throwback alongside pieces that challenge convention, grapple with difficult current events, and assert progressive social commentary. One thing these authors and artists share, however, is their willingness to take risks—in form, in subject matter, in the vulnerable spaces they inhabit—and that is certainly what I find most admirable in the work we have presented here.

The amount of time, energy, and skill required to put this journal together is no small measure, as it is fraught with strict deadlines, continuous multi-tasking, and lots and lots of reading and discussion. Although the work is pleasurable, the pressure our student editors endure to accomplish all that goes into the production of the journal is daunting at times. I refer to them as “student” editors, but the reality is these students are engaged in the full scope of professional press activities; not only are they responsible for reading, evaluating, and selecting the pieces that appear in this publication, they also participate in marketing and promotions, fundraising and selling advertisements, solicitation, copy-editing, document and graphic design, distribution, and publicity. And they do this all within a single semester! I am beyond grateful to have worked with such a talented, thoughtful, and dedicated group of student editors who, like the authors and artists whose work is featured within these pages, must be commended on the work they do to enhance the literary presence we have on UMSL’s campus. To see the final product of their efforts in your, the reader’s, hands makes every moment worth it.

We are proud to present this issue to the campus community, and we thank you for continuing the *Litmag* legacy by reading, submitting to, and supporting the journal.

Kate Watt, Faculty Advisor

# acknowledgments

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## about *litmag*

English 4895 Editing *Litmag*, a course in editing and publishing a student literary magazine, is offered at UMSL for the spring semester. Students interested in enrolling can contact Jeanne Allison at [allisonjea@umsl.edu](mailto:allisonjea@umsl.edu).

## about *litmag* contests

*Litmag* conducts three individual contests for the Best Poem, Best Prose, and Best Artwork submitted to the magazine. Contest winners are determined by the editorial staff and are based on a variety of qualities related to technique, composition, insight and originality. Specific criteria for each award can be found on the English Dept. *Litmag* webpage.

*Litmag* also publishes the Besse Patterson Gephardt Award winning short story offered by The Wednesday Club of St. Louis. This award is given to the best short story written by an undergraduate at UMSL, as determined by a third-party judge.

Creative work solely reflects the views of the author and not necessarily those of UMSL or the English Department. *Litmag* is proudly printed by Mira Digital Publishing [www.mirasmart.com](http://www.mirasmart.com).

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Night had fallen swiftly, spreading across the surface of the buildings and to the outreaches of the campus. The deepest cobalt clouds slid across the darkening sky, settling upon the icy surface of the otherwise warm climate. The sun finished dropping, vanishing over the horizon and leaving blackness in its place. The evening cries of insects rose, echoing over the silence of the compound, giving it a minor breath of life in an otherwise dead area. The shadows of the decrepit school buildings crossed over one another, hiding the ground from wandering eyes. There was a world of possibilities underneath a sea of darkness.

Within one of the smaller buildings was a small party, consisting of Dani, the leader; Conrad, the trickster; and Emily, the mutineer. If anyone asked though, they were anywhere but there. Dressed in the dusk's obscurities and illuminated by their fire's flame, the group sat in anticipation of the foreseen events. Conrad lounged over an old metal container, which had been crunched over time, with arms behind his head and legs propping him up precariously. Emily rocked on her chair, listening to the squeaks of the ancient woodwork. Hands resting over the back of the chair, she faced out over the nothingness outside the safety of their spotlighted area. Dani was otherwise occupied, peering out the window at the building across the way.

"I'm getting bored," remarked Conrad without opening his eyes or losing his smug grin.

"When does the fun start?"

"At this rate, never," grumbled Emily, glancing behind her at Dani.

"Anything yet?"

"Not that I can see. Movement is hard to track when it's this dark."

"We could switch on the lights already. It's an easy fix. I could do it in less than a minute."

"And give away our presence!" snapped Emily, slamming her chair legs to the ground. "Don't you ever think things through?"

"Let me think about that?" he smirked.

Emily pursed her lips, glaring at him. She opened her mouth once as if to retort but shut it again and continued rocking. Dani smiled lightly, rolling her eyes at the group. They had spent too much time together and needed to recon with the main rebel cell, not that there were many of them left. The enemy had kidnapped a good portion of them in the last battle, leaving them with even fewer forces than when they started. Things were looking bad.

"What was that?" perked Conrad, sitting up alert and smashing his

feet on the concrete.

“Don’t do that!” hissed Emily, standing up as well. “You know that freaks me out!”

“No, seriously. I heard something. Listen.”

The three stood in anticipation, holding their breaths while concentrating. There was the faint sound of thundering footsteps, growing ever closer. Conrad turned to Emily and the two turned to Dani. She gave a gentle nod. Conrad leaned over, grabbing his rifle and clicking the barrel. The barrel’s blue light switched on, glowing an ominous color in the dark landscape. Emily sat down, bending over and tapping a button on the heel of her boots. A similar sapphire glow emitted from along the side, lighting up the soles of her shoes.

“Think you can keep up?” smirked Conrad, tilting the rifle on his shoulder.

“Think you can keep up with me?” responded Emily, standing up.

“I’ve got visual!”

“What we got?”

“Three Sym-bots...five drones.”

“I’ve got the drones,” grinned Conrad, setting up his rifle on the window’s ledge.

“I don’t even have to go anywhere.”

“Don’t miss. Or you’ll seriously give away our position.”

“Relax. I’ve got this...”

“See if you can lure the Sym-bots away,” Dani instructed, directing Emily in the opposite way.

“On it.”

Each of the three was equipped with the finest energy weapons that the rebel army could construct. Conrad’s guns, varying from pistol to rifle to an experimental mega blaster, were equipped with a unique electric energy, which supercharged the ammo and virtually prevented a lack of ammunition. Emily’s boots allowed her to run at an advanced speed, though it was physically taxing on her. Dani’s energy blades were the sharpest edges known to the rebel alliance. These three were the top of their ranks, which was why they were assigned together in the first place as the main attack unit. That first mission together did not end well.

“Got the shot?”

“He’s got the shot in sight. If he makes this, he’ll gain a ten-point lead over the speedy witch. Boom...”

Conrad’s finger wrapped around the trigger. The gun clicked, energy bullet flying forward, colliding explosively into one of the drone’s heads. The slug dug into the skull, rupturing into metallic and organic chunks. The

cyborg, more machine than man now, stumbled, feet slipping backward until his ankle rolled. The headless creature fell, gaining the attention of the other clueless drones.

“Ten points!”

“Don’t get cocky. I’m going to help Emily.”

“Lining up for the next shot. He’s going for a two for one...this shot is worth fifty points.”

Conrad moved to peer through the eyepiece. The Sym-bot, the commanding android over the drones, waved its arm, aiming its wrist blasters at Conrad’s window. He gulped, sitting up slightly. The blasters shimmered, switching from a charging red to an unstoppable white beam. Conrad leapt back, ducking behind the barrels as the charge slammed into the wall and window. The explosion devastated the wall. Conrad, hands over his head, waited as the dust and debris landed around him. The smell of corrosive liquid sizzling onto the wall remained sifted through what lingered of the room.

“Crap!”

He dashed to the window, searching over the liquefied wall remains for his rifle. The blue light dimmed, fading into the burning rot of the building. Conrad snarled, tugging at his hair. The Sym-bot loomed in the shadows of the night, only visible by the gateways to hell for its eyes. The metal head turned slowly, blank faceless expression turning toward Conrad.

“That was my favorite gun!”

Another shot fired, this time from one of the drones, scattering chunks of earth into the air. Conrad yelped, ducking back behind what remained of the wall. After peering out one last time, he quickly rushed upstairs, ripping his pistols from their holsters.

“Crunch time.”

Emily spun around another wall, edging closer to the enemy with great speed. A drone was lingering in the pack, dragging a defective limp. It was easily dismantled with a kick from the energy boots. The clattering of its android pieces falling to the ground called forth little attention, except that of the second Sym-bot. Being faster than their tracking monitors, Emily was out of sight before the mindless contraption could spot her.

“That was close...”

A chunk of the wall clipped off from a sharp blast, nicking her cheek. She stifled her gasp, feeling the blood begin to trickle down. The Sym-bot, still suspicious of the sudden and fleeting noise, was approaching with guns readied. A deep sigh, eyes burning in the rising heat, she took off as fast as she could. It wasn’t enough. A stray blast charged forward, striking Emily’s left arm. She felt nothing for a moment, then nothing but pain.

Falling forward, tumbling over herself a few times, she found herself lying face down in the dirt and dust. She coughed, choking on the pain resonating in the joint of her arm. The burning sensation radiated through her arm, bubbling along the wrist and up to her shoulder. Blood trickled along her skin, seeping between her fingers. She brushed her hair from her face, smearing the blood along her brow.

“Speed down, speed down!” Emily called out, feeling the burning in her eyes cool with the gentle saltiness of her stifled tears.

“Backup on its way.”

Two drones spun around, turning to face her. Not wanting to waste time, she cut them down the middle. They sizzled for a moment, sparking from the new incision at their hips. Oil and other assorted fluids spurted from their joints as they fell back like dominos. Dani had passed between them before they had collapsed.

“Conrad, status?”

Static.

“Conrad!”

Static.

“Crap,” hissed Dani, leaping over a walled-in garden area. It once held plentiful flowers and bushes but was now reduced to nothing but crumbled leaves and twigs.

Conrad could feel his heart pounding in his chest, echoing in his ears. His breath was labored, heaving his lungs in and out, slipping into the warm air and evaporating in the rising smoke. His throat was growing dry. It couldn't be helped. His pistols, now glowing an eerie cerulean, were pressed against his shoulders, fingers twisting over the triggers.

“C'mon...C'mon...I know you're there.”

The Sym-bot, ranging from 7 feet to 10, crashed through the lowered doorway. Conrad grinned, stepping closer to the gateway to the stairs. He heard the pounding stomps of the machine approaching. The joints hissed, releasing steam into the already burning atmosphere. Optics scanned the area, switching between visual, heat and ultraviolet scanners. Eventually, it located Conrad at the top of the stairs. It raised its arms.

“Bite me.”

An explosion ruptured. Emily barely gave it a glance. She had crawled her way to a crashed wall, offering her a basic cover for now. Based on her math, there should be only a few machines left. Most likely the Sym-bots were still standing, posing the biggest threat. The drones were easy to defeat. The Sym-bots were the true enemy, and there were three of them.

“Emily, location?”

“To your seven!”

Dani rounded the wall, kneeling beside Emily. Sweat was caking the soot and hair to their faces, apart from the streams of clear skin that the tears had rolled upon Emily's cheek. Dani dug into her pack on the back of her belt. It had limited medical aid, but the bandages would limit further damage to the wound.

"What happened?" Dani requested, wrapping the gauze around Emily's elbow.

"What do you think?"

"Sym-bot," the two spoke in unison.

"Where's Conrad? I heard the explosion...could only be him."

"His comm. is down. Just hoping he's still alive," nodded Dani, giving the wrap one last tug to prove its tightness. "You can stand?"

"He only got my arm. My legs are fine."

"Then let's go check on our sharp shooter."

They moved slowly, Dani helping Emily with the rising pain. Her fists tightened around Dani's arm, nails digging in. Dani didn't speak against it. The spotlights of the searching Sym-bots made it easy to avoid them. Counting the spotlights proved that only two of the three Sym-bots were out in the open.

"What happened to the third one?"

"I'm going to assume our guy got one."

The building they had begun in was burning, flames gushing from the pores. The gaping hole in the wall proved helpful, allowing the two to enter without much problem. The remains of the third Sym-bot were slumped against the wall, a shattered hole in the chest and an almost invisible hole in the center of its head. Its eyes flickered red then died.

"One down...only two more to go..."

"We don't have time to deal with the other two. You're hurt and it's likely so is Conrad. We need to evacuate."

"Not without one last boom..."

The two turned to the top of the stairs. Conrad sat on the second from the top step, leaning on the railing. The left side of his face was bleeding, burns barely visible passed his sideburn, but his ear was crumbled. He grinned, patting his final weapon.

"Boom," he mouthed.

"That's insane!"

"I'm not gonna let them beat me! I'm probably deaf in my left ear because of them! I lost my favorite gun cause of them! I'm at least taking out one more."

He hobbled down the stairs, dragging his left foot down each step slowly. Dani huffed, looking between Emily and Conrad. She was biting her

lip, and he had finished his descent. Oddly enough, they were both grinning.

“Make it count. Or else we’re toast.”

“I’m already nice and toasty,” he grinned, stepping slowly toward the opening. “They got their lights on?”

“Motion sensors probably active too.”

“Good. Then they’ll see it just before it hits.”

Using both hands to lift the weapon, one in the back toward the trigger and the other holding the handle to keep it lifted. He let out a choking sigh, struggling to breathe. A single blinding light swiftly found its place in the building, directly shining over Conrad. He was still grinning.

“Surprise!” cheered Conrad, pointing the gun upward and pulling the trigger.

The gun’s barrel glowed brightly with a white aura, firing a powerful beam at the shadowy Sym-bot towering overhead. A loud crack sounded, the light cutting out. Conrad stumbled back, dropping the gun. The machine moaned, red eyes fading in and out as it tried to adjust to the missing part of its head. It cried out, attempting to raise its arm and fire at the three. It fired twice, shattering the ground around Conrad, but failed to hit any of them. The machine fell down, crashing to the earth with a loud clatter.

Conrad threw his arms into the air.

“Hundred points! Conrad wins again!”

“Can we go now!”

The night was glowing orange, dancing flames and rising smoke sifting in the sky. The warm glow highlighted the once peaceful campus, drawing the attention of overhead crafts. Lights shone down upon it, further illuminating the destruction that had occurred around it. Troops stormed in, more drones, more Sym-bots. They came across the battle scene, with a single Sym-bot searching the area.

“So...is that a win or a loss?” commented Conrad, gesturing toward the campus down the hill from them.

“We’re alive...that’s a win,” nodded Dani. “Why’d you turn off your comm. again?”

“I didn’t want to hear Emily gloat.”

“And she doesn’t want to hear you, but if we need to contact you we can’t because of your stupid comm.!”

“I’ll put it on next time. Root beer?”

“Don’t bribe me!” shouted Dani, swiping the drink from Conrad’s hand. “Where do you even get this stuff?”

“I know a guy.”

“Does your guy know of a place to get cream soda?”

“I’ll ask.”

# requiem for a midnight stroll

---

alex neupert

I still remember our late-night walks  
and the way every small step we took  
brought us closer together and farther apart  
as we played with the words of old Fred and Walt  
with equal parts reverence and disdain.

We thought ourselves sophists at best, poets  
at worst, and trailing puffs of mint cancer,  
it took us neither long nor short before our  
feet had carried us far from blinding streetlights  
so that we could more fully know our folly.

It was like the time we took the Ferris wheel  
to the top—not of *the* world, no, but perhaps  
to the top of *our* world—a statement to both  
those above and below that maybe our truths  
were more than just half-whispered secrets.

We didn't know that it was already written,  
played out on canvas for all but our own eyes,  
almost begging us to look in the mirror and  
finally admit to ourselves that we were  
lost and searching but not for each other.

And each in turn we'd both look up  
at long-dead stars, our own mortality  
dawning on us as streaks of light began to  
warm our chilled souls and move us in ways  
not even we could fathom in our cleverness.

We were insignificant, it seemed, less  
purpose than a grain of sand on the ocean bed  
or a single cry in a sea of roaring voices,  
both unaware of the stories we had woven  
and the little satellites we met along the way.

# committed

---

catherine howl

I.

The dark asylum of day arrives,  
With clouds creeping insatiably  
Over a short length of light  
That will no longer penetrate  
Your boxed shoulders and back  
For the next forty-eight hours.  
Instead, your rough skin  
Appears bruised like a shallow  
Basket of overripe fruit  
We carried at the annual street fair  
Where our youthful fingers  
Were last woven together.

II.

We no longer wear rings  
Unlike the elders who still  
Gather in pairs,  
Their hands drawn in  
Stiff, arthritic poses engaged  
To the knobs of gnarled,  
Dragon-headed canes.  
And the committed  
Silver-haired wind gale  
Trips the alarm of impending rain  
Like the siren  
Of an approaching ambulance  
Coming back to collect us.



moonlight

ink pen and airbrush on paper

tam n. nguyen

# splash mountain

amela cikota

---



acrylic and Japanese paper on wood

# pygmalion

---

philip michaels

Sometimes I like to think that I'm not real.  
Instead of lovely lonesome fantasies,  
I dream of a girl who's dreaming of me  
Just for a change of pace on those long nights.  
Instead of lovely lonesome fantasies  
When magma in my lungs freezes and rots,  
Just for a change of pace on those long nights  
I picture her somewhere alone in tears.

When magma in my lungs freezes and rots,  
To imagine me as someone desired  
I picture her somewhere alone in tears  
Praying to Venus stone will melt to flesh.  
To imagine me as someone desired  
Sometimes I like to think that I'm not real.  
Praying to Venus stone will melt to flesh,  
I dream of a girl who's dreaming of me.

# skeleton

---

amber scholl

Most give gifts of pastel-colored petals  
but you press a skeleton into my palm  
light as the white dust of a dandelion  
just matted tangled veins, the remains  
of a leaf whose chlorophyll color drained away  
left brittle skin, cracked with age  
until decay consumed every bump and ridge  
leaving behind these bare bones  
like a spider's varicose web.

The wind snaps the skeleton from its stalk  
and sweeps it from the bed of my palm  
to surrender to some other corner of the earth.

I stared at Pip, my goldfish, through my swollen eyes as my phone rang on my desk. Pip's eyes were wide open, his mouth agape, and his belly faced the glow-in-the-dark stars on the ceiling. I looked away from Pip, and picked up my phone with trembling hands. "Hi Dad," my voice sturdier than I had expected it to be. "What's up?"

"I just got off the phone with your chemistry teacher," he replied, and I could almost see that crocodile grin stretching across his lips like it had so many times before when he'd caught me off guard in a lie. "Is there anything you want to tell me?"

I hesitated.

I had already lost, but I could soften the blow depending on my response. I knew better than to smile and lie, because then I'd be caught twice over for deceiving him, not to mention the trouble I'd be in for my grade in chemistry. But, if I were honest, he'd ask why I hadn't told him sooner, and I'd scramble to lie...again. "Elise?" he urged me on.

"I don't know," my voice finally shook.

"You don't *know*?" His crocodile grin faltered.

"Well what *do* you know?"

I looked at poor Pip, belly up. "You're angry, and Pip's gone."

"Anything else?" his voice refused to soften.

I drew a shaky breath. "I have a D in chemistry."

"So you *did* know," he laughed humorlessly.

"And you didn't tell me?"

*I didn't think I could.* "Pip is gone."

"Just flush it before it stinks," he replied. "We'll talk about this when I get home."

The line died and I threw my phone on the bed; *the lecture just got 20 minutes longer*, my mind scolded me. *If he finds out*, I replied, but he always knew somehow. I let myself look at Pip again, and his eyes looked back without seeing anything. I'd stopped crying once dad called out of habit, *the lecture continues to grow in length*.

\*\*\*

I stared at Pip as my father roared over me. I'd never get into a good school. I'd never amount to anything. Was I stupid? *I don't know*. I shouldn't be crying. *Why was I crying?* He wasn't even angry. *He sounded angry*.

Was there something wrong with me? *I think there is, Dad.* But I didn't say it, because I knew he wouldn't have believed me if I said so. I just kept apologizing, kept crying, while my brain kept spinning like a drill, digging myself deeper and deeper into a hole.

I counted nine apologies.

Maybe ten would have been enough.

Maybe not.

He was finished, at least for now, with his tirade. I knew he'd be back; he always forgot to say something. I laid in bed staring at the ceiling, trying to get my mind to stop spinning—it could have been for hours, or seconds, I didn't know.

My eyes hurt.

I sat up; Pip was still there, his stare accusatory.

*Can't even take care of a stupid fish.*

*How could you amount to anything?*

*Maybe Dad's right.*

That nagging voice in my brain spat venom into my veins. I stood and picked up the bowl that held Pip, poor Pip, roughly, the water sloshing, and almost spilling over the edges, but, blissfully, nothing escaped.

The bathroom was three steps from my bedroom; it felt like miles to go in enemy territory, but I made it, door shut, locked, alone. I put Pip on the floor and lifted the toilet seat and lid. I sat down, grabbing Pip and holding him in my lap. *I'm sorry, Pip.* The water spilled over into the toilet bowl. I closed the lid—I couldn't watch as I flushed Pip down the drain. I sat there, waiting until the noise from the toilet ceased, tears spilling over onto my cheeks in the quiet, too quiet.

Ten apologies. It wasn't enough. I wasn't enough.

I stood, washing my hands in the sink. I tried to avoid looking at my reflection, but I caught a glimpse anyway: purple and red-rimmed green eyes, sunken in cheeks, and chapped, cracked lips. I reached for the knob to re-enter enemy territory, and there was a knock.

"Did you take care of that fish?" my dad demanded.

"Yes," I don't know how I kept my voice from shaking.

"Good, make sure to spray air freshener," he replied. "Your room stinks."

I listened to his footsteps fading before wrenching open the door, and racing to my room, lavender scented aerosol in hand. I sprayed it heavily before placing the half used can where Pip used to be. Lavender did nothing to calm my nerves, but something stopped me from crying long enough to look out my window; the sun was setting, oranges, pinks, and the

singular, brilliant ball of red just above the horizon. I laid in bed again, turning out the lights, staring at the ceiling, door open, listening for the moment when the chatter turned to silence.

\*\*\*

My room was pitch dark, and quiet, too quiet, for me to sleep. I kicked off the covers and stood, walking over to the desk, tracing my fingers over the ring Pip's bowl had left. *Bet you heard about that*, that nagging little voice snapped at me. My fingers paused in their tracing, tears burning my eyes, but I blinked them back, my eyes already raw. I wrapped my arms around my chest, went into the bathroom and sat on the cold tile floor; the night light in the corner was enough to find the Tylenol PM in the medicine cabinet and take it back to my room. I sat on my bed, holding the bottle in my lap, hands shaking as I opened the childproof lid. *That's not fair*; the voice told me.

"Just enough to sleep," I murmured to myself before lying on my back, eyes open, mouth agape.

# serenade

---

amber scholl

There are no bullets ricocheting into bodies  
no chasms opening underfoot or  
earth crumbling into rubble

just words whipping flesh into wounds  
like bayonets bleeding us dry,  
our foundation thrumming with footsteps  
of a hundred memories' death march.

We trudge through trenches,  
our silences wrought with tolling bells  
and swan serenades  
hands clasped  
one finger on the trigger  
'til death or dawn.

# communion

---

jason becker

The meat of life, I freely give to you.  
The finest cuts, as well: The Saturday.  
The Sunday morning, dew-blessed and cool.  
I lay them out before you in a vast array  
Of tenderness. The red of blood exudes  
The iron scent of pride. The strong, white bones.  
The straightened path which winds the darkened wood.  
I offer you my mid-day energies, from home  
To labor under suns and days of rot,  
Until my love unfolds within my jealous chest,  
Until I balance perfectly between my part  
And your whole. Yours is all, and mine the rest.  
I ask no blessing, no return in kind.  
My service is the all-sustaining sign.

# world war iv

---

sean rolwing

*"This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a whimper."*

-T.S. Eliot

Mankind never could *stop* fighting. Wars, business negotiations, baseball games, political elections. Their hunger for victory and defeat saturated every aspect of their society: staining its fabric bloody forever. Even long after these concepts had turned to dust, buried well within the minds of lost men, humanity's struggle continued.

This Old Man, for instance, had fought every single day of his existence. He fought his way forward through his sterile, bone-white desert world; clawing up the dunes of dust and ash surrounding him like the grave mounds of Gods. He fought to keep the slashing gusts of sand out of his tightly pursed lips. He fought to keep the aching cold from freezing his muscles thickly solid. He fought to keep his eyes open as the ball of nuclear fire which poured through the open sky scorched the dried, dead-pan plains: leaving no places for even the shadows to hide.

He fought to live.

It had been closer to a century since the HELLSTORM. All the Old Ones, what scarce few remained, were always the ones to show up to the settlements to tell all the mad stories to the children: weaving weary tales from the Green Days with their worn and tired tongues. For these were truly the last men alive who really had any need of speaking to one another.

Their strange stories told about how Old Kane sent forth a hundred of his fiery war-birds from the depths of hell itself: their blazing wings swooping and soaring as they split open the skies. As all the war-birds died they crashed to the ground, and plumes of endless fire melted the land. The mighty sun, jealous of the fire's light, crept over every crevice of the land.

But these were just silly stories, made up for the children by starving dead men.

The younger ones, tired and emaciated, ate up every syllable of these stories to supplement their meager meals, while their parents shook their heads: dimly refusing the fearful truth behind the old words as they fought on through life, heads down from the terrible cold wind buffeting them ever backwards.

This Old Man, still clambering in a clunky, unbalanced gait up the ever-shifting landscape, was one of those who still tried telling the old stories, refusing to let them die. While the man had little in his possession of use to anyone else besides a canteen of acidic water, two precious matches

and his rat (he preferred the five-legged ones, for they held more meat), he still held something else even closer to his heart than his own comfort.

It was one of the old stories, perhaps even the oldest one left, printed down in the strange marks which so many now feared as witchcraft. While the paper felt like soft, crumbling fabric from its age and the ink had become worn in places to the point of illegibility, the cover page still remained half-intact, revealing a scene from the imagined. It was truly one of the mad stories, of the ones which could never make sense in this world again; but still it held heavy to the inside pocket of his long overcoat, always as close to his chest as possible.

He often entertained the thought of leaving it behind though, burying it within the gritty, bleached soil for some other forgotten soul to find. Too often had men tried to kill him upon seeing it, greedily putting hands upon it to trade to one of the War-Lords: always seen searching for the relics of old, believing them to still hold the power of their people. Too often had these same men died for the book.

He had just come from a place like this, where men still cowered together in their stilted, rotten-wood lean-tos: shitting in the wide-open and slitting each other's throats over whatever garbage flotsam drifted down through their dusty settlement. He had escaped a nasty lynching there, slipping out of town with a few more scars and a lot less hope than when he had entered. While these sort of sacrificial rituals weren't uncommon amongst men now, he would rather die in the deserts than allow his story to burn along with his dangling body.

The glaring light overflowing upon the land like water did nothing to bring warmth to the brittle bones of the Old Man as he finally reached the summit of the hill, staring off at the stinging rays of blindness as he continued to trudge towards the direction of Sun's Grave. Soon the brightness would end and there would only be darkness, leaving only the Moon to lie about which direction he walked. He needed rest.

Two miles later, he began to glimpse the glimmering, mirage-like outline of a flat, squat building half sunk into the dry, hungry sands. He issued what sounded to be either a squeal of delight or delirium as he began shifting his feet ever faster towards the opaque image on the horizon. The light also began to shift rapidly through the spectrum ever faster, leaving the reddish-golden hued day behind in favor of the violet, violent night as the Old Man found himself before the cracked double doors of the stone building.

Pushing the sand partially clinging to the doorframe backward with a sudden, forcing motion, the old man swung open the entry of the old Municipal Bank & Trust: still firmly planted into the dried-up Earth with rusted

iron roots year after unknowable year. It stood alone and decrepit, like the abandoned shrine of a lost and forgotten culture. Most people avoided the old places as if they were the Black Death, but the Old Man had hardly ever had a choice as to where or when he could rest.

A gust of arid, musty air billowed out from the shadowy blackness of the entranceway, now gaping open like the gates of Inferno, or the jaws of some primordial leviathan. The stench of stale air forced the old man to cover his nose with his handkerchief. He thought for a moment that perhaps it might be better to leave this mausoleum of the modern undisturbed, and rest outside. But, remembering, as all men truly do, the howls of the hungry in the endless pitch night, he crossed into the threshold.

The floors and glass partitions were cracked and rimmed with grease. The walls were covered in dust and sand: the paint having crusted over and fallen lazily onto the ground long ago. Only dim, gray beams of light shone through inside, revealing only motes dancing lazily on the currents of air and what remained of a cork poster-board plastered with warnings and reminders and sales and deals. Old pamphlets and business cards crumbled and decayed into dusty ruin before his eyes.

Pinned onto the bulletin board was a faded, yet recognizable poster of a clean-shaven, well-tailored man, smiling with a gleaming white and wide-tooth grin resting confidently upon his face. Words, printed in red-white-and-blue, slanting across the bottom of the poster read: *Vote John Kane for President! Savior of the Free World!* He started suddenly, almost pissing his pants as his eyes ran over the face. The Old Man had finally come face to face with his devil.

The man who started the Final War. The man who tripped the great HELLSTORM. He tried vainly to reach for that faint ghost of a memory which his father had passed weakly on to him, of how the world was in the Green Days. Most of it, he had thought, sounded more fairytale than fact – like the maddening story he had held so close to his heart for so many a mile – so as an ignorant child he had never devoted much attention to its remembering.

Places on the earth covered with so much water that creatures could live long lives without ever gleaning the edges. Entire lands, big and wide as even the deserts now, covered completely with tall, green grasses. *Trees*. He remembered his father used that word. *Not grass, that's different. Trees were like thick grass, tall as buildings. They grew food that just dangled off of them, ripe for you to eat.* The father's mad words rattled through the son's ears.

Then the humans turned to animals, and the animals turned to dust, and that dust was whipped up into the unrelenting storm blowing out-

side. Only the driving, unceasing, inescapable fight for existence remained. He fought to stay conscious, crossing his chest with his hands superstitiously, before eagerly continuing his search for something left to burn to keep his bones from grinding and chattering together in chorus.

He slid slowly over the counter, eyeing with some hesitation the massive, gleaming, white-silver vault which stood open before him. The Old Man thought suspiciously that it might be some trap Old Kane left for someone a little too curious or desperate for their own well-being. They always told of how he did such things, trapping you or tricking you until you gave up your very own soul. This was his house after all.

A little too curious or desperate for his own well-being, the Old Man peered into the eerie opening and choked on his own breath with sudden surprise. The fortune which lay before him was one which few left could ever boast to have seen. The pile amassed upon the central table of the small room was several feet high, and the old man grew suddenly giddy, allowing strange sounds from his uncaged chest. He jumped up and down slightly before the crisply cut, green slips of fibrous paper printed before the HELL-STORM, allowing his wandering hands to tear out loose coils of sparse, rotten hair from his scarred skull.

Finally containing himself, he took one of his precious matches and lit one of the bricks of smooth cash on fire before tossing it upon the rest of the pyramid of paper. It burned with a strange-hued glow and emitted a noxious rank, but it burned nonetheless. Such prime kindling was a wealth usually reserved only for the families of the War-Lords.

Roasting his rat upon the open flames, he ate well for the first night in many, and soon grew to notice the heaviness of his own body, the numbness in his calloused feet, the heat returning to his skin. Wearily, he pushed his back against the wall and retrieved the worn story from his coat pocket. The half-torn cover still read in glossy print: *Moby Dick, Story by Herman Melville.*

The fire-light banished the shadows lurking within the creases of the book as he turned to his page, leaving only the darkness of the ink words to coast along the flimsy paper which held them within. The old man's mind wandered again to that incredulous idea of the water-lands, where so much liquid flowed that one man could never see the ends or depths of it no matter how his eyes strained to do so. So much water that fantastical beasts of unimaginable size and form flitted about in massive herds, above which floated magnificent towns of wood powered by the winds themselves.

*"Where unrecorded names and navies rust, and untold hopes and anchors rot; where in her murderous hold this frigate earth is ballasted with bones of millions of the*

*drowned; there, in that awful water-land, there was thy most familiar home.”*

Yes, the old stories truly were mad. Completely mad. The old man doubted there ever could have been so much water in one place. Yet the stories were beautiful, and deserved more than we could ever give them in return.

Returning to his words, he followed them along their winding tracks in that bent, broken trudge which defined his life for hours unknown. The fire stayed steady, sputtering out a heat and light he had never been shown before. This was not the cruel light of day, but instead the soft, forthcoming light of the hearth fire, forever the untrustworthy friend of man. He drifted softly downwards towards sleep, and in the dark abyss of his mind more dreams blessed him with colorful plays of comforting stories.

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The money had turned to ash now, and the cold bit into his body like fangs of bitter steel. He had sat, barricaded within the walls of the safe, for what might have been the third day now as the cold winds blasted sand throughout the air: completely failing to blot out the constant dim sphere of light which still passed across the faces of humanity exactly as it had done a thousand years prior, indifferent to the pain and carnage which contorted those same faces to tears.

The screeching nothingness, now but a ghost of the green forests which once blessed its vacuum, howled back a hundred curses upon the face of humanity for their betrayals. Hugging his knees closely to his chest, the old man clung to the memory of warmth as the Earth convulsed in sickness.

He, too, convulsed, as if the fear he had known his entire life had finally reached a deeper, cellular level, with every fiber of his being fearing for their own independent safety and now desiring to desert their dying vessel: like rats from a sinking ship. The tears he had once tried to hold back had long ago streaked frozen paths down his cheeks, and his mind quickly began to do the same: solidifying into a single thought of survival.

“No.” The old man said adamantly to the echoes haunting the walls, his only companions for days on end. He readjusted himself, clinging still to the worn memory of warmth. “No.” He couldn’t quite tell what he was refusing, but knew all the same that it was important to not give in to it quite so easily.

By that night, however, the cold had done its worst. His muscles were expanding and contracting desperately, fighting to keep alive. His fingers and nose were tinged black, as if death had already claimed him as his property by right. His bones felt like glass and his skin tore like paper from

the cold.

That same horrible thought had occurred to him a little less than an hour before, and he was unsure whether his head now shook from the cold or from his own stubborn inability to do what was to come next. Try as he might to push it back down into that black, subconscious pit, instinct had raised the unthinkable thought from the darkness, revealing the harshness of survival to the Old Man. It sat there, in his mind, festering like a splinter.

“No.”

Yes.

“No!”

*Do. It. NOW.*

“NO!”

*Burn the book.*

“I SAID NO!”

The sad screams died as they bounced back and forth in the isolation, along with the Old Man’s hope. Slowly, he fumbled to light his last match: his fingers fighting against him all the while.

He felt something weak pulling at him, pleading with him, please to stop, that he could never come back afterward. But something older and stronger tugged as well, dragging him kicking and screaming back to survival. *Live*, it wailed. *LIVE. LIVE!*

Whimpering, and slowly lowering his head in defeat, the Old Man struck the match: sending the sputtering second of flame hungrily onto the only fuel for days around. The brown paper turned black before him, hiding forever the inked-in words which he had so worshiped ever since his father had given him the book as a child. He hugged his knees back to his chest closely, not for warmth now, but for comfort, and closed his eyes: allowing either sleep or death to take him.

Eventually he would wake, and the winter storm will have passed. The Old Man will have survived, but he would never live again. Continuing to trudge, unknowingly, towards the Last Ocean, the cold, gray ashes of the book would remain behind him forever, resting peacefully amongst the dust and ashes of the rest of the world. Behold all, the death of humanity.

All appeared lost. But, he still remembered. Bits and pieces, but still, he remembered. And maybe that would be enough to live again. The words he had seen pass before his eyes so many times before, passed again before him as his back faced the East once more. He kept walking, trying to find water.

*“But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.”*

november 25, 2014

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jason becker

A brick, a rock, a stick, a bottle stuffed  
With rags and soaked in gasoline, with fire  
From scratch of heart on stony heart. Enough  
Of heat and spark, incinerates desire.  
An eye with love concealed, a fist aloft,  
A pulse increasing, quickened by the sound  
Of men—all young and free—heads hard, hands soft.  
The broken glass, the flickered, shadowed ground.  
And I, a river and a screen away,  
Consider all the province of another life.  
I stretch to feel the revolution's sway.  
I feel my otherness, I strain for strife.  
I flail against the river and the screen  
But cannot penetrate the in-between.

# police station

natasha chang



digital



downtown apartments

photography

vincent blount

# reunion

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ethan c. crombie

John Campbell hobbled slowly up the stairs to the upper level of the Ulster High School library.

It was a huge wing. The two halves of the roof met at a 45-degree angle, turning from drywall to glass near the junction to form a bright atrium reminiscent of a Roman or Gothic cathedral. John had entered through the doors at the back (east) from the main hallway. At the opposite west end were the outside doors, below a huge glass wall. The sun was perfectly positioned to flood the whole library with golden light. Although the library was empty except for John, classical music was still playing over the PA speakers.

The upper level consisted of two platforms on the north and south walls, which connected with the roof at 40-degree angles to form alcoves. John could have taken the elevator, but he was in no hurry, and the medication had all but eliminated his knee pains.

His destination took up the entire northern alcove: the Archer Heritage Museum. Ulster High School was among the oldest in the Midwest. First built in the year 1925, it was already 25 years old when John had graduated. This was its second campus, still one of the oldest buildings in Ulster township. When the building was renovated and the new Archer Library was added in 2000, someone in the Archer Alumni Association had come up with the idea to dedicate a museum to the school, and to a lesser extent the district and the town.

John reached the top of the stairs and looked around. The museum was impressive. Portraits, relics, and signs were everywhere. Half the wall was occupied by a shelf containing yearbooks dating back to the founding of the school, along with archived copies of *The Range* (the Ulster High School student newspaper) and some special interest books about the town. At the west end of the museum, there was a television hanging on the wall, which John guessed played a video about the school during the school year. There were even handy audio-visual aids of the kind found in professional museums.

John walked over to a large book sitting on a table in the middle of the museum, which someone had left open. It was a book containing mostly pictures chronicling the major events of the school's history. The planning and building. The soup kitchen set up in the school cafeteria during the Depression. Pearl Harbor. The fire that almost completely destroyed the library in the original building. The first colored student. Air raid drills. The first time the Archers made it to the state football championship. The student walk-out demonstration over the Vietnam war. The groundbreaking cere-

mony by the mayor for the new campus in 1980. The time President Reagan visited the school. The dedication of the new library in 2000. September, 2001. And, most recently, the decision to close the school and merge the Ulster student body with that of another closing school to form a new high school. The museum would be moved to that new school.

John left the book open. He had never liked high school, and the news that the school was closing did not especially sadden him. He was never even sure why he kept coming to these class reunions. He walked over to the bookshelf and pulled out the 1950 yearbook.

On the same page as his own portrait was the person responsible for many of his only truly fond memories of high school. Heather Fletcher was his girlfriend from sophomore to senior year. They had known each other since first grade. On the next page was the person responsible for most of his other happy memories from that time. Terry O'Conner was his best friend, maybe his only friend in high school other than Heather. John had known Terry a little longer than Heather, but the three of them had been thick as thieves throughout elementary school to high school.

Heather had always been the most sociable. A member of the honors choir and a writer for *The Range*, she was well liked by most of the class of 1950. When she and John were together with others, she did most of the talking. John was more reserved, but Terry was the shyest. He had a girlfriend of his own, briefly, but John knew he also had a crush on Heather during high school.

On the same page as Terry was the person responsible for most of John's bitter memories from high school, and many from before. Eric Kraus was not smiling like most of the other seniors. His dark green eyes—Eric remembered even though the portrait was in black and white—stared directly into the camera. As far back as John could remember, he had always had that same look of profound unease combined with intense focus in his eyes. Mixed with his long, fiery red hair, people often said he looked a little crazy. Eric Kraus had tormented him since first grade. It started with minor harassment in grade school. In fourth grade, Eric began threatening John and Terry for their lunch money. He also started pranking Heather, putting a live snake in her locker once.

By seventh grade, Eric seemed to have lost interest in John. He still bullied him, but no more than he bullied everyone else. At that time he was the head bully of the class of 1950, and he had a lot of other students to police. As long as John continued to pay his lunch tax when asked, Eric was mostly content to leave him alone.

This relative peace lasted until about 10th grade. Sophomore year,

Eric had become truly violent, and although he continued to be feared by all the student body, he selected John as his favorite target.

By this time Eric was the offensive captain of the junior varsity football team, and a member of several other teams. This brought him popularity he had not enjoyed before 9th grade, and which would last until senior year, though John was never sure if he was ever truly popular or if everyone just thought he was popular and was too afraid to challenge the idea. Either way, he was at least envied by much of the Ulster student body. He had nice clothes, a nice car, girls chasing after him constantly, and by 11th grade he was being scouted by Ivy League teams. His life was good, and it was only going to get better.

So it was always confounding to John why Eric was so angry, and why, in particular, he was so cruel to him. John noticed it in his face the first couple of times Eric beat him up in high school. The somewhat playful and coy demeanor with which Eric used to extort him for his lunch money was gone. The intense uneasiness and strange wolf-like focus were still there, but behind that John saw something else: a hot rage which seemed to be present at almost all times, but which was especially obvious whenever Eric so much as looked at him.

Although John got the worst of it, many other students experienced this enhanced cruelty as well. They all learned to fear Eric's wrath, more than they ever had before high school. They also feared his gang. He had a small posse of sorts, a crew of about five other boys who served as his personal security force. Together, they terrorized anyone who so much as gave them a weird look.

But by this point, Eric was no longer the lead bully of the class of 1950. That office belonged to Johnny Laclede, who was the president of the Ulster High student council by senior year. Whereas Eric Kraus's popularity was always dubious at best, there was never any doubt that Laclede was truly popular. His circle of friends was extensive and included all four grades, and he always made sure to keep his favor in demand by including only a select few in his tight clique, while keeping the others who were vying for his attention content by awarding them lower positions in his army in exchange for fealty. He had all of Eric Kraus's wealth and status, plus he had charm and movie-star looks.

Whereas Laclede did most of his dirty work through his large network of accomplices, Eric still attacked kids directly and frequently. His small crew of bullies was made up of the lesser bullies who had been unable to or uninterested in rising through the ranks of Laclede's posse. While Laclede was mostly content to make sure his subjects were compliant, Eric

would not rest until they were *afraid*. Laclede may have been the highest-ranking bully in high school, but Eric Kraus still held the title for most vicious.

Laclede and Eric had been friends once, but had grown apart by high school. Those paying attention could tell they didn't particularly like each other. Terry once said it must be because Eric and his crew were the only group Laclede was unable to bring under submission through his allies. Eric was a renegade. Eric was always pushing things too far, disrupting the delicate balance of power Laclede worked day and night to maintain. Laclede could always use his charm and tact to smooth things out whenever the teachers got involved in something. Eric just had to keep the teachers on edge all the time. Both Laclede and Eric came from respected families in Ulster who were anxious to keep them from soiling their names, but while Laclede was always happy to make it as easy as possible for his family to cover for him, Eric always seemed to be daring the authorities to confront him. And this always made it more difficult for Laclede to keep his own hands clean.

During senior year, Eric and his friends became especially violent. Once, they descended on a group of students from Ulster Junior High and pelted them with rocks from slingshots. Another time, they beat up several Heartwood students at a lacrosse game with lacrosse sticks. Each time, they managed to get away clean or with a slap on the wrist. But Eric never seemed to especially care if he got caught and punished.

For the second semester of senior year, everyone stayed clear of Eric and his boys. Eric's underlings seemed to grow bored of inflicting pain and terror on others, and cut back their bullying efforts. But while Eric no longer patrolled the halls and attacked people on a whim with his boys, he continued to bully John, alone. His rage only seemed to grow, and John became terrified that, some day before they graduated, Eric might actually kill him.

Eventually he realized what it was. He realized it from the way Eric looked at Heather, the way he looked at them when they were together. The source of his rage was John's relationship with Heather. John didn't understand. Eric could still get practically any other girl he wanted who wasn't already taken by Johnny Laclede. Laclede himself had once tried to harass Heather into dating him, but had given up after being turned down the first few times. Eric's undying obsession baffled John Campbell.

But relief came the first week of May, 1950. Eric had received an acceptance letter from Notre Dame. He was going to be their defensive lineman. For the first time since 10th grade, he seemed truly content. He

no longer bullied anyone who wasn't really asking for it. He left John alone.

Graduation came, and John thought he had escaped Eric's wrath once and for all. When his sports scholarship was announced at the ceremony, everyone cheered, and Eric was seen smiling for the first time in as long as anyone could remember since 9th grade. John himself didn't have any plans for college, but he was just as happy to have high school over with.

But Eric was not finished with John. He was done tormenting John directly, but he wasn't about to leave for Indiana without hurting him one more time.

Two days later, Terry came home at night, badly beaten and bruised. Eric had come at him with a baseball bat while he was walking home from work. There was no hospital within driving distance of Ulster at the time, so two doctors had to make an emergency house call.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Conner had actually called the police this time, but there was no proof Eric had done it. John and Terry were expecting reprisal for the police report, but it never came. Eric moved to Indiana in July, and that was the last John heard from him for a long time.

John put the yearbook back. After looking through the other three from his time in high school, he started looking through some other ones. Heather had become a teacher at Ulster High in 1955, and in 1956 he married her. John became a welder.

Heather, John thought, was the reason he came to the reunions. Not just the class of '50 ones but, since she was a teacher at Ulster High, many of the ones in between as well. She would always mingle and smile, but John was never especially interested in these things, and he mostly held back.

They had a child in 1959. They named him Lucas, Terry's middle name. Lucas would himself end up going to Ulster High School.

John put back the other yearbooks and entered the trophy room, centered on the wall. The trophy room itself was 15 feet high; there was no other way to fit everything in. John walked past the shelves and display cases to a large plaque on the opposite wall. The plaque was a memorial to all the Ulster alumni who had been killed in war. The longest list was for World War II, then the Vietnam War, then the Korean War, then all the other misc. conflicts the United States had been involved in. John remembered how Heather had become deeply depressed when so many of the class of 1950 were killed in Korea. During that conflict, funerals were almost every week in Ulster. John himself had missed the draft, and had since always regretted not going over to fight. But he had family obligations at the time, and missing the draft allowed him to fulfill them.

Terry O’Conner, however, did go to Korea, and was killed toward the end of that war. John and Heather were devastated, but Heather, having already suffered immense grief for her other classmates, was all out of tears.

Heather had mostly recovered by the time they got married, but the grief returned in the mid-‘60s, when her former students started dying in Vietnam. This grief never quite left her. She was never again as bright and cheery as she had been in high school.

When Lucas died in a car crash in 1979, Heather again found it difficult to cry. Still, she retired from teaching the next year, the year they finalized the plans for the new building.

John left the museum and walked down the stairs to the lower level of the library. By now the sun was setting, and the aircraft hangar-like library was washed in a pink glow. He exited the library and walked across the hall to the cafeteria.

Hanging above the cafeteria doors was a red and white banner that read “Welcome Back Archers Class of 1950!”

The cafeteria was even larger than the library. There were no windows. The room was empty except for three other people. One was a current student reading, and another was a caterer (Ulster did not have any good venues nearby) tending the refreshments. There was only one other 1950 graduate. He was fifteen feet away, but John immediately knew who he was.

The first reunion had been miserable. Just 15 years after graduation, everyone was feeling the missing presence of so many who had been lost in Korea. Those who had returned formed a group on one side of the gymnasium, where the reunions used to be held, while everyone else tried to talk to them about the war, with varying degrees of success. No one seemed to be having any real fun, but John, still grieving Terry, was especially dejected.

John mostly held back during the 15-year anniversary, but Heather went around to chat. She was not any happier than anyone else there, but her outgoing personality enabled her to reminisce with her classmates, as it had allowed her to bond with them in school. John had smiled as he noticed how her presence seemed to brighten the mood at each of the tables she visited, turning the awkward melancholy into, if not a lively conversation, then at least a somewhat comfortable and relaxed situation.

Eric Krause was there. He had gone to Korea. Less than two years into his football career at Notre Dame, he had been kicked out, and then drafted into the Army. John had noticed the sort of uneasiness he had

always had in his eyes appearing in those of some of the other Korean War veterans, but in Eric's own eyes he detected a lingering weariness, under the perpetual nervousness and intense stare. His once long, fiery red hair was now reduced to a military crew cut. While all the other veterans sat together and talked amongst themselves, Eric sat alone, rarely engaging in conversation. Many wanted to speak to him. The glory of his high school sports accomplishments had faded, but now he had a new reputation. He was something of a war hero, a Purple Heart and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient. Everyone wanted to know his story, especially those who had been to Korea, but he shared very little.

The one person who was able to get the full story out of him was Heather. At the time, John was still bitter over all Eric had put him through in school, and he knew Heather hadn't forgotten either, but she was always the more compassionate, and was somehow able to put those memories aside and break conversation with Eric.

Apparently, Eric's whole company had been nearly wiped out. Those who survived were captured and taken to a POW camp. There, they were savagely beaten and tortured. Eric had helped hatch an escape plan, and led a prison break in which half the prisoners were able to escape and be rescued.

John watched their conversation from across the gym. He could tell even then that Eric still had feelings for Heather. John was annoyed. It wasn't that he was jealous. Heather was just a naturally empathic person, and Eric wasn't flirting with her. It just seemed wrong that they could talk so intimately, without so much as an apology from Eric. War hero or not, Eric still had a lot to answer for.

The 25-year anniversary was better. Among the class of 1950 there were some divorces, two suicides, and an incarceration, but they had largely recovered from the trauma of the war. John was also more sociable, and talked with friends about topics like Johnny Laclede, who had shown for the 15-year reunion and was one of the centers of attention there, but who had since moved away to California.

Eric was there again, and he was also more open to conversation, though still very reserved. Even in high school he had been rather reserved for someone of his social status, but he always welcomed the attention he received for his status as a sports champion. Now, people were still giving him attention for his status as a war hero, but he shunned them. One time, Heather ran into him and said "Hello Eric". Eric merely gazed at her with those uneasy eyes and said "Heather" before turning away. John was still somewhat angry with Eric, but he also couldn't help but have some admira-

tion for what he had endured in Korea, reluctant to admit it to himself though he was. Still, he wanted to confront Eric about high school, about all the things he had put him through. But for this reason or that, he never did.

By the 50-year reunion, the attendance had dwindled considerably. Many of the class of 1950 had already died, and many of those who remained were in assisted living situations. At the 15-year anniversary, some of the 1950 graduates had wheelchairs, walkers, and other medical accessories to cope with their injuries from the war. By now, more than a third of the attendants had some such device. By now almost half the people attending were spouses of the graduates, friends whom they had met later in life, graduates from other Ulster classes, and teachers. Those 1950 graduates who did attend stayed well past the official end of the event, as they knew this was the last time many of them would see one another.

Eric Krause wasn't there this time. Oddly, John kind of missed him. He heard that his younger sister had died. Apparently, they had been very close. For the first time, John felt truly sorry for Eric.

Now, at the 65-year reunion, it was just the two of them. Actually, that wasn't completely true. Archer Alumni Association records indicated as many as 25 members of the Ulster class of 1950 were still alive, and it was still a half-hour before the event was to officially begin. Still, it was lonely in that huge cafeteria. Very lonely.

During the previous reunions, John had held onto some of his anger against Eric. It had diminished over the years, but by the 25-year reunion there was still some of it left. But now there was no anger left in him. He was just tired, very tired. And he was lonely.

Nothing about John's school experiences with Eric mattered anymore. In fact, standing there in the cafeteria, with only Eric and two other people around, he was astonished at just how little he cared about any of it.

He sat down across from Eric at one of the round tables. His red hair was all gone now, and he was bald save for a few strands of white hair. Eric stared at him, still bearing that profound uneasiness, but now the weariness had eclipsed the sharp focus, and his once dark emerald eyes had faded to a pale green.

Eric was the first to speak.

"I heard Heather died," he said softly.

"Yeah," John nodded.

"I'm sorry", Eric said.

John paused for a moment, before saying "thank you."

The two continued to look at each other silently for a few more seconds.

Then they heard a voice. There was another person in the room.

“Are we late?” the voice came.

It was Kyle O’Harris, with his second wife Kelly. Neither John nor Eric had ever known him well in school, but they smiled at their arrival.

“Hi Kyle, hello Kelly. No, it’s a half-hour early. Do you know if anyone else is coming?” John asked.

“Well, last I heard there are a dozen or so of us left. Mary Peters is in a nursing home, and her brother is in the hospital. They don’t expect him to make it to Christmas. Justin Faulkner lives in England now, but he said he might fly in for this. I don’t know about any of the others.”

“I heard Jim Howell might come,” Eric offered.

“Why don’t you have a seat, Kyle?” John said.

Kyle and Kelly sat down as the caterer brought them some lemonade. Kyle then raised his red plastic cup. “To the class of 1950!” he proclaimed.

“The class of ’50!” they echoed.

# homage

---

molly brady

out in the yard sunflowers lean, demure, toward horizon.  
the sun is in the east, hidden behind the july storm.  
remember when our mouths were full of mint?  
teeth and palate green and sticky, shirtless, running rampant - as  
if we grew from the dirt ourselves.

the zinnias on the old tin table smell musky and sweet,  
the odor of homeless living behind the flood wall.  
an animal has been sheared by some non-human hand  
and its coat left in the garden  
to decay to dust.

He'll bring a bouquet that says "i never left",  
scented with innocence and dispossession.  
the honeyed petals will wilt and fall  
on a bureau in the room of a woman  
whose name has escaped me.

now the shadows fall westward  
and the still, still air  
finds webs beckoning their eight legged masters home.  
the dew coated threads, an unraveled coverlet.  
the language of yearning.

in a borrowed memory, we are young once again.  
with backs arched in curiosity,  
we allow fingertips to stroke the hind ends of winged beings.  
reddened lips parting in awe,  
lashes flutter, blinking out the sun.

behind their door we now sit and watch  
as the last of the insects flock to the screen,  
gathering warmth against this near october air.  
here, we feel the quiet, slow rhythm  
of enduring wonder.



untitled

clay ceramic

uran alexander



miss me with that

acrylic

brock seals

# he's awake and i am sleeping

---

zachary lee

he's awake and i am sleeping  
he is sobbing i am stirring  
he is hurting what has happened  
why is he so far away from  
me now lying throbbing fetal  
breath hiccupping catches snags i'm  
rubbing sleep from eyes with hands that  
barely waken to this scene as  
i scooch over closer, darling,  
hush now darling arms are wrapping  
what's the matter—sobbing still—  
he is reeling shit, it's real  
mumble mumble had a bad dream  
nothing really—sobbing grows—  
s'okay darling, it's not real  
sobbing grows yet he's so silent  
used to crying i suppose  
sorry that i woke you up, dear  
never mind i'm here right now  
over, over, newsreel playing:  
“forty-nine and [sniffle] more”  
dark here so i click my tongue:  
echolocate, little one.  
active shooter sniffle in my  
hallway creaking to my door.  
closet, hidden, i'm not safe there  
shush, my darling, nothing more.  
think of friday: hands we're holding  
public, darling, we're not hidden,  
safe in public, tides are changing,  
favor, gaining ground, we're bolder  
moving forward, sleep now soundly.  
he is resting on my shoulder  
lightly snoring drooling sweetly  
he is sleeping i'm awakened.

# lonely autumn

diana miller

Barren trees and empty nests  
are lonely to behold, where  
Birds no longer swing and chirp,  
flit and twitter, rarely perch—  
others make long journeys south.

Oaks and elms shed their covers,  
endless, empty boughs and twigs.  
Gray squirrels often seem to scurry,  
seeking, caching treasures, hurried—  
my eyes catch the low-slung sun, seep.

Furred critters disappear to sleep  
inside dams, cocoons, or burrows.  
The first whip of crisp chill air  
sharpens breaths, it's autumn still—  
wait to embrace, seeking release.

Huddled inside dew-cast, heavy coats and  
scarves wrapped 'round throats;  
Gone are the mounds of fragrant blooms  
scenting the breeze and upturn one's lips,  
cozy two-by-twos briskly hurry by.

A frost clings to everything—  
fences, posts, and colored panes—  
While silvery crystals shimmer  
over yellowed patch-quilt meadows and  
lonely roads of muddied hollows.

Aching loneliness echoes everywhere  
with hollowness, like cupboards bare.  
When will it be my turn at last—  
to view these days as in the past—  
others do behind painted masks.

Breaths catch, sharp, and my mind turns  
toward thinking perhaps come spring—  
There'll be a new reality to life—  
happier and warmer I'll be by then  
fingers barren of long-worn rings.

The setting sun lit our hopeless dash for home, my baseball bat becoming heavy in my hand. “If we don’t make it before dark you can spend the night at my house,” Josh gasped.

“It wouldn’t change anything. We would just be putting it off until tomorrow or whenever I see him again.”

“Maybe he will cool off while we are sleeping.”

“He’s never cooled off before. And it might make it worse.” The thought of showing up late made body ache. “I’d rather deal with it sooner than later.”

“I’m sorry man. If I hadn’t hit the ball into the forest, we probably wouldn’t have lost track of time.”

“It’s fine.” My heart started to beat faster and my head began to hurt.

“It’s just a ball. We could’ve left it. I have plenty.”

“Josh, it’s fine.” My broken wrist began to throb.

“We could’ve just left it. It was late enough when we went to look for it. I didn’t realize how long we were out there.” I stopped and grabbed Josh’s shoulders. “Joshua, it’s not your fault. We made a mistake. I’ll be fine.” I could see Josh’s eyes watering. “Come on, let’s just get back.” He rubbed his eyes and we started running again.

We turned onto my street as the darkness fell and the street lights came on. We stopped, sweaty and gasping for air. We began our walk to our houses. “We were so close,” Josh muttered. I looked over and saw a tear roll down his cheek.

“It’ll be alright,” I told him. “This isn’t the first time.” He just looked at me. “How about we play again tomorrow. Just try not to hit the ball so well.” He smirked a bit and nodded. “Tomorrow then,” I said as we came up to his house.

“Tomorrow,” he responded and I watched him as he walked up to his front door and went inside.

I walked to my house right next to his and approached the door. It was unlocked. I opened it and stepped in. My father was standing in the kitchen doorway down the hall. I could see my mom crying on the kitchen floor. My dad walked up to me. “Give me the bat, son.” The smell of alcohol was strong on his breath as he spoke. I looked at my mom and my grip tightened on the bat.

“No.”

“What did you say?”

I looked him in the eyes. “No.”

He raised his hand and I raised my bat.

This was going to end tonight.

# space between

---

peter plank

What are you?

I am a 7-year-old boy  
set forth from the cosmos  
made of stardust  
trajectory bound for Earth,  
who finds most of his world  
inside the bindings of books  
yet still traverses suburbia and urban  
wonders of his neighborhood.

Yes. But what are you?

Ah. I now see.  
It is clear my skin pigment confounds you.  
The color pallet you have created only contains two hues.  
You fail to recognize the halffrican, oreo, mulatto man standing  
in the space between  
who you compare to the color of coffee.

Clarify. Go ahead. Ask. I've heard it all before.

Where are you from?  
Do you live in the city?  
What do your parents do?  
Is your mom or dad black?  
Can. I. Touch. Your. Hair?

What are you?

I suppose the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 was true.  
My heightened melanin still adheres to the One Drop Rule  
that makes me a black male, with light skin privilege  
who cannot be indoctrinated into the world of the always for-  
given.

What are you?

Did you not learn from Langston, Malcolm, Frederick, and Dubois?  
Light skin is not safer, doesn't make less noise.  
Although you feel more comfortable with us in public spaces  
your assumption of assimilation is without valid basis.

What are you?

I am a 7-year-old boy  
set forth from the cosmos  
made of stardust  
trajectory bound for Earth

who shouldn't have to explain his life story  
to soothe your binary brain's categorization,  
so before you decide if I am worthy of mass incarceration  
or a country club initiation  
I must inquire:

What are you?

# the pig eaters

---

philip michaels

Bodies stacked atop each other  
Pale flesh rushed red with  
Open sores that are new  
To the light of day  
Creeping in  
Through the holes in the cage.  
Those lucky few  
Can cram their snouts and jaws  
Fitting them around the bars  
And bite it like a bit  
To breathe their first  
And last scrap of fresh air.  
They fight for the privilege.  
One cracks the dried layers  
On his swollen face  
Through the years of pus and fluid  
To stare at me  
With dim, broken, unfocused eyes.  
Some too far gone  
To stand on their own power  
Are relieved to find  
That the piss gushing down on their faces  
Flies away after a moment  
At seventy miles an hour.

# the mysteries of madness

---

sean rolwing

I first blew into Cloud Heights Mental Ward on a chilling, gray December dawn, when the air was as crisp as the dry, dead leaves which skittered aimlessly about the entrance. Now finding myself upon the fringes of my furthest years, with my eightieth birthday rapidly approaching, I still often recall the exact circumstances of that first day as an attending psychiatrist. Memories I have long since shelved as nothing more than dusty remnants of a forgotten past, now glisten within my mind like jewels.

Earlier that morning, as I had been plodding my way to work along my newly discovered route, I had absent-mindedly ran directly within the oncoming path of another pedestrian: throwing us both to the ground and sending the contents of my briefcase sailing across the sidewalk. After apologizing to the man profusely – who had remained remarkably calm and polite throughout the entire incident – he and I both collected our belongings together, secured them in my briefcase, and walked our separate ways.

However calmly the situation was handled, it nonetheless left me running beyond late on my very first day of employment practicing medicine. My worn leather loafers squeaked incessantly as I scurried to my superior's office, quickly signaling my arrival to Dr. Fairbanks.

“Ah, Dr. Chase! We were all wondering if you were planning on making an appearance today!” Just as I thought I would collapse from embarrassment, he chuckled re-assuredly to himself.

“Oh, come now old boy, you're going to be just fine. If we fired everyone who got lost here on their first day, then these halls would be desolate. Please, please, take a seat there.

“Well, I'm not sure how much the others went over with you beforehand, so I'll just give you a crash-course in the basics. The nurses usually hand out meds to the patients around 11 o'clock, rounds are usually done at about 1 o'clock, and personal and group sessions are alternated days after that. Do you have any questions?

“Good, it should all be rather straight-forward to you. Knowing you father, these cases should all seem fairly simple to you.

“However, there is one specific case I would wish to speak with about before you begin. A rather, ah, *afflicted* soul. He was diagnosed here rather early on with a fairly extreme case of paranoia, with schizophrenic tendencies. He was *my* patient, but he's, um, rather *difficult* to handle sometimes. Normally, we wouldn't ask you to intervene, it being your first day here, but he's completely ostracized the rest of the staff here. We were rather hoping that a fresh face such as yours would be just what we need to

connect to him.”

“Of course, of course! I’d be obliged! What’s the patient’s na-.”

“Yes, well, if you have any more questions, then please feel welcome to ask the nurse outside in the hall. I apologize, but I’m rather late myself. I have a meeting with the board that I need to be getting to now. I hope to be seeing you around Dr. Chase,” he remarked, revealing a badly bandaged hand as he extended forth a handshake.

“My goodness, are you alright?”

“Ah, yes, yes! Just a little ‘farewell gift’ from that patient I had referred to you. Not to worry though, he’s generally not a violent man. He was only a tad confused, I think. Accused me of being a part of some damnable *conspiracy* here at our institute! Me, a *criminal*? Could you imagine?”

“No, no, not really. It shouldn’t be an issue though, I’m equipped to handle such cases.”

\*\*\*\*

*“Two by two,  
With hands of blue,  
They prick and prod,  
And smile at you.  
But alone at night,  
Doc comes in white.  
And he gets away with the blues!”*

As I sat there, seated across from Martin – a regional sales manager for a paper company before being sent to Cloud Heights by his loathsome children, looking for an early inheritance – I remember receiving the distinct impression that I would never change anything. Try as I might, Martin would inevitably spend the remainder of his pitiful existence confined within the aseptic walls of this hospital. So, in all likelihood, would I.

I pushed down the lump of depression forming in my throat, swallowing before trying again to break through to my patient.

“Well, that’s certainly a nice rhyme, Martin. Would you, maybe, like to tell me what it means?”

It was like bashing your brains in via brick wall. There’s only so much self-inflicted pain one can endure. Realizing that I wouldn’t be getting anywhere with my first patient, I sent for the orderlies to come and escort him back to his room, first writing him a new prescription for Clonazepam.

Fifteen minutes later I found myself hiding on the roof, choking

down the cigarettes I told myself I had already quit. Now, in my later years, I've come to regret such things, but then I probably would have stuck myself with a hypodermic needle if it meant one more drag.

Soon, though, I found myself late for my next appointment, and was forced to drag myself back into the building. Fumbling into my office, I was surprised to see my next patient already waiting for me. His long, lanky body was stretched lazily in the sofa, and his head was flopped back, staring at the ceiling.

"I'm so sorry that I've been keeping you waiting like this, I'm sure it's been quite a bore sitting here in my office." He said nothing at first, sweeping his eyes over everything they could find. Locking eyes with me, he stared for what seemed an eternity. I noticed slowly that one was a cold blue, while the other remained a shining green. Finally, a grin spread like wildfire across his face.

"No problem at all, John! Boredom and I are well-acquainted, and he and I long ago accepted each other as the other's inseparable burden."

"I'm sorry, I'm not sure that I know your name. I can't really seem to be able to find your file at the mom-"

"Oh, come now, that's alright! I know all about you, in fact, I've been waiting for you for quite some time now!"

As he walked, his long legs became intertwined with the briefcase I had sat near my chair, causing him to stumble slightly and my belongings to once again spill onto the ground.

"Oh no, no, no, no, no, look what I've done. That's just so clumsy of me! Here, here, let me help you with all of this." He fumbled around with my papers, pens, and other miscellaneous items, before I closed the rest of the belongings securely inside.

"So then, let's talk about you some, shall we? I haven't really had the time to get acquainted with your ca-"

"No."

"Excuse me?"

"No. That's not the question. The real question is -" he said, leaning forward excitedly, "what the hell are you doing here, John?"

"How do you know my na -"?

"No, no, no. Wait - no, Yes! Ah, yes! I see now." From underneath his seat he pulled a bright red folder, exactly like the casefiles for patients.

"Wait, you have a file on *me*?"

"A man, as young and blond as you, working for an institute as affluent as this one directly out of medical school? Had to be some family connections."

A rage which had settled into my stomach since graduation burst from my belly.

“Oh yeah, well, I can find out things about you as well! You should recall that I see hundreds of patients here while you only have to see *one* doctor. We’ll just take a look here...”

All of the words had been inked over hurriedly with wobbly marker lines, and his picture was clipped cleanly from the report.

“Did you redact my file?”

“Mmmm, you don’t need to know everything.”

He finally looked up, as if from a dream, noticing the deepening frown on my face.

“Oh. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. I didn’t mean this as an insult to your character. It’s apparent to even the meanest of intelligences that you’re a man of great honor and that you despise your family. The oldness of your shoes show that you refuse to accept any money from them. Buying new shoes would most likely have been your first purchase had you not been too busy paying off those student loans.”

I glanced down at the brown broken leather of my old loafers.

“So, let’s see how far we’ve gotten today.” He continued in a scholarly tone. “You’re a self-sufficient man of moderate intelligence, who secretly despises people in positions of power, and yearns for the freedom granted to him through hard work. Your resolve is strong enough to resist even the most magnetic of temptations. Also, you care far too deeply about the impressions of others. This most likely stems from your severe paternal issues, but I’m sure we’ll be able to iron that out in our next sessions. How am I doing so far?”

“So... you’re the patient who bit Dr. Fairbanks I presume then?”

Silence.

“Well? No snappy response to that one?”

“I. Did. NOT. Bite. A *doctor*. I bit an insidious, oppressive sex-trafficker with a penchant for snorting the same pharmaceuticals he uses to dull the senses of his victims. Not exactly a *capital* crime, is it?”

I have to admit, the thought of Fairbanks being a master criminal forced a sputtering chuckle from my mouth. “I’m sorry,” I said, stuffing the humor back down my throat. “Even you have to admit that the idea of that Christmas-time Shopping-Mall Santa Claus being an international human-trafficker is just a little...”

“A little what?”

Crazy. Bat-shit crazy.

“A little *presumptuous*.”

“Oh, a little *craaay-zeee*, you mean to say?! Yes, I suppose to you goldfish even arithmetic would seem like sorcery. I only *presume* logic, which is actually much easier to find within a mental hospital than one would expect! Well, I presume, that you weren’t here three months ago whenever I first began my rounds with that wretched excuse of a healer Fairbanks. Precisely two-and-a-half inches away from his left ear were bright, fresh red scratches. He insisted that he had tripped some time earlier, but I knew he was lying. They were parallel to one another, and appeared to be some type of marking from fingernails.

“Defensive wounds typically seen on attackers mimic this appearance. I could tell by the distance between the scratches that they came from very delicate, small hands, much, much, much, much too small to be a man’s. That’s when I began becoming quite curious about the comings and goings of our good Dr. Fairbanks. I found that some years ago, his brother, the owner of a shipping company based out of Beijing, was under investigation for human-trafficking.

“They were unable to find his connection in America, so they were forced to close his investigations. Little did they realize, his falsely estranged brother was the one who was allowing him to funnel his victims into the United States!”

“Please, sir, I beg you to just have a seat and take a moment to compose yourself. If you keep this up I’ll be forced to ask the nurse to administer a sedative to you.”

“SEDATIVES! Exactly! The sedatives! Ever since I witnessed the result of this apparent attack upon Fairbanks, amounts of Clonazepam and Thorazine have been systematically stolen from the hospital’s pharmacies. Never enough for anyone to raise any alarms about, especially since Fairbanks is the one running this hell-scape anyways. Only one ever noticed.”

“Oh and I presume that was you. You’re the hero of this fantastical tale?”

“No, you fool! Martin! Martin, Martin, Martin! He was beginning to recover before Fairbanks began to pilfer pills from the pharmaceutical department. He was making more and more sense every day, even began talking to me about his children. He told me, in one of his more lucid hours, that he had seen Fairbanks coming and going from there at all odd hours of night. The next day, I found him in a corner trying to eat glitter. Apparently Fairbanks had chosen him *at random* to participate in a revolutionary new drug trial! How convenient!”

“This...this doesn’t mean anything. That’s why the police handle such things, they look for actual *evidence*.” I said, trying to compose myself

again.

“But I did, of course. Why do you think I bit him? I had to tell what his pain tolerance was. If you had heard him pretend to scream, you would know that his tolerance is most definitely not that of a fragile old man. No, no, no but definitely the pain tolerance of a man drifting through life while high on enough pain medication to even sate my appetite. It is a *conspiracy*, a conspiracy, I SAY! One only I can see for some reason!”

Classic paranoid schizophrenia. Delusions of those trying to help you being enemies somehow bent on your destruction. Mania. Mood-swings. False impressions of grandeur. Maybe this would be simpler than I believed.

“Listen, I want you to try to keep calm. I’m going to prescribe you a dose of –”

“No. Why would I need to take medication, if I. AM. NOT. CRAZY! The fact that I’m smarter than you and the rest of the blind quacks in this asylum doesn’t mean I’m crazy.”

“Oh, and because you were born with such great gifts, you can see everything about the world from the window of a mental ward!”

He bit his tongue and clenched his jaw shut. He lounged again upon the sofa, setting his gaze away from me and out the window.

“No.” he said blandly.

“Care to elaborate? Even a little?”

*Sigh.* “I shouldn’t have to, it should be obvious to you. It is to me, why *not* you? No. This was never a gift. And I was not born like this.”

“How do you mean?”

“Don’t you see? It’s all *her* fault. My no-good, dirty, rotten mother. Everything in my life is her fault.”

And we were back to crazy.

“Ok, so like I said I’m going to go ahead and prescribe you –”

“It all started twenty-six years ago, in Hong Kong. At the time, in China, the One Child Act was beginning to take effect. Unfortunately, many parents in that era wished for their children to be male. If a female child was born to them, then the parents – believing that this meant they could never have a male heir – would either abandon the child or attempt to murder it and cover it up as an accident.”

“I really don’t see how this connects –”

“One of the more popular ways of doing so was by sticking needles through the soft part of the newborn’s skull. They would be killed without any visible wounds, and the parents would be free to try again.”

“Jesus, that’s horrible! How do you know all –?”

“My mother, who had once visited Hong Kong only a few weeks before realizing her pregnancy, knew of this horrid practice. And, returning home to America with an unwanted child, decided to put it to trial. Whether it was happenstance or her own stupidity – or some combination of the two – it failed. Instead the metal in my brain acted as a superconductor for the electrical impulses of my mind, allowing me to connect thoughts together faster than most. It’s really quite a common story if you think about it.”

“No, no it’s really not. So, you mean to tell me that she admitted all this to you?”

“Oh, god no! I could never get her to fully crack, and I’ve been interrogating her about it since I was five. She still refuses to confess, but between the two of us, I’ve found quite a few irregularities in her story. I’ll get her to one day though, you just watch!” He looked down at the ground for a moment. “Wow that even sounded crazy to *me*.”

“Are you even going to tell me your name before you try to shovel this bull-shit down my throat?”

He pulled out a small glass pipe from the folds of his third bathrobe and puffed away at the green substance within. “Tut, tut, tut Doc. I figured out who you were all by myself. Was hardly a three pipe problem. It would not be fair to just give away an ending like that. It’s just not sporting.”

“Are you seriously smoking that during our session? You’re lucky I don’t call the police on you; you’ve been entrusted into our care here. Wait, how the hell did you even smuggle it into the ward?”

“Ah, I told you Doctor, I don’t like giving away endings, even if they *are* badly written. Besides, even if you tried to stop me I’d just wind up blaming it on Dr. Fairbank. I’m a *crazy* person, remember?”

“Well, I think we’ve made some excellent progress with you here today. But I’d like to see you again soon though so that we can work out some more of your issues.” He turned and began walking out of the office.

“Um, we... we’re not actually finished yet, your session is supposed to end at –”.

“Later, Doc!”

A few moments later, I walked out after him. I looked down the halls and saw no one, except for a lonely nurse filing case reports.

“I’m sorry, I don’t really want to disturb you while you’re working, but would you mind telling me, do you know the name of the patient that I just saw?”

“You mean to tell me that you didn’t even *look* at his casefile? I

swear, every year you doctors become more and more careless. Do you even care about your patients? Or let me guess, your daddy bought you this job?" She stared me down until I walked back to my office, my face red.

\*\*\*\*

It wasn't until a full week later that I was stopped in the hallway by an older woman as I made my rounds. She seemed confused and asked me if I could help her find a patient.

"Sure, ma'am. What's his name? Could you tell me what he looks like? Maybe I could help point him out to you."

She stifled a little laugh.

"No, no worries dear. If you'd have met my son, you definitely would have remembered him. Bless his soul, there wouldn't be any question of that!" She hobbled on as I stood there abashed. Finally, it struck me.

"Oh! Oh, you mean *him*! You're his mother? His real mother?"

"Ah, yes. The one and only."

We talked. Apparently he had really been born in China, where she had stayed for a short time. Eventually, the subject of her son's delusions came up and I discussed with her the stories he had made up concerning her: that she tried to murder him as a baby, leaving him with a needle implanted neatly into his brain.

"Oh, that's just absurd!" she guffawed. But there was something in the way she said it, some glint behind her eyes perhaps that left me suspicious. She acted as if she had never heard the story before, but she was much too adept at dismissing it.

"Well, ma'am, there is really nothing to worry about. We believe that your son's condition may be a neurological one, so we've decided to conduct an MRI later on today."

She started. "Oh, oh no, no, there's no need for that at all. He's been improving so much, and I don't know if the insurance will cover it."

"No," I pressed "It will come of absolutely no cost. I just want to make sure that his brain is functioning correctly or if there is some physical explain —"

"No! Really! You can't!"

"Why can't I?"

"Because... Because... you just can't! I'll sue this entire place if you lay a finger on him!" She snapped back like a wounded animal. I stared at her, my mouth agape. Unbelievable.

"Son of a bitch. He was telling the truth, wasn't he?"

I turned from her quickly, snatching the phone out of the hand of the nurse.

“Who are you calling?”

“The police.”

“Oh god, no! Don’t call the police! I was just so young and I –”.

“Oh shut up! I’m not calling them on you.”

\*\*\*\*

The sun had risen the following morning before I had arrived back at my office. I was tired, too tired even to ask how the patient had broken into my office. He lounged in a chair he had moved by the window and stared out of it without saying a word. His pipe was blazing, and smoke curled up by his face. I took another chair and moved it by his before collapsing within its leather folds.

“So?” he said.

I sighed. “After I called the police, they were able to get a search warrant for his house. Apparently, you were right about his brother in Beijing. They had been trying to get enough evidence for a search warrant.”

“And?”

He turned his head towards me.

“And?” he repeated.

Silence.

“They found four women chained in Fairbanks’ basement. They had been down there for weeks, no light, just alone. One of them had already died. He’s been put into custody. They don’t know if any of it will stick.”

I snatched the pipe from out of his hands and took a long drag. *Jesus*, it had been a long time since college. My face became red as I coughed out.

“You have to tell me. How the hell do you sneak this in?”

He smiled his Cheshire cat grin.

“You really don’t want to know.”

“Oh, come on. Tell me. I won’t stop it, whatever it is.”

He looked back out through the window.

“I get it from you.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“*I get it from you*. Remember a strange man bumping into you last week? Fiddled around with your briefcase for a while? He’s mine.”

“Damn. So he slips it in, I walk through the main security gates,

and all you had to do was get it back out. Which, of course, was simple because I'm an idiot."

We laughed together like two mad men before settling back down into the heavy seats.

His face darkened.

"All levity aside, you know it was your fault that she's dead, don't you?"

I clenched my jaw tightly.

"Yes. Yes, I know. But you have to understand, you're a —"

"Crazy person. Yes, you've told me. Maybe you'll learn to listen better now. For instance, take us here, now. Do you see that van parked outside? Wilmore Construction?"

He pointed. I nodded.

"Not a construction company. There are people on the inside listening to every word we say. You should try to emulate them."

We didn't say anything else, just sat there for hours. Little did I know at the time, this period of silence was very perplexing to the two men in the back of the van.

"Jesus," one said to the other, "the one just rambles on and on. What got him to shut up?"

"I don't know, we haven't lost the feed. Just take it as a blessing."

"God, I can't believe I got stuck with this detail. Babysitting some psycho and his doctor. Why is the boss so concerned with some nut-job anyway?"

The other one shrugged, twirling his coffee around in his cup.

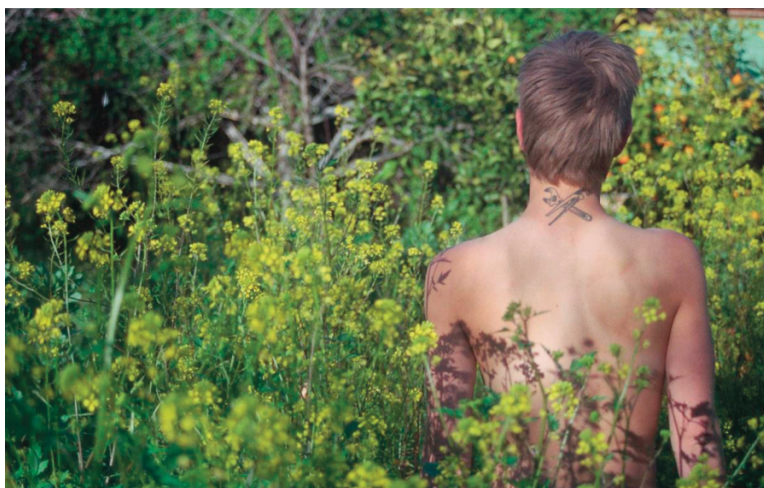
"Says he wants an eye on him. Don't know why. But he says he's important, then that means *you* better believe it."

Outside of the van, the two of us stared out of the window, both trying to parse out the mystery of which one of us was the crazy one.

ella after work

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andrea trigueros

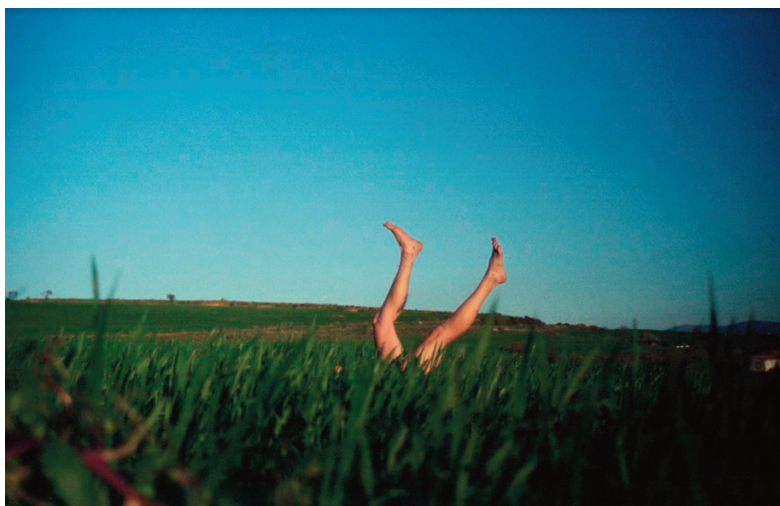


photograpy

# ella playing in the fields

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andrea trigueros



photography

*At thy return my blushing was not small,  
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,  
I cast thee by as one unfit for light...*  
-Anne Bradstreet, "The Author to Her Book"

Sir? Ma'am? I beg you, snatch my bastards, snatch them all. I can no longer stand their squall, their spit, their sticky feet kicking my hip.

They look sweet to you, don't they? But to me they are images of incest, both parts mother and no part human. I birthed the last one in my shower. It smelled of rot and flopped like a fish. Then I looked in my mirror and saw scales.

At times I've tried strangling them, shredding them like confetti and throwing the pulp out the window, feeding them dirt until their white bodies were speckled with soil. I would rather be made to scrape a coal mine clean with my thumbnail than continue to bear bastards. But every year, every day, there are more of them. They dig into my body with their proto-fingernails and scrape another layer of my womb away each time. I fear that soon I will only exist as crud in their cuticles.

So please, take them. Maybe you won't cringe at the gibberish they scribble on your wall. And as you can see, I have never given them the satisfaction of a name. Perhaps you can. But I warn you, if you must settle on a surname, give them yours, a stranger's, or a name you plucked out of nothing, as long as it isn't mine.

# six or seven things i know about her: a stolen biography

---

zachary lee

## *The Name*

Carol tended to look away when someone called her name. She hated her name as soon as she knew it. She envied other girls, girls with names like Madelyn or Charlotte, names like Arcadia that pop off the tongue like fireworks, or names like Ophelia that settled like snow on the lawn. For hours, Carol would stare at her name, wringing some meaning out of the five little letters glaring back at her on the page. Carol... Carol... Carol, she'd repeat to herself at night. Carol is a name you give an aunt, not an artist, she'd whisper into her pillow.

## *The Walls*

When Carol turned ten, her parents took her to the Home Depot three towns over. They pored over pallets of color strips, the three of them, until Carol picked out a satisfactory shade of periwinkle. The rest of her furniture—the bed, the bookshelf, and the dressing drawers— remained a polished blanche.

## *Listening In*

I'm not even tired. I just go to sleep so I don't have to feel this way."

## *The Art Project*

In the sixth grade, Carol asked her teacher if she could take home an art project. She wanted to perfect it over the holiday weekend, an acrylic kitten stretching on the blue linoleum kitchen tiles. In her room, she spilled less than a spoonful of tabby colored paint on the mousy carpet. Her mother never quite forgave her.

*First Criticism*

“Carol, you’ll never make it as an art major. Art majors end up on the streets. Haven’t you heard of starving artists? You’ll never get a job, you’ll never have any money, and you’ll never be able to take care of me and your father when we’re older.”

*Self-Criticism*

“Maybe I should be an accountant.”

*Reprise*

Carol’s teacher selected the acrylic kitten for the school’s art show. All of Carol’s classmates agreed that her piece was the best. Her mother told the story about how Carol spilled the paint in her room to four different teachers at the show. All of them shuffled their feet uncomfortably.

# brother, the fault was never yours

---

sean chadwick

Boyhood sermons took root, consumed growing years. Invasive species—they sunk trunks beneath flesh, gouged away your technicolor coat, left you powerless. Thorny brambles overran scarred flesh; body became prison. You were just a boy who carved initials into old park benches and knew to hate himself for ever doing something so stupid—so dangerous. I was just a boy whose face was willful ignorance and fearful denial at every inquisition.

What hope can little boys have against scripture?

Scripture that drove you to require that every lover live at least an hour's drive away—to only bring them here and consummate during tense, dark nights inside our infertile house—to never let them get too close unless they might actually make you believe that you deserved love—to shut your lips any time the topic arose at the dusty dinner table, a steel trap—to scrub every trace of dirt in long, hot showers until numbness possessed you—to swallow courage and finally admit that sapling scars had grown fatal wounds. I saw every lash struck across your skin and still I denied you when you needed me; in your darkest hours my palms held no silver, but sweat-stained fear. So when you finally showed your true colors to all under noon-time sun, torrential grin beating back fear, the shore beating back the waves, your bodies embracing shamelessly; his arms freeing wildfire—

I couldn't breathe. I wept.

# granny's sankofet

---

marie chewe-elliott

Hands like tanned leather  
Reincarnate to command  
Mezzo forte renditions of Baptist standard hymns  
From days gone by  
“What a Friend We Have in Jesus and Glory to His Name,”  
Granny’s voice refuses silence and  
Speaks long after she is gone

Gone to heavenly reward for reading and living according to the Word  
Drilled aspiring doctors, teachers, writers, with speeches  
For Easter, Christmas and Children’s Day programs  
From days gone by  
Breathed life into goeey Algoma mud-planted, love-reared children  
Harvested sorghum, melons, tomatoes and corn  
Stitched patchwork couture and the foundation of generations

Generations will cherish and channel her spirit  
Great-greats will sing the songs and prayers of her lips,  
Beckon the values and blessings  
From days gone by  
Arms spread wide gather  
Then cradle the bountiful  
Legacy from her heart to our hands

# every sandwich is clean

---

sarah hayes

He writes it on the blackboard:

*Every sandwich is clean.* You imagine

It: A sandwich, overflowing with all of the  
Farm raised sliced deli meats and cheeses,  
Lovingly hand washed, made pure for consumption  
By the flowing stream of mountain water that  
Passes through the mouths of virgin bees and is  
Filtered out through the stomachs of exotic cats, to be  
Patted dry by a thousand thread count Persian rug  
And blessed by the relic bones of an obscure saint.  
You eat it and you are filled with its immense weight.  
The world slips away from under your paper plate.  
All meals that came before are now mud in the throat.  
Every sandwich is clean. Every mouth is tainted.  
None of us are worthy. Everyone is hungry.  
Perhaps you have taken this too far. Or:  
Perhaps you should order another sandwich.



after the storm

photography

aftern joiner



blown away

unknown

krasimira angelova

# the desert

---

catherine howl

I listen for my father and hear static from a poor phone connection. He stammers, then falls silent. Usually at least one year goes by before contact is made by me. This time I'm calling from Aunt Collette's in Palm Springs, California. I knew this was a bad idea, but Collette, his sister, insisted, "You really should get ahold of your father, dear. He's probably really worried." Probably really worried? I would venture to say he probably really doesn't know what the hell is going on with me and still won't after our conversation. I know my aunt is far removed from the reality of her brother's true paternal dynamics.

Fleeing Northern California to the Southern California desert from my abusive boyfriend is the major event of my life this month. I hear myself telling my father the basic semantics of my escape and a bit about my bruises. His lack of response makes me question what my reality is. Did this really happen to me? To me? The phone must be free floating because I am invisible.

I am relieved when my Uncle Francois wants to talk with my father. I push the floating object toward Collette who passes it back to Francois. My aunt and uncle are sitting at a card table. They were playing rummy before the interruption. I choose to stay outside on the patio where I feel more safe. I can see them though the screen where I listen to Francois's filtered voice. I imagine what my father is saying to him or more likely what he isn't saying. I hear, "Well, your daughter is no longer a child. She is a beautiful young woman and we don't mind having her here."

Not a child. Beautiful young woman. Don't mind having her here. I carry these words and syllables and trailing voice through the darkness, until I meet the edge of their pool's glowing, soft white light. Here, I lower myself until my legs are immersed in wet warmth. I lie back. I look above me at the vast sky. I manage to cover myself with stars that appear as dusty, sparkling spots. With every blink they multiply. I start to blink rapidly. I like the great spread. It is fascinating. It is something that I can control, unlike my inability in the present moment to focus my teary eyes from their fluid gaze as the sparkles grow dim.

I tuck myself in for the night. Later, I wake in a single bed. A dark cube. Reaching, my fingers find the slender ridges of the sill. I abruptly part the blinds and wonder if day break has arrived. I fall back on my pillow from the sun's intensity. Through blindness, images of last week's events appear. His strong fist to my eye. The shove that knocked me tumbling

down our apartment stairs. I feel like I can't deal with facing relatives I haven't seen since the fourth grade, especially under these circumstances.

I pull the covers over my head, forcefully thrusting myself backward. I land on the floor. I sit upright, rub my wrists and long for my blanket of stars. At eye level, with my glow-in-the-dark travel alarm, the time turns to 12:30 P.M. Changing into my swimsuit and the monogrammed terrycloth robe left by Aunt Collette takes all my energy, as I make my way out to the patio. I pass Francois in the kitchen. He insists that I pull up a chair out there and then he will bring me his fabulous brunch.

He can barely sit still, as I, an invisible person, share what I can of my invisible experience. I mumble out loud, "I didn't know you had a second home. He won't find me here," I hope to myself. They are both very attentive until I start to cry. Collette motions for Francois to get me a beer, as my tears well up and cascade down my sun blushed cheeks, burnt from my cross state travels. I feel myself sink so far into my mesh chair, I wonder if I will hit the ceramic tile just beneath me. I haven't touched my food, but Francois isn't insulted. "Just drink this. You'll feel better. We have more in the fridge," he says encouragingly. I take a couple of big swigs, a fine-tuned skill, that depletes half the can.

There is no more conversation of my troubles at hand. Francois approaches me. "I'm going back to L.A. for the week. Aunt Collette will stay with you. O.K.?" Flooded by my third gulp that leaves one fourth of my beer, I choke out an, "O.K.". "Now let's see you take a swim before I leave!" he exclaims. Somehow I feel obliged to do so. My weight shifts forward and I drop my robe on the way to the pool. I dive through the air in slow motion, roughly breaking the surface that helps lessen the ache of my somewhat atrophied muscles. I swim the length of the pool and resurface at the edge. Collette and Francois stand off to the side, Francois with another beer in his hand for me and Collette with a towel.

Drenched, they hand me these items. I wrap my hair and start to work on the beer. They are both looking at me. Collette bursts out, "You're tall and thin like your mother, but you look so much like your father." Francois blows me a kiss, "Have a nice week!"

He's gone.

I confine my whereabouts primarily to the patio area during the day and my bedroom just before I am ready to sleep at night. Aunt Collette and I work on plans to remodel around the corner of the pool. She likes my ideas! Right now we are painting two large, cement elephants arranged for good luck. Collette plays the piano daily, while I read a book she gave to me by Sylvia Plath. My concentration level is low and I'm having trouble understanding the words. I've thought of my mind's poetry before a blank page,

with all my words becoming images of a lost, nervous, depleted type that find their center in him, my abusive boyfriend. Late evening shadows sometimes cast themselves beneath the cabana, crossing the center of my body, and I fear he has found me here, in the desert.

The next morning I pour myself a glass of lemonade and inquire as to whether there is any mail for me. Aunt Collette is clutching several pieces. "No dear, there isn't anything for you." Maybe in disbelief, she shuffles through the stack a second time, to convince herself of her accuracy. I fall into the pool, allowing my tears to become part of the heavy chlorination. Leaning against the watered wall, I wait until I just can't hold my breath any longer. I float back up to the top. Collette has gotten in the pool. She has a purple envelope in her hand. She shares the lengthy letter written by my cousin, her youngest daughter, who lives in Redondo Beach. Collette seems to feel good about hearing from her. They haven't spoken in two and a half weeks.

Francois calls. Business in L.A. is going to take longer than he expected. Already, more than a week has passed. I have heard short phone rings during this time, knowing that Collette's conversations with him are brief. He doesn't ask to speak with me. She asks me if I would mind her leaving for a few days to be with Francois. I told her I would be fine, even as I remembered the shadows....

Before departing this evening, Collette gets out some old family photo albums. We look through them together. She has some black and white pictures of my father I have never seen. After listening intently to a few of her stories, she tells me I remind her so much of Michael, her brother, my father, someone I wanted so badly to find me in the desert.

## biographies

**Uran Alexander** is a current Studio Arts major at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. He began art with 2-D drawings of his favorite cartoon characters. Today he enjoys making 3-D sculptures made from ceramic, wood, or any material he can get his hands on. He plans to collaborate his creativity with clothing, to express his ideas in an artistic style. He recently displayed his artwork in his 1st gallery showing.

**Krasimira Angelova** did not provide a biography.

**Jason Becker**, among other things, is a father, husband, student, teacher, and poet—roughly in that order of importance. Most of what he knows about the first two, he learned from books and mistakes. Most of what he knows about the last three, he learned from the excellent teachers he was lucky enough to have. And books. And mistakes. Lots of mistakes.

**Vincent Blount** is a senior at UMSL pursuing a bachelor's in Criminal Justice and a minor in Spanish. He is an avid car enthusiast, Cardinal's fan and former Normandy H.S band geek/drama nerd born and raised in St. Louis. He wants to pursue a life devoted to helping others in the field of crime and justice. Vincent believes that photography is a great way to showcase the beauty in everyday living.

**Molly Brady** is a Saint Louis native, currently studying Biology at UMSL. In her free time Molly runs stupid long distances, pedals around the city, practices yoga, and bakes all the snacks. She has been previously published in *Flood Stage: An Anthology of Saint Louis Poets* and *The Riverfront Times*.

**Sean Chadwick** is a Secondary Education English major, Pierre Laclede Honors College student, and *Bellerive* editor. Before joining UMSL in fall 2016, he explored biochemistry, nursing, and pre-med; consequently, his piece here is among the first he has submitted for publication. He hopes someday to teach young people about fantasy, science fiction, and American literature. Sean would like to thank friends on the *Bellerive* staff for their inspiration and help.

**Natasha Chang** is an optometry student at UMSL who occasionally acts on her urges to draw buildings or skulls. If she is not studying or drawing, she is likely watching TV or looking for spiders to photograph. Her work has previously been published in several issues of *earthwords*, the University of Iowa's undergraduate literary review.

**Marie Chewe-Elliott** is a writer and poet whose work celebrates women and womanhood. Since 2003, Marie has hosted or participated in various community arts and poetry events. She has served on the board of St. Louis Poetry Center and is a member of St. Louis Writers Guild and Write Sistahs Literary Group. An alumna of the University of Mississippi and Webster University, she is communications manager for a state agency and adjunct lecturer at UMSL. Connect with her at [www.mariecheweelliott.com](http://www.mariecheweelliott.com).

**Amela Cikota** has enjoyed painting abstract landscapes for the past 2 years. She also loves working with fiber arts, watercolor, and printmaking. She is currently getting ready for graduation, where she will be receiving her Bachelors in Fine Arts - Art Education. Teaching art is her true passion and she looks forward to working with students for many years to come. For the last year, she has also been the president of the Student National Art Education Association at UMSL.

**Niki Cloutier** did not provide a biography.

**Ethan C. Crombie** is a senior at UMSL studying Criminology and Criminal Justice. He enjoys a variety of fiction and nonfiction. He loves birds of all kinds, especially birds of prey. He listens to a wide range of music from Irish rebel songs to hip hop. He is a confessional Lutheran.

**Kyra Goldman** is a senior majoring in both English and Anthropology and will receive her Bachelor's in both in May; she writes both short and long fiction.

**Shane Hanley** is a Junior attending UMSL majoring in English. He has been writing stories and poems for about nine years. He hopes that he can gain some level of fame and help people with his stories. He believes that dark or controversial stories can bring up important issues that need to be discussed.

**Sarah Hayes** graduated from UMSL in 2016 and is now a grad student in library science at the University of Illinois. Wait, she graduated already? Get outta here! She currently loves Richard Feynman, Hamilton, blogging, and playing board games every week. She is continually astonished that people like her poetry. Sarah wants to be a writer/librarian who makes podcasts and studies physics and makes the world a little stranger with every thing she makes.

**Catherine Howl** holds an MFA in creative writing (poetry) from UMSL. She studied visual art, creative writing and English Composition at California State University San Bernardino in Southern California where she has lived most of her life. Howl paints with acrylics on recycled canvas, creating images with Fauvist and Cubist influences. Her poetry has previously appeared in *Litmag* and literary magazines found in California. "The Desert" is her first piece of published fiction.

**Afton Joiner** did not provide a biography.

**Jessie Kehle** is a first-year student in UMSL's MFA program, where she takes potshots at the patriarchy and forces her fellow students to read her very sexy gay poems. She lives with her new wife in a messy South City apartment. She is stoked to be featured in *Litmag* for the fourth time. Her untitled piece deals with her occasional fits of abject despair about poetry writing.

**Emilie La Breyere**, a Michigan native, moved to Missouri several years ago and currently attends UMSL. She is a senior, majoring in art history and minoring in studio art—but Emilie has been drawing since she could pick up a pencil. She primarily works in ink and graphite, as well as watercolor, and has been inspired by Realism, Expressionism, Impressionism, and Art Nouveau. Her pieces are typically soft, focusing on color and curving, organic lines.

**Zachary J. Lee** is an English major emphasizing in creative writing and gender studies at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. An active member of the Pierre Laclède Honors College, Zachary is an editor for *Brain Stew* and the head of editing for *Bellerive*. His work has appeared in *Litmag*, *Bellerive*, *Spires*, *Bad Jacket*, and *Stories of Music*. Zachary takes his inspiration from his friends, his family, and the beautiful city of St. Louis.

**Philip Michaels** is an undergraduate at the University of Missouri-St Louis. He is triple majoring in theatre and dance, liberal studies with emphases in psychology and creative writing, and interdisciplinary studies in comparative linguistics. He has previously had his poetry published in *Brain Stew* with the Pierre Laclede Honors College, and *Symmetry*, an online physics magazine.

**Diana Miller** is graduating with honors in May 2017 with a Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies, a minor in psychology, and professional writing certificate. Her essay, "Something Stolen" won Pierre Laclede Honors College Excellence in Writing Contest (2014), which was published along with her poem, "Unseen, Unheard," in *Bellerive*. Besides writing, she's an avid photographer and painter, and enjoys caving and hiking. She's proud of her daughter working/living in Australia, and son serving in the U.S.A.F.

**Alex Neupert** has a BA in English from UMSL and is currently an editorial intern at Amphorae Publishing Group. In his spare time, he works on his epic fantasy trilogy at a snail's pace and occasionally writes a poem or two. Don't ask him what they're about.

**Tam N. Nguyen** did not provide a biography.

**Peter Plank** is in his last semester of his undergraduate studies at UMSL. As an English major, Peter has had the pleasure of honing his skills as a writer while under the tutelage of UMSL's wonderful professors. When he isn't occupied with his writing, Peter can be found working as a musician in the St. Louis area and beyond.

**Sean Rolwing** is an aspiring author and journalist, responsible for writing and publishing several short stories and news articles. He transferred to the University of Missouri – St. Louis and is currently a major in media studies. He hopes to one day become a professional journalism and publish his own novel.

**Amber Scholl** recently graduated UMSL with an English BA, a Spanish minor, an Honors Certificate, and a Creative Writing Certificate. She now offers freelance services in writing, editing, and website creation and spends her free time writing, reading mystery novels, training in Krav Maga, and drinking too much coffee.

**Brock Seals** is a 24-year-old St. Louis native who enjoys creating art & opportunities for others. Seals provides a platform for emerging artists to display and showcase their work to large crowds. With his diligent efforts, Seals has helped with the cultivation of a premier art scene in St. Louis when he hosted the annual “Art, Mimosas & Pancakes” exhibition.

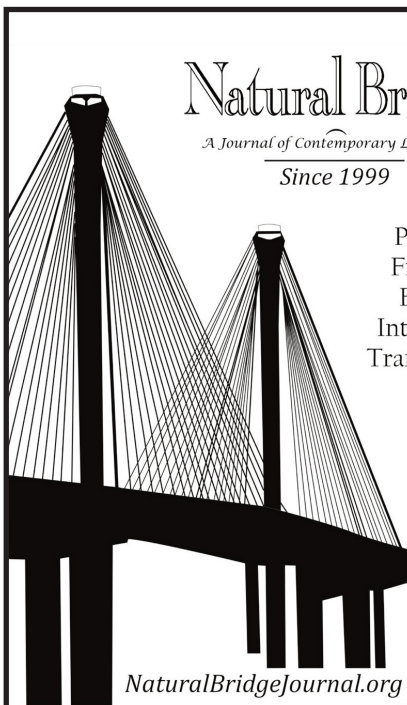
**Andrea Trigueros** is a recent transfer student from El Salvador. Majoring in Biology with a passion for reading, writing, photography and the outdoors. Nature is a recurring theme in all of her creative work. Enjoys any moment where she gets the chance to slow down.

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*Litmag* accepts submissions from October to February. As we are tied to the semester calendars, we are unable to read submissions during the summer months. Please visit the English Department *Litmag* webpage for submission guidelines. We look forward to reviewing your work for the 2018 edition. Only previously unpublished work will be accepted.

## join the class

Students can earn credit by taking ENG 4895 Editing *Litmag*, a course in editing and publishing. Students participate in all phases of the publication process, working with a small group of peers and a faculty advisor to produce the magazine, which is distributed annually during UMSL's Mirthday Celebration. This class can be taken as a capstone course for the Writing Certificate. Interested students are invited to contact Kate Watt at [katewatt@umsl.edu](mailto:katewatt@umsl.edu) or Jeanne Allison at [allison-jea@umsl.edu](mailto:allison-jea@umsl.edu) for more information.

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