

Quadrangle.





QUADRANGLE

Quadrangle is a journal devoted to publishing the literary and artistic works of students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and staff of Canisius College. *Quadrangle* is published annually and distributed by the student-run *Quadrangle* organization at Canisius College. The organization is funded by the Undergraduate Student Association (USA) of Canisius College and supported by the generosity of various departments on campus.

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A Word From The Editors ...

The dedicated and endlessly creative souls who have collaborated to produce this collection of artistic and literary works pass this magazine from their hands to yours. As co-editors-in-chief, we prefer to see ourselves as curators of the magazine, reviewing these works with care and arranging them to speak to one another. There is simplicity in the design so that each artist's message is celebrated without distraction.

We begin the magazine with “Dear John,” a punchy poetic letter inviting you to dive into the magazine, like the woman darting up the steps of Capri in the image *Bolt*. As you read further, you will discover *Androgynous Abstractions of the Body*, where the photographer, as she seeks to create a common experience in connection to all people, as opposed to focusing on the differences that set people apart. Later on, you will find images that pay respect to the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris, France, on January 7th, 2015. We include these photographs not only because they are visually stunning, but also because they honor artistic freedom.

When deciding a theme for this year's *Quadrangle*, we kept coming back to the textures and tangible elements that embrace the value in print. We accomplished this by adding features that reflect the quality of an old book, from our cursive font and cream-colored pages to the vintage paper used in the collage on the canvas-like cover. It is our goal that you not only read our magazine, but appreciate the choices that went into how the magazine feels in your hands.

We leave you with *Bare* and “Tiny Seedling,” an image and a poem that are representations of growth and new beginnings. Like the themes in these final works, we hope that you feel a sense of enlightenment, inspiring you to integrate creativity into your everyday life.

Your editors-in-chief,

Victoria Claflin & Hanna Etu

Quadrangle's Digital Initiative

In 2015, a *Quadrangle* website was created as a collaborative project between the Rev. J Clayton Murray, S.J., Archives, the Creative Writing Program, and the Digital Media Arts Department.

Though a digital platform of *Quadrangle* now exists, our print version will not be going anywhere. Instead, we would like to think of our website as a time capsule allowing print and digital to work hand-in-hand.

With the efforts of Archivist and Special Collections Librarian Kathleen DeLaney and the assistance of Jessica Arsenault '16, every cover of *Quadrangle* is organized into a timeline to celebrate the growth and maturity of the magazine's outstanding history.



Hugh Laidman (1913-1987)
Photo by Betty Laidman

Digital Media Arts Professor and Design Advisor Ben Dunkle and Brooke Ballard '15 designed the entire website from scratch. Together the web designers incorporated analog elements into the website using a logo that was developed and printed at the Western New York Book Arts Center in downtown Buffalo.

In addition, a beloved charcoal drawing of the College's quad by Western New York artist Hugh Laidman (1913-1987) found its revival on the website. Laidman's drawing was featured on the cover of the Winter 1983 edition of *Quadrangle*. The drawing represented Canisius College for many years on their print materials, whether it was on coffee mugs, recruitment letters, or calendars.

Though you cannot feel the magazine's texture or pages through a website, we hope that it inspires you to pick up the physical copy and love *Quadrangle* just as much as we do.

www.canisiusquadrangle.com

Table of Contents

Dear John,	1	Magdalena Azmitia
Bolt	2	Joe Krajewski
Through the Mist	3	Morgan Rodriguez
What We Know	4	Neil Savoy
Tea With Ms. G Reaper	6	Lee Ann Kostempski
It's All Over Now Baby Blue	8	Teresa Alessandra
Alleyway	9	Dylan Conroy
The 1 Train	10	Marie Rossi
Scrap	17	Katrina Cosgrove
Texture	18	Nicole Kuhn
Impression	20	Brianna Blank
Rubber Soul	21	Aryanna Falkner
Hung to Dry	23	Sarah Maurer
The Reason for Muttering	24	Hanna Etu
Posing for Picasso	32	Kate Light
Androgynous Abstractions of the Body	33	Hannah Olek
Carrying Brenda	37	Victoria Claflin
Sink or Swim	38	Gabrielle Weiss
Glow in the Dark	40	Olivia Hoffman
Vino di Cantina del Vesuvio	41	Julia Green
Airport	42	Bethany Dudek
I Should Have Never Come Back Here	43	Noraa Sue Danielle

...

Storyteller Hands	44	Kelsey Colwell
The Cup	46	Neil Savoy
Above the Hawaiian Clouds	57	Nicole Ratajczak
World Atlas	58	Sarah Pozzuto
Lantern Light	60	Olivia Hoffman
Je Suis Charlie	61	Brianna Blank
Headless Mary	63	Leah McDonald
Easter	64	Kate Light
Green Grotto	65	Dylan Conroy
Charon	66	Alex Segelhurst
Art and Paper	68	Marissa Verdi
Cracks	69	Joe Krajewski
A Doll's Curse	70	Aryanna Falkner
Down a Venetian Alley	87	Katrina Cosgrove
Ithaca	88	Darby Ratliff
Lilith	90	Megan Smith
Like Atlas	91	Natalie Medina
Waves of Austrian Landscape	93	Katrina Cosgrove
Klimt's "The Kiss"	94	Aryanna Falkner
Pizzaman	96	Dylan Conroy
Once Removed	97	Neil Savoy
Bare	99	Bethany Dudek
Tiny Seedling	100	Magdalena Azmitia
Little Falls	102	Morgan Rodriguez

Dear John,

Magdalena Azmitia

Your name isn't
John, but I think
you get the gist.

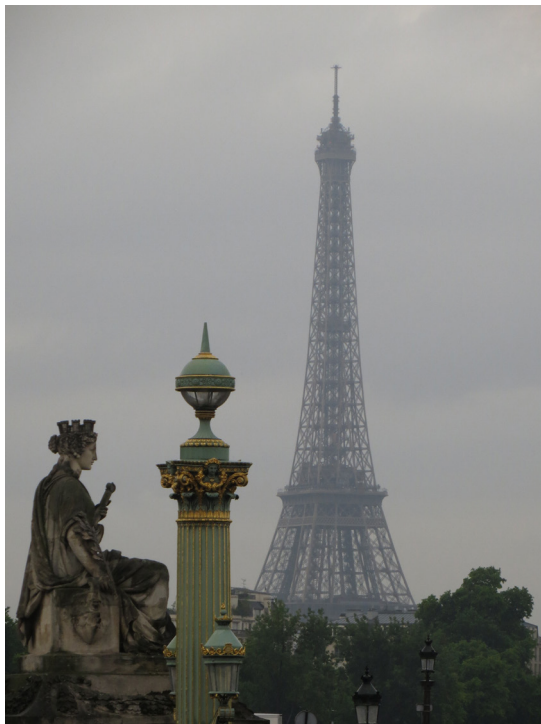
Bolt

Joe Krajewski



Through the Mist

Morgan Rodriguez



What We Know

Neil Savoy

There is little certainty, only a desperate guess
as I lie in bed and wonder what they know.

As my speakers rumble through the cracks at night,
the vibrations seep through the water stained walls, rattle
the ceramic tile, bounce inside the pipes, and like mist
float upwards from beneath the floor.

Somewhere my father lies in bed, with the song
of a harvest moon looping through his brain. Yellow
nails scratch against his untrimmed beard, hairs black,
white, and gray like television fuzz blurring his face.

My mother lies down. The last few wisps of a cigarette cloud
dissipate into the air, into the paintings, a Remington statue, and
a saddle on the wall.

Perhaps as she feels the music against her spine, she reaches out
for the remote, lowering the television's volume to a murmur
as blurred notes rock her in place. She holds her eyes shut,
trying to dream again.

My older brother stands clean, out of the shower,
looking at his reflection. He presses his fingers into the hollow
beneath the shallow cheek bones we share,
plumper than they once were.

He might turn his head at the noise rising through the house,
cranking the window shut to hold it in.

And maybe my younger brother, coming home, scrapes the gate
against the faded black driveway, entering the house holding the handle
gently in his hand, and steps in to see the television glowing.

And maybe, just maybe, as he passes by the basement door
and hears the arpeggio of an orchestra swell up,
he opens the door to let the sound consume the home.

Tea With Ms. G Reaper

Lee Ann Kostempski

Tossing her white braid over her shoulder,
Ms. G. Reaper strolls into a diner and, much
to the shaking waitress's surprise, orders
Jasmine tea. The patrons are too scared
to stare. An old man in a booth across the room
glances and then hides his face behind a worn copy
of *The Great Gatsby*. A mother pushes down
the pointing finger of her son, whose eyes widen to saucers
as Ms. G. Reaper grins over her shoulder at him.
Her old-lady teeth are smudged with bright lipstick,
even redder than the kind his Auntie Jean leaves
on his cheek whenever she kisses him goodbye. But
he wouldn't want a kiss from Ms. Reaper, she has
a lip ring. He begins to wail until his mother
throws down a bill, then ushers him out and

away. Ms. G. Reaper watches them leave, suddenly
lonely. She wears tight, ripped jeans, a chain-link belt,
and a black hoodie that's a little too small 'round the hips.
The cuffs have holes where bone-white thumbs poke
through. When the waitress brings her tea, eight gnarled,
many-ringed, spidery fingers crawl out from inside her sleeves
and wrap around the mug, sucking the warmth out of it

like winter. She dismisses the waitress with a friendly nod, but this girl too avoids eye contact and scampers

away. So Ms. G. Reaper sits alone, picks up an abandoned newspaper, starts reading. Her laugh is an explosion; she twirls her stool around, and waves over the old man with his book in the booth. He startles like a bird, as if expecting death to descend, snaps his book closed, and flees, never knowing that Ms. Reaper merely wanted to show him the latest *Calvin and Hobbes*.

Her tea break is spoiled. With a rattling sigh, Ms. G. Reaper leaves a generous tip on the counter for the waitress who hides in the kitchen and, donning her hood, returns to the day's work. The dying made better company anyway.

It's All Over Now Baby Blue

Teresa Alessandra



2012, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 16 in.

Alleyway

Dylan Conroy



The 1 Train

Marie Rossi

Running down the subway station stairs with an injured German Shepherd in my arms would be a lot easier if there weren't so many damn people rushing with me. You would think the middle of the week would be slower but New York City in the summer is smothered with tourists; it's not the heat that suffocates you, but the pulsating crowds of backpacks and cameras, the air filled with car honks and foreign languages.

Tourists are the exact reason why I was making my way to midtown when the accident happened. It involved three rented bicycles and one of those damn yellow cabs. And Rex.

The turnstile is a challenge, as is pulling the wrinkled MetroCard from one of my many pockets. Rex is yelping in my ear, and not the cute, soft yelps that he makes when he wants more of my morning croissant, but a high-pitched screaming that somehow sits perfectly between human and beast.

"I know, I know," I say, shifting him up and over the metal bars, pushing my hip into them so that we get through in one piece. This station – 66th and 9th – is the cleanest on the 1 line, the only line I'll take when I decide to ride in the subway cars. I'd rather walk.

Walking, though, is not a choice today. We've only gone ten blocks and already my arms are aching from Rex's limp weight, his fur making my arms slick with sweat so that when I readjust his body, I'm in danger of losing my grip. There are a handful of others waiting for the train but they're just objects in my periphery. As I sink on one of the wooden benches, Rex finally quiets to harsh whimpers as I stop moving, but when he breathes it sounds as if he's choking. As if he's

swallowing water when I know he's not.

"You'll be okay," I tell him through quick pants of my own. "We'll be fine. We're just going to get down to Drew and he'll fix everything, won't he? Yes, he will." Talking doesn't help calm my nerves but I do it anyway; I can feel the other people on the platform staring at us. I'm wearing a blue and silver backpack that is so stuffed it's making me lean forward so that the waistband of my jeans digs into my gut. "You're heavy, bud," I say and Rex's ears twitch, tongue out the side of his mouth, hot breaths making my already sticky skin even more gooeey.

Rex's blood is on my shirt and now it's on my pants too, soaking into the denim like acid, burning me in more ways than one. I wipe the blood from his mouth with the hem of my shirt, trying not to let my racing heart get the better of me. This dog has been at my side for two years and now he's bleeding out on my lap. Every couple minutes his body heaves and he hacks up blood, letting it drip from his lips before I get the chance to wipe it away. There's something wrong with his back legs too; the cab must have done something to his spinal cord when it swerved to avoid the bikers and clipped Rex. Now he's like Warren from 51st Street who was paralyzed in the Korean War and spends his days like I do – begging for money without trying to look like we're begging. Except that Warren is stuck in his rusted out wheelchair and I get to walk around.

"Yo, what's wrong with it?" There's a kid in front of me, a teenager really, at least ten years younger than myself. He nods to Rex with his face scrunched up, a gold necklace gleaming on the outside of a plain white t-shirt. He's got a backpack too but it's probably jammed with school supplies, not the only belongings he possesses. I curl even further around Rex, as if this can shield him.

"He got hit by a car."

"He don't look so good."

No shit.

Thank goodness for the rattle of the train approaching. I stand, jostling Rex again, who yelps, and the kid jumps away, which annoys me. It's not like my dog is going to attack him; he can hardly move, and yet I'm the one being glared at as

a man in a business suit waits beside me to board. To my surprise, the kid waits for everyone else to get on and then he holds the door for me so it won't shut on Rex. The 1 train isn't usually crowded but this car is pretty full and there's nowhere to sit down. Panic swells in me just as the train lurches into motion like a racehorse from the starting gate. The rude kid from the platform grabs my elbow as I almost topple over.

"Yo, this guy's dog is dying, let him put it down!" First my elbow, then my whole body plus Rex follows him as he tugs me over to one of the full benches. "Look at how pathetic that is," he says, gesturing to me. "A homeless man and his dying dog, you ain't gonna give up your seat for that?"

One young woman stands up quickly and moves to the other end of the car. The other two – a man and woman – relax when she leaves, but it's not good enough for my new friend. "That's it?" he says. "One little seat for all this? C'mon people where is your *compassion*?" They move.

"Thanks," I mumble, keeping my head down because as nice as it is to have some help, animals aren't allowed on the subway and I don't want to draw unwanted attention. As I arrange Rex in my lap, my stomach lurches when I realize the sharpness sticking into my arm is coming from Rex. I look down to see something white – *not something, I know what it is* – protruding. I gag.

"No problem, man," the kid is saying. "I'm Tyrone, but you can call me Ty. My sister has one of those teacup poodles, ya know? Stupid thing doesn't shut up when the doorbell rings, but man, she loves that dog." Without warning, he reaches out a hand – a matching gold bracelet loops around his wrist – and pats Rex's head. The dog whimpers but sticks out his tongue. "Aaayyy," Ty crows even as Rex leaves a streak of blood on his palm. "He likes me!"

Rex likes just about everyone, but I don't tell Ty that because the kid is the only thing keeping people from bumping into me. Ty stands in front of us like a prison guard, his eyes up and searching for potential trouble but his voice friendly.

"I've seen you around," he continues, glaring at a red-haired businessman who is eyeing the half-open seat next to me. "You come up here often?"

"Every day," I say. "Rex and I get our morning coffee and head to the park, then start downtown for the day." Downtown because only sympathetic tourists give money to the homeless, and no matter how clueless and ignorant they can be, I survive on their generosity. To every person who hands me a pocket of change or a dollar, I want to explain I wasn't always this way, that the drink got the best of me just like my father. Instead, I nod and keep my eyes to the ground; they seem to expect that anyway.

"He looks like one of those police dogs," Ty says, nodding at Rex. "Like the ones that chase down the perps on TV. You know, they climb fences and shit."

"Not Rex," I say, sinking a hand into the warm fur and massaging the space between Rex's collarbones, the place I know he loves the best. His muzzle is lying in the crook of my elbow and he sighs just once, still panting while my breath has returned to normal. "He was my dad's dog."

"That's cool," Ty says, and then raises his head as the subway stops. "Columbus Circle, you getting off?" I shake my head, rolling the thick fur in between my fingertips, trying to gather calmness in the familiar sensation.

I'll ride this train almost to the end of the line, where I'll get off in the swanky celebrity neighborhood of Tribeca, because that's where our only chance of hope works. It might seem dumb for a homeless guy to have an animal, and trust me, I'm the last person who thought I'd end up with an eighty pound German Shepherd at my side, but that's the way life went. My dad died and I sold everything to pay the debts, everything except Rex. He's the only thing I kept and that's because he was already so old that no one else was going to take him. Plus, he kept following me around at the funeral, pawing at my nicest pair of jeans like my pockets were full of hamburgers.

It's just him and me against the city.

Now it's him and me and Ty.

The kid has made it his own personal mission to make sure no one bothers us.

"Move along, move along," he tells the Columbus Circle folk as they stop and stare. "No seats over here, just a man and his dog."

"No dogs on the subway," an older woman with a bright orange scarf grumbles. This causes Ty to puff up his chest.

"Well, this ain't a normal dog. He's dying. What if your dog were dying, huh? You gonna just *walk* him downtown to the vet? Yeah, I didn't think so." Scarf-lady mumbles something under her breath, but glances away and when we stop at 50th Street, she gets off and moves to the next car over.

"Man, people are rude," Ty tells me. Yeah, so says the guy who keeps announcing my dog is dying. I lean forward to check on Rex; he hasn't yelped lately and his breathing has quieted some. I'm hoping this is a good sign, but when I see his eyes closed, dread pools in my stomach like rainwater. And even though I'm pretty sure his spine is broken and you shouldn't even move injuries like that, I shake him. Hard.

"Rex, come on bud," I say, voice soft as I bend towards his ear. "Stay awake." I slide him onto the two seats next to me, his front paws scrabble for purchase on the plastic seats. Grabbing onto the thick fur around his neck, I hold tight. "Don't you dare," I say, whispering now because I don't want everyone to hear the splinter in my voice. Guys don't cry over dogs. Especially dogs they didn't even like a couple years ago and dogs that belonged to their drunk of a father. As if he heard, Rex turns his chocolate eyes on me and nudges my chin with his nose.

"Yeah," I say, smiling through lips that feel too dry to stretch. "That's right."

"Hey." Tyrone is squatting next to me. "I got a question. Why you going all the way downtown to a vet?"

"I'm not going to a vet, I'm going to see Drew."

"Is Drew your man?"

"Sure," I say, even though I don't know what that means. "Drew fixes things." Drew's just a doorman turned friend that will sometimes give me a place to sleep on his hotel steps, or drop off a plastic bag full of supplies when he knows I'm running low.

Then we're at 42nd Street and the tourists stampede like wildebeests being chased by a lion, as if this is only train for the rest of the day, as if another one isn't going to show up in two minutes. These people are bogged down by shopping bags and exhausted feet, slouching from the heat but exhilarated all the same because hell, they're in New York City, The City of Dreams and all that shit.

If they only knew.

Ty stands up, prepared.

"Yo, we got an injured dog over here," he says, flashing me a smile as if to say *ain't I good at this?* "So if you all could respect the space, I'd appreciate it." This time the smile is for them and it does the trick; the series of awws that resound are plentiful, and the bustle stays away from me. Away from Rex.

His eyes are closed again, but this time I don't shake him, just trace the point of his ear with one finger, let my hand slide down and cradle his paws that have grown rough from constant pavement contact. The warmth has seeped from them and the pads are cool on my palm. It's painfully ironic that the one who usually keeps me warm is now so cold. I squeeze and let go, staring at the delicate eyelashes I've never noticed before. I didn't even know dogs had eyelashes, but Rex does; they are golden and perfect and goddamn, these eyelashes are going to make me cry.

This dog was the one by my side when my wife threw me out and he was by my side the first time I had to sleep outside. He's an extra blanket in the winter, an extra pair of eyes to watch my backpack, the only pair of eyes to guard me while I sleep. Now I am kneeling on the floor of a subway car while he melts away from me, slipped through my fingers as easily as water over rocks.

There's a hand on my shoulder and I know it's Ty, because who else would be touching me, and yet I can't bring myself to look up. Rex's breathing is all funny now and I know. I know, but that doesn't make it any easier.

"Dude, dogs are man's best friend."

Tyrone – just a random kid I met half an hour ago on a subway station –

probably isn't trying to sound all philosophical; he probably said the first thing that popped into his head. All the same, a part of me not present at the moment appreciates his gesture, even if I can't show it. I'm too busy stroking Rex's muzzle, rubbing the spot over his nose that always made his tail wag. Today it lies as limp as the rest of him.

I haven't been homeless that long, not compared to some, but I've known what it feels like to be alone since practically forever, and never once have I cried about it. Tears don't solve anything, that's what my father used to say, and he's right: they don't. But there's a pressure in my chest now, building right behind my ribs and making it hard to breathe, making it hard to even focus on anything except how soft the fur under my hand is. How soft and how still. Somehow I'm packed in a train full of people and yet no one else is here. So even though guys don't cry over dogs, I do.

Scrap

Katrina Cosgrove



Texture

Nicole Kuhn

People always say that scars tell your story.
I don't think my scars tell my story. In fact,
I have spent my whole life trying to convince
people that my story is about more
than my scars. But the marks
on my face are louder than the words
I can speak. My bumps and divots
are the demanding subtitles, forever
distracting you from a bigger picture.

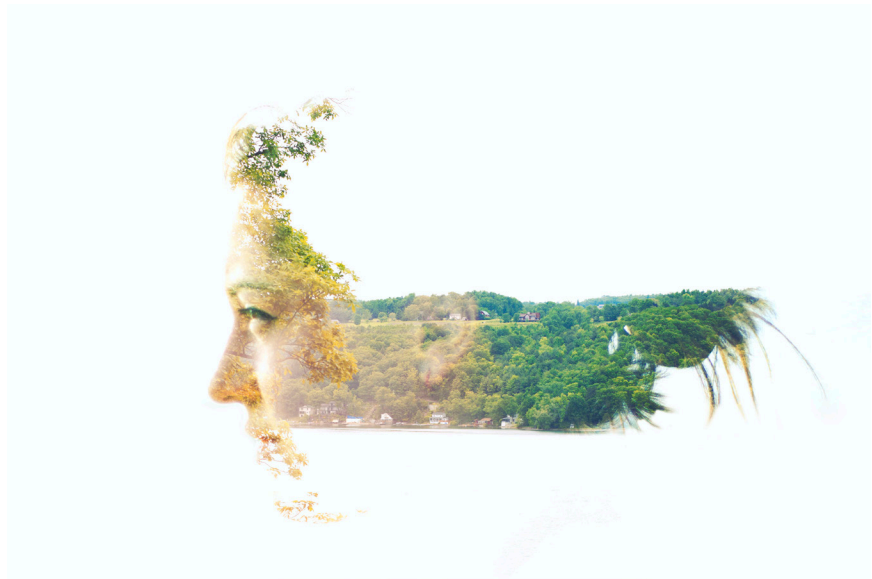
The truth about severe acne is that some nights
you go to bed and wake up bleeding, but it's not
always from the pores in your skin. Sometimes
it's the pores in your confidence that won't stop
leaking when you go to the mirror and startle
at the image of your own face. Sometimes the lump
on your cheek deviously becomes the lump in your throat
when putting on makeup over open wounds every morning
just burns a little too much today. I always found it funny
that a euphemism for "acne" is "irritated skin" because my skin
is definitely pissed off, but that phrase says
nothing for my heart.

You see, a sore that breaks and drains
at the tug of your smile or the shift
of your bones stings far more in the depths
of you than it ever does at the surface.
When people ask why I don't really date, I once told
someone that I don't know any man brave enough to handle
a chain of active volcanoes. They didn't get it.
They thought I was talking about the fire
in my personality, not cursing the red mounds
sprinkled across my shoulder blades, too temperamental
for even the touch of my t-shirt.

I assure you, though, at the roots of my angry
complexion is a seed of defiance. When I say I have to put my face
on before we can go out anywhere, it's not because I want
to hide who I really am. It's because most people
are too ignorant to remember that sometimes
infection is only skin-deep. It's because I get
ticked off when people won't look
me in the eye because they assume that I have a reason
to always be looking down. We should not
be ashamed of this artwork. It just has a little more
depth, a few more dimensions. It just has a little more
color, a little more texture than yours.

Impression

Brianna Blank



Rubber Soul

Aryanna Falkner

There is a song playing on the radio when he
tells me that he loves me,
his fingertips plucking notes onto my open palm
from a record we swore we would not dance to:
a nineteen-sixty-five Beatles album
and the sizzle of sunny-side-up eggs on the stove.

He keeps time with his restless foot on the kitchen tiles,
each measure signed in three-fourths,
serenading me with the *tap* and *whisk* of their bare souls.
I think for a moment that we will last until we are ash
from a memory that burns hotter, brighter, faster
than the cigarettes we swore we would not smoke.

The melody effortlessly falls from his chapped lips,
blending with grease in a pan that he slides off the flame,
as if he doesn't know how his lyrics
strike a chord on the contour of my skin,
making me forget when we swore that love was not for us.

But there is something to this beat we create
in the sunlit corners of his kitchen that makes him
say those warm words with his tongue in the grooves

of his lips like the needle on an old vinyl—
and I swore I would never sway to Lennon and McCartney,
or taste the tang of tar, or sing the song that goes, “I love you,”
but he has me humming its tune.

Hung to Dry

Sarah Maurer



The Reason for Muttering

Hanna Etu

The dishwasher job in any place of employment is always a degrading position, but at my work it was a whole deeper, darker, dingier crawling-around-in-the-bottom-of-the-dumpster level of humiliation. Lynn was our combination dishwasher, bathroom-cleaning lady, garbage lady. She did the jobs nobody else wanted to do. I assumed for the first few weeks of my job that Lynn was just another cook in the kitchen until I finally realized they would never allow her near sharp objects of any kind.

Lynn was a stout, middle-aged woman with a mouse face and long gray hair she kept yanked back in a bun. She wore the same faux-velvet jumpsuit with the standard white apron nearly every day, with a pair of shoes that must have been sneakers at one point in time, but were mostly a few pieces of fabric and rubber desperately attached by a couple threads. Her face was usually crunched in a concentrated frown, which made it all the more startling when she actually got animated about something, and her eyes would bulge out of her face like a squeezed doll.

I worked mostly at the bakery and prepared foods counter, which consisted of several long cases full of cakes, pastries, and brownies followed by a long reach-in case with bowls of various mayonnaise-coated salads. At the end of the bakery cases was a dividing wall that led into a long galley kitchen, where two stainless steel tables took up the expanse of the middle of the room. At the very, very end in a corner that always appears dark and almost cave-like in my memories of it, was a sink with a pull-down faucet with an industrial dishwasher next to it. Underneath and to the side were a collection of spray bottles, paper towel rolls, and

other cleaning supplies. This was Lynn's corner, her little home, her sanctuary of sorts.

On my afternoons at work, I would barely make it into the kitchen without hearing a sudden, high-pitched squawk.

"Watch it!" She'd say. "The floor is wet!"

I'd see her wildly brandishing a wet mop taller than herself, dragging it over the mucky concrete floor. *Swish swash*. I'd tip-toe by her, so as not to ruin the floor, deposit a dish in the sink (at which she would sigh "*all* right"), and hear another sing-song "*caaaareful*," before making my way back to the bakery counter.

I soon realized that Lynn was obsessed with her floor, and obsessed with reminding you when it was wet, as if the five different Wet Floor signs positioned perfectly equidistant from one another weren't enough.

"I'm gonna hit the floor now," Lynn would say, for whose benefit you were never quite sure. Either way, it sounded painful.

"Did you hear the floors were wet?" Shauna would say, leaning against the counter, her arms folded in furious defiance of Lynn's over-cautiousness of our well-being. "Because I honestly didn't know."

I imagined Lynn being scarred by someone else's tragic wet-floor-related accident. I pictured someone power walking into the kitchen in the middle of a rush, distracted by thoughts of brownie bars and cheesecake slices, skidding on the slippery concrete, their arms flailing in pointless resistance, their skull hitting the floor with a resounding *crack!* I imagined Lynn falling to her knees, wringing her hands and proclaiming "if *only* I'd been there to warn them!" The imaginary camera shot would pan out and up to view a Quentin-Tarantino-style pool of blood trickling through the cracks in the floor.

I slipped ever so slightly on the floor once, walking quicker when I thought Lynn's back was turned. But I was caught in the act.

"Careful there!" she piped up immediately as I gained by bearings, skull intact.

I kicked myself for days, months, years afterwards. Oh, the *humiliation*.

Many afternoons I would be lining up kifli cookies (little crescent shaped

cookies with assorted fillings that every customer pronounced wrong for the sole purpose of seeing the frown lines on my forehead) on a tray, boxing up a slice of cake, or filling up cannoli shells, when I would hear an assortment of profanities echoing from down the way.

“Fuck!” the kitchen would exclaim.

No, that couldn’t be right, I thought. I just have a dark mind, that’s obvious, right? I’m not *really* hearing that.

“*Shhhhit!*” the kitchen would declare, as several pots went slamming into the sink.

The profanity parade was a regular routine, as I came to realize. It was complemented by the slamming of dishes or the rough scratching of the broom against the wet concrete tile. At least someone was expressing themselves.

Around the store, Lynn was our favorite subject for imitation. We would enunciate various profanities—“fucking *shhit*”—remind each other that the floor was going to be wet, or announce repeatedly that we were going to take out the trash. Her voice would rise and fluctuate at random intervals that filled you with an odd sort of fear. The wet floor warning would be in the high pitch of an angry grandmother telling you to come inside for dinner, while trash-time Lynn was more like that uncle that drank just a little too much whiskey at family parties.

Tiffany would scold us, though she mainly scolded Alan, our class clown, the king of impersonations.

“You really shouldn’t make fun of her, Alan,” she’d say. “You know she has issues.”

Lynn clearly suffered from some kind of mental disorder, though we never discovered which. There was evidence for several different possibilities: the talking to herself could possibly indicate schizophrenia, the swearing could potentially mean Tourette’s syndrome, and the social awkwardness combined with an impeccable ability for crossword puzzles could possibly be a sign of autism. But none of us really did the research. I did feel guilty as my Lynn impressions improved and I would continue to feel bad as I continued to imitate her. Alan

never seemed to feel guilty at all. I guess the key was remembering the times we'd hear Lynn complaining to herself about us when she thought we weren't listening, in the midst of the profane outbursts. You kind of accept your hell-bound status when you work in retail, and impersonating Lynn as daily entertainment was just signing the contract.

By now I understood why Lynn was not in a position to interact with customers. Just the sound of the phone ringing would agitate her. If Willie, the head chef, had left for the day or stepped out of the kitchen for a few minutes and the kitchen phone rang, Lynn would stand and quiver over it like a dog watching a cat; she was highly uncertain of it, and ached to pounce, but couldn't quite get up the nerve to do so. She'd stare at it, listening to the incessant ringing, rolling her feet back and forth as she grasped her broom in her hand.

"Uhhh..." She'd shout over the ringing. "Can you uhh...answer the phone?"

If Lynn did not know what to make of the customers, the customers certainly didn't know what to make of her.

"Comin' behind ya," she would say as she snuck by a customer, bringing some garbage or cleaning supplies to the back of the store. The customer would often jump or attempt to make raised-eyebrow eye contact with one of the other employees. *Hey*, I wanted to say. *You're the outsider here.*

What was a little worrisome was Lynn's adoration for little babies in strollers. Without asking, she would walk up to the stroller, peek in, and say with the voice of Goofy but the stature of Mickey Mouse, "Hey there, little fella!" Often times the parents weren't sure if Lynn was an employee or not, and would politely nod and answer questions until she shuffled back to work.

Lynn's most amusing moments were the ones she did not know anyone else was a part of, or so we thought at first. Nick was in the back warehouse once while she was on one of her personal rampages, off to fetch a bucket or something of that nature. He couldn't hear much of what she was mumbling to herself until a sudden "Where am I?" flew out, in, according to Nick, the angry grandmother tone of voice. At first I attributed this to more of her own personal

issues that we were either too ignorant, insensitive, or just plain unobservant to determine the specifics of, but the more I thought about it, the more I felt she was, unknowingly, posing a philosophical question. Where was I? Where were any of us, really? Work might have thrown her into the untouchable category of our segregated society where we could giggle and point at her absurdities, but we were all working there, suspended between productive points in our lives. Lynn was just suspended for far too long.

Lynn also had an unorthodox manner of maintaining her self-esteem. Alan liked to reenact a scene at the lockers when Lynn was getting ready to leave in the evening.

Lynn was trying to unlock her padlock, repeatedly getting the combination wrong and not being able to open it. She was clanging against the locker, trying to force it open and getting frustrated, grunting in-between clangs.

"I can't do it," whined sad grandma.

"You can do it ba-by," urged whiskey-drinking uncle.

These full on conversations were very common. Many days I would be getting ready to punch in for work when I would hear multiple voices drifting out of the break room, a deeper one and a higher one. I would generally assume a male and female coworker were having a conversation in the break room until I walked by and saw Lynn sitting there alone, in the same metal folding chair she sat in every day.

My brother once walked by her while she was puttering about the back warehouse, pushing her cleaning cart to straighten up the employee bathrooms, muttering angrily to herself. Tom was accustomed to her constant dialogue, but she must have finally realized he was there and noticed the undoubtedly puzzled look on his face, because she suddenly turned in his general direction and said, "I'm not *crazy*—" (in true panicked-grandmother fashion that suddenly altered to uncle smoking a cigar)—*"I'm just stressed."*

That was certainly true, to some extent. We were all stressed—Lynn just had her own special way of articulating it.

One night, after the managers had left for the evening, Alan and I went to Lynn's back corner area of the kitchen. Amongst various spray bottles, sponges, rolls of garbage bags, and (oddly) dirty crumpled up scraps of paper towels, we found a decrepit yellow legal pad. Lynn's slanted scrawl covered each page, listing each activity of every day.

"Started doing dishes," Alan did his best high pitched impression. Next chore: "Ended doing dishes! Look, she even listed the load number."

We flipped to the day before. *Started doing dishes*. Next: *Ended doing dishes*.

We flipped back a couple years, for the pages, crumpled and water-stained as they all were, went back to the beginning of time. First task: *Started doing dishes*.

I wanted to both laugh and cry for very different reasons.

Albert Einstein once said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. But did Lynn expect anything different? I wasn't really sure what Lynn expected at all. Consistency? Fulfillment? I feared that Lynn was the manifestation of what just too many days, weeks, months, years in that place could do to a person. What dish load number would it take to reach fulfillment?

"Lynn's always been like that," Jack, our general manager, once said to me. "Have I ever told you we went to high school together? We were a couple years apart. She's always been like that, and well, you know how kids can be."

I wanted to say, *Kids? I know how adults can be, too*, thinking of how many times Jack and I had impersonated her while she was not around.

"She came to me in the eighties, she'd just been fired from K-Mart and she was devastated," Jack said, his arms folded in his usual contemplative stance. "I showed her application to our manager at the time and he said, 'eh, give her a job.'"

Lynn cashed for her first few years, or possibly months, I'm not sure how long that could possibly have lasted. Jack said she had a habit of perturbing customers with the way she moved the items—"blueberry jam, huh?" SLAM—and announced the products to herself as she went—"cold...cuts." That could not have

gone on very long before they hid her in the kitchen, where she would dwell for the next thirty years.

On one of my later days at work, after our store moved to a new location, I was getting ready for the day—gathering my apron, hat, and headset—when Jay came up to his locker to gather his things.

“You haven’t been here in a while, have you?” he asked.

“No, not since Sunday,” I said, pulling my apron over my head and tying it around my waist.

“So then I’m guessin’ nobody’s told you.”

“Told me what?”

Jay got down to a whisper and hunched his head down in the way people do when they’re either telling you a secret or pretending to confide in you to make sure you’re listening.

“Lynn got fired yesterday,” Jay said.

There weren’t any words to describe that moment, because there is a blankness that takes over your ability to think when you’re in a state of disbelief. But when I started to think, I wondered what kind of a person you have to be to take away the tiny income and entire world of a person just to save on providing that tiny income. I thought about her having to clean out her locker, gather all of her belongings. I thought about her not knowing where she was going to get herself up to go the next day, or the day after that, or the day after *that*.

I imagined Lynn just coming in to work the next day, as if nothing had happened, simply because she didn’t know what else to do. She’d start the day as she always did, cleaning the dishes out of the sink, then getting her cart and taking on the bathrooms, mumbling all the way.

Lynn did not do this, but she did return several times, begging for her job back. It’d worked once years before, with a different owner of the store, but it wasn’t going to work now. I pictured her trying to apply to every kitchen within a ten-mile radius of her house, going to an interview with every one of her personalities.

A month or two later she came in and it was the first time I'd seen her come in since she'd been fired.

"So I guess you may have heard," Lynn said, lowering her voice. "I don't work here anymore."

As if it was some kind of secret.

She told me that she'd gotten a job at a restaurant washing dishes, of course. But they weren't giving her as many hours as she wanted, and it just wasn't cutting it. Even if it was going to eventually get better for her, it was never going to take up more of her life than our store had.

Lynn was not replaced, but it wasn't like people were lining up at the door to be the dishwasher in our little grocery store. The cooks and bakers just piled up the dishes in the sink until they accepted the fact that, for once, they were going to have to do them on their own.

The stock department absorbed the bathroom-cleaning job, and therefore on occasion I absorbed the bathroom-cleaning job. I would push the cleaning cart to the bathroom and put on a pair of rubber gloves, feeling like I was going into someone else's bedroom and rifling through their underwear drawer. I could still picture Lynn grunting as she tried to get the cart over the little edge in the door frame, muttering to herself as she swept and mopped the floor. And I, after four years of working a bakery counter, finding myself scrubbing old trails of urine dribbling from the toilet bowl rim to the floor, began to see the reason for muttering.

Posing for Picasso

Kate Light

When he slips his palm
beneath my knee, cocks
my head, arranges my elbows,
I will be only an ellipsis between
one undressed girl and another.

The rosiness of my cheeks will blue,
and his animal eyes will burn a girl
in his throng of naked offers.
He will love her for a while
in impossible angles and lopsided colors,

but me, he will position unnaturally,
breathing paint fumes and Spanish
and sadness against my neck.

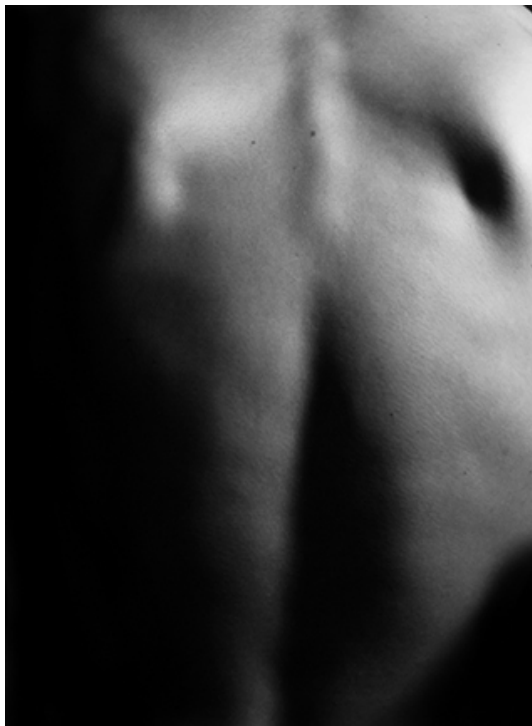
He will make another woman hold my mirror,
and cover her in the blue dress he loves
more than her curves, until he slides the
cloth from her shoulders,
surprised to find a woman there, her hips
angled precisely where he left them.

Androgynous Abstractions of the Body

Hannah Olek



Audrey I



Matt II



Audrey II



Matt I

Carrying Brenda

Victoria Claflin



Sink or Swim

Gabrielle Weiss

If I follow your footprints in the damp sand
where the tide clocks in and out, I will find you

hunched over, sifting through seashell mosaics,
hunting for the smoothest red-speckled shells.

I choose to follow the waves, wanting to float
on the surface of dark, murky blue. I'm unaware

that the moon is the master of tides, but the ocean
is a metronome, ticking out beats that bruise our hearts.

I am one wave in and the current grabs,
tangles and knots me, forces salt into the corners

of my lungs, and drags me along gritty sand.
Never-ending waves pull shoulders out of my sockets,

and stretch me out like the points of a starfish.
This goes on until I am nothing but the sea's own eddy.

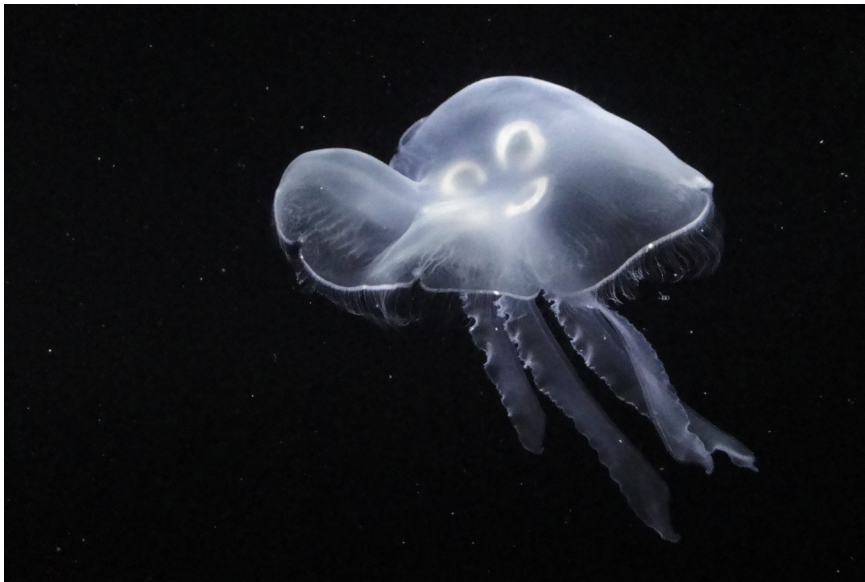
At an age when oceans live inside fathers, you pick up
my bundle of limbs and cradle them. Years later,

when it's ten minutes past curfew, I'll lie on the hood of a car
looking into the night sky, with a boy who traces a map

of stars into my palm. He'll ask what my father's like.
I'll tell him that you've always smelled like sea salt.

Glow in the Dark

Olivia Hoffman



Vino di Cantina del Vesuvio

Julia Green



Airport

Bethany Dudek

Club Airport, the only rough
black-bricked building downtown
with a neon red awning, peeling
white logo of a plane circling
a martini glass, although thirty miles
from any real travel hub.

An exclusive terminal with bald
bouncers and a throbbing beat heard
from the sidewalk, shrill college girls
sway in the streets, shedding silver
speckles on nearby shadows.

DJ bobbing, bodies slinking, ladies
throwing their heads back as men yell
for more shots. Clear liquid sloshes
on top of the counter, a runway for drinks
to land, take-off, and return to the bar again.

But vacation, this nocturnal break has ended
for the guy with the X on his hand, thrown
into the frigid morning for a gritty brawl he
will forget and plum bruises lining his jaw
to remind him.

I Should Have Never Come Back Here

Noraa Sue Danielle



Storyteller Hands

Kelsey Colwell

Yosemite in August brought me a man
named Ollie. His blond stubble glinted
in the sun as he studied his callused,
taped, rock-aged hands. He told me,

“Hands should tell a story. Soft
hands reflect a boring life.”

I study my story. White climber’s
chalk flakes in the countless folds.
Cuticles were torn with purpose
from hours spent digging along the sides
of my nails, looking for a quieter mind.
Smiles like serrated knives stuttered
at the ends of chipped pink polish,
whose flakes gleam voodoo spells
to ward off anxious teeth.

My palms are a palm-reader’s
playground. Lines so tangled,
the incense of her studio would cling,
nestle, and call them “home.” The heart
line is a cat’s tail as long as Hippolyta’s

girdle. The life line is stubborn like the sharp
granite that wore my fingerprints into thin,
mauve, rice-sized saucers. Lacing my fingers
and bending one way, then the other,
they crack sharp relief. On the ebony neck
of a violin, they sing as a mother
to her child. Standing on rock, fingers
combing the clouds, they scream strength.

The Cup

Neil Savoy

The first vase struck the edge of the kitchen counter like a purple firework. Small bits of glass cascaded down to the cold, ceramic tile. Then another one hit a cabinet, nicking the paint and sending shards flying. Jake's voice seemed to scream out of each jar, each dish, as they soared from the dining room into the kitchen.

I had been on my way into the kitchen to make macaroni and cheese when he threw the first vase. I have to admit I froze for a moment, but after seeing the second jar I ran upstairs to my room, shutting the door as another shattered crystal cracked through the walls.

This was a Bad Night. It made sense, I guess, not every day could be good, nor bad, at least I didn't think so. I didn't know what Jake wanted but he wasn't getting it. My mother's voice started pleading with him. I leapt onto my bed, lay on my back, and pulled the tips of the pillow over my ears. I stared at the fan whirling overhead, its blades blurring into one another. Their voices were muffled, but the pillow couldn't block the sharp sound of breaking glass as it cut through the cotton. Then I heard Jake shout, "Just let me go, Mom!"

Before you get the wrong idea, Jake isn't a nasty person; he just gets really mad sometimes. If you're wondering why my dad hasn't stopped him from throwing another plate, it's because he can't, and he can't because he died. I lost him when I was four and Jake was seven. It's been nine years now, but even when you're thirteen you can still see the vacuums of space your father should be in: an empty recliner, one less car in the driveway, your mom showing you how to tie a tie instead of him. It's not something you can just ignore.

It really stinks that he isn't around, but I've come to figure out there are some bright sides to having a dead dad. I know that sounds terrible, and I'm not saying I'm glad my dad is dead, because I'm definitely not. And I'm not saying these bright sides are anything worth bragging about either.

But like I said, there are some "benefits" to having a dead dad. There's also a lot of bad things, but talking about all those bad things would just upset me and I'm making an effort to focus on things I should be happy about, like my mom, my friend Olivia, my dog Beanie, and the fact that Jake doesn't break *my* stuff, but that doesn't mean I like when he breaks my mom's stuff; it's just that that would go on the other side of that list.

One way of figuring out what's not terrible about having a dead dad is to make a chart. I put mine in a marble, college-ruled notebook, so that you can fit more stuff in as you go along. You have one column where you put all the bad stuff and one side with the good stuff. But don't write down the bad stuff because there's a lot and it will only make you feel worse; it's best to leave it blank. So while the bad side of having a dead dad is pretty obvious and lengthy, the not so bad parts take some thought, but here's what I've come up with:

1. My dad can never yell at me.
2. He can never tell me I've disappointed him.
3. He can never hit me.
4. He can never divorce my mom.
5. He can never walk out on us.
6. He can never become a drug addict.

I wondered if Jake had come up with a list like this. I didn't think he had. He must have been writing the bad parts in his head and once you start that list, it's hard to stop. The thoughts keep coming like a stampede and it leaves your heart trampled. I would give you an example, but like I said, then everything would go downhill super-fast and it's already a Bad Night and I don't want it to get any worse.

Either way, it's just best not to mess with Jake when he's like this. I'm not

saying it's okay for him to break stuff and shout at Mom. But he doesn't do this every day. In fact, he never used to do anything like this at all.

There wasn't another crash after that last one. I could still hear muffled voices, but they were dying down. The words were unclear and the rhythm slowed. Apologies, I assumed. I *hoped*. I released the grip of the pillow and my ears caught the swoosh of the side door. No more broken glass tonight. Jake was gone.

The next day I got a text from Jake during lunch, "Hey Cole I need u 2 come straight home after school, k?"

Shoot. I just realized I never told you my name, sorry. That's rude isn't it? Well, like the text says, it's Cole. I'm usually much more polite, like waiting to eat at Thanksgiving until all the food has been passed around, even the mashed potatoes, or giving my seat to an older person before myself. Either way, I like to think I'm a decent guy and if I met you in person I would hold the door open for you and ask how you were doing even if we didn't know each other's names.

I considered what his message meant. He must have needed help with something, but I was supposed to hang out with Olivia after school. My phone lit up again, another message from Jake, this one read, "5 minutes max."

"OK," I responded. It would only take a few minutes to bike home, help Jake with whatever, like move dressers around in his room or something, and then go to Olivia's.

Olivia was one of those lucky kids that had a pool and a trampoline at her house. The pool had been closed a month or so ago, but the trampoline was still out and we were working on perfecting how to do a front flip. Only, she could land on her feet while I flopped forward onto my back. It was still fun to fly in the air and feel the bounce mat curve along your spine and cradle you as gravity pulled you down.

After my last class, I hurried to my locker, suffocating in the overpowering scent of Axe and Old Spice cologne-drenched bodies. As I weaved through the

stuffed middle school hallway and outside past the other kids, no one stopped to say hi to me, or bye I guess since it was the end of the day and all. I don't say that to sound like a loser, because I'm not a loser, I'm just kind of nerdy and that gets on some people's nerves. Besides, I'll see Olivia later anyway, and we were both kind of nerdy together.

I've always been a dork. Back in second grade, we were doing an exercise where we listed off words that ended in "-tion," so I raised my hand and said, "mummification," and my teacher paused for a second before she wrote it out in giant letters on the board. I think it was a big deal because there were so many syllables, or maybe because it was about an ancient civilization. Either way, my teacher started having me do extra assignments that I was interested in, like drawing a diagram of a spider's organ system. Then, the next year, I started being in a Gifted and Talented program where I met Olivia.

Before you go and think I'm a total know-it-all, you should know I don't know everything. The only reason I knew about mummification was because I had been reading a lot about ancient Egypt, and I only knew what the insides of a spider looked like because I read a book about spiders. I liked to read about lots of different things like reptiles, comic books (never the comics themselves though, just about the canon), and tornadoes. Cool stuff, really.

As I walked home I started listing off all the first 151 Pokémon in order: Bulbasaur, Ivysaur, Venusaur... Which wasn't to show off, but to make sure I remembered them all correctly. If you can't tell already, I'm in my head quite a lot, but then again I'm always in my head, and who isn't? I never met anyone who wasn't. It's not possible to think *too* much either, otherwise your head would just pop like a water balloon, or you'd get institutionalized or something.

As I walked into the door of my house, my Jack Russell, Beanie, raced up to me and shook his tail so hard his whole body jiggled. It was just before 3 p.m., but the family room was still gray like the morning. The drapes, thick and green, hung over the windows, and cracks of light seeped through, brightening the dust and dog hair in the air. I imagined my lungs looking like the lint filter in the

dryer, fuzzy and packed with gray and purplish thread. I crouched down to pet Beanie and noticed the brown hairs near his eyes starting to gray.

“What took you so long?” Jake towered over me, standing between me and the kitchen with a clear plastic cup in his hand. His hair was buzzed and a plain, silver chain hung over the cuff of his baggy South Pole shirt. I looked down at my navy blue fleece sweater, now adorned with Beanie’s white fur, and my plain jeans. Right now it’s cool if your jeans are ripped, but in the ‘60s bell bottoms were cool, so I think I’ll leave my pants the way they are.

On the ceiling above Jake like a halo was the crater he made last month when he punched the smoke detector for doing its job. I think he was making grilled cheese. When my mom got home from work he said he was sorry and that he would fix it.

“We get out at 2:45. I had to run to my locker and then bike here.” I set my backpack on the wooden swivel chair by the computer desk. The weight of my books made it twirl, creaking its old joints. One of the books in there was about a future where all the kids were kidnapped and transformed into monsters but some kids weren’t and they could do special things. It was pretty dark but I feel like most future movies and books are. I’m surprised they didn’t try to be brighter.

“Ah, okay. Well, I just need you to fill it up to about here,” he said, pointing to a notch on the cup, a little more than halfway up.

He nodded his head behind me towards the bathroom and I looked back to the cup, just like the ones at the doctor’s office.

I was pretty sure Jake had been having some issues at school lately. I knew my mom didn’t like his friends too much and last month he was brought home by the police for spray painting the side of a building by the aquatic center. He should have probably just doodled in a notebook, but maybe the pages were too small.

“You can’t?” I asked, which was maybe intrusive of me, to ask if he could pee for his own urine sample, but it seemed like a fair question.

Jake sighed, "Please, Cole, I need you to do this."

"Okay."

He handed me the cup and I just looked at it and the green lid you had to push in to twist off.

"Cole?"

"Um, one sec."

I went into the bathroom and locked the door, setting the cup by the sink. I started to think of all the ways I could fill the cup without actually peeing in it. I knew that might sound wrong, but this was like cheating on a test—it literally is cheating on a test—except this isn't my algebra exam, and I'm not sure what the grade is for.

I had seen a movie before where a guy used apple juice to fill a cup, but that was a comedy and this was real life. Besides, the only drinks we ever had in the fridge were skim milk and water from the tap. I checked under the sink but all I could find was purple and blue shampoo. I also would've had to heat up whatever I could find and there's no way Jake wouldn't have noticed. Even if I could've done any of those things, Jake would know I had let him down.

"Uh... how's it going in there?" Jake asked, his voice muffled against the door. He must have heard the cabinets.

"It's... going... I didn't drink much water today so it's taking a sec."

I thought about how much I hated myself for doing this, and how much I hated Jake for making me do this, to come home and piss in a cup. I wished he'd just go into my room and smash my GameCube—although I wouldn't like that either—but that didn't involve me doing something I knew I shouldn't be doing. But I knew I couldn't say no. When you've lost someone in your life you do everything you can to hold on to everyone else.

I couldn't decide what the best way to do it was so I started peeing into the toilet, clutching the cup in my left hand, feeling the increment bumps on my fingertips. I paused, halting the stream, and brought the cup towards me; it filled, warm and bubbly on top in just a few seconds, and I finished in the bowl.

"Are you almost done?" Jake's voice pressed on the door.

"Yeah, just give me one more sec."

I set the cup by the sink, making sure the outside was dry, and washed my hands. As I opened the door Jake was still standing there. His eyes moved to the cup full and capped.

"Thank you, Cole."

Jake reached for the cup, held at the top and bottom edges between my thumb and index finger. I know I've already cleaned it off but it was still a little wet from the water and I couldn't be too sure about what each droplet was. He took it. I felt so little and gross in that moment, like a worm baking on the pavement.

"I might need you to do this again next week, if you can. Okay?"

Don't ever ask me to do that again, I thought. But that wasn't an option. I wanted to feel like this was worth something, so I asked, "If I'm going to do this, then can I listen to your stereo?"

"In my room?"

"Yeah."

He paused, looking down with a momentary scowl.

To be honest I had no intention of ever listening to anything in his room. I wanted to make him feel uncomfortable knowing I might be in his space, touching his things. I wanted him to understand how it felt to be forced to do something you didn't want to.

"Yeah, yeah," he said, "that would be okay."

Except it wasn't okay. Whenever I went to the doctor's and they gave me a cup to pee in I didn't trade it with anyone else. They didn't literally say, "only you can pee in this cup" but I thought that's sort of a given. So while I didn't know everything about the world yet like how to file my taxes, drive a car, or do any kind of work besides delivering newspapers, I did know that when you were given a cup to pee in it was supposed to be your pee and not your little brother's. And if there was something wrong with your own pee then maybe a doctor really should have a look at it.

“Thanks again, Cole, I really appreciate it.”

Jake turned and disappeared into his room downstairs in the basement. I headed out the door followed by Beanie. As I shut the gate and pedaled down the driveway he sat and watched me until I vanished out of his view.

One of the best things about being friends with Olivia was that she lived just around the corner. Two corners to be exact, but still, super close. I just had to go right on my street, up two small blocks, take another right, and her house was just a little further down on the left. It was maybe a five minute walk, but with a bike I could be there in less than sixty seconds.

When I got to Olivia’s she was sitting on the front steps, with her blonde bangs swept over to the side. She’d already changed out of her school uniform into jeans and a baggy hoody. See, Olivia went to a private school, but when we were both in elementary school, kids from her school and mine went to the same Gifted and Talented program every Friday. One day at lunch we got to know each other after I asked if she wanted to finish her chicken patty sandwich (she didn’t) and I ate the rest of it in less than fifteen seconds (I really did), and we agreed it was sad that Ophelia drowned herself in *Hamlet*.

“Hey Cole, what took you so long?” She smiled as she asked, so she wasn’t upset. Normally I would have been there ten minutes ago, it was part of our routine if we’re going to see each other after school.

Oh, nothing. I just had to pee in a cup for Jake.

“Nothing really, I just had to stop at home real quick.” Close enough.

We went through her back gate and into the yard where her kidney-shaped pool was covered by a big blue tarp held in place by concrete blocks. The water on top had grown dark and murky with dead leaves and I saw a frog skid through the muck. We slipped our shoes off and got on the trampoline.

As we jumped, we talked about our school day and the coolest things we got out of class. She learned about how women took over factory work when men went away to fight in World War II. I found out that in an atom, you have positively charged particles (protons), neutral particles (neutrons), and negative

ones (electrons), and that the positive and negative attract each other and hold the atom together. I thought about Jake flying around my mom and me, like an electron, getting further away but being pulled back in.

"Hey," Olivia said as she bounced into the air, then landing on her butt and sitting, "have you ever been to the Thousand Islands?"

"No, why?" I leaned backwards and lay down beside her, staring at the cloud covered sky, breathing in the decay of leaves.

"It's one of the coolest places in New York. My family and I went when I was little, and I'm hoping we go this summer."

"What's so cool about it?" I asked, zipping up my polyester jacket.

"Well there are lots of islands, some are super tiny, with just a tree on it," she held up her thumb and index finger less than an inch apart, "but some are bigger, and one has a castle on it."

"A castle? We have castles in New York?"

"Well, not like the really old ones, this one was meant to be a giant house for a family."

"Meant to?"

"Well, what happened is this guy bought Heart Island, and he wanted to build a beautiful home for his wife and kids, but during construction his wife died and when the husband found out he stopped all construction on the island and never went back." She rocked backwards then forwards, springing back up onto her feet. As she jumped my body bounced and tipped from side to side.

"Really? Never?"

"Never." This time she fell backward but lay there, bouncing up and down and few times before she settled. I lay opposite of her. "It's like a fairy tale, don't you think?"

I thought of the different rooms with blank walls like a primed canvas, missing wallpaper and painted murals. I imagined the blank ceilings missing their chandeliers and the cold naked floors without rugs to cover them up. I filled the rooms with velvet armchairs, stained glass lamps, varnished writings desks and

tables, a library packed with books in beautiful shiny bindings. I picked every dish, fork, and knife, and filled the drawers with everything I could dream of. A freezer stuffed with all the hams I could ever eat and cupboards stacked with a million boxes of mac and cheese. I pictured the empty bedrooms and put in the biggest, comfiest beds anyone had ever slept in.

"Do you think they'll ever finish it?" I asked.

"No, and I don't think they should. It's not what the man would have wanted. Besides, some things are best incomplete."

"Olivia!" Her father shouted from the back door. "It's time for supper."

"Will I see you tomorrow?" I asked.

"Of course."

...

Jake hadn't been home for four days since I peed in the cup for him. I sat in the family room at the center of the braided rug, picking the lint out with my nails as my mother announced to me, "Jake isn't going to be home for a while, but he's in a safe place."

Beanie came over and sat between my outstretched legs and tilted his head up at me. I spotted a few more grays by his eyes and some new ones by his nose. There was fog in his eyes.

My mother sat on the chaise lounge, still in her work clothes as if she were preparing to give me a formal presentation about Jake's absence. I could tell she wanted me to say something, anything, but I welcomed the silence. No broken glass.

She pulled a dark wood box out from under her and pulled out a prescription pill bottle, took a few different shaped capsules out, and sipped them down with coffee. She placed the bottle back in the box, shutting it tightly, and placed it back beneath her.

"Where is he?"

She grabbed a pack of cigarettes, Marlboro Golds, unwrapped the thin film of plastic, and began compacting the tobacco, slamming the box against her open

palm.

“You’ll see when we visit in a couple weeks. Just know he’s okay.”

Beanie looked to her and back to me. His ears were upright with the corners bent forward, waiting for a prompt, some assurance that it was acceptable to come forward and lick my face.

The cigarette was lit and in a few minutes the cloud has swirled around my mother, Beanie, and myself.

“It’ll be okay, Cole.”

Above the Hawaiian Clouds

Nicole Ratajczak



World Atlas

Sarah Pozzuto

I think we need to talk.
Let's talk.

Let's draw maps of each other's minds
and shade all of the spaces that match.

Shade them blue, Lapis blue,
and drown in each one as slowly as we can manage,
passing one breath back and forth until our lungs wilt,
pieces of origami paper folded into boats and set adrift.
Soaking and wilting, bleeding colors into blue,
dancers in Lapis blue.

Topographic diagrams of dissimilarity,
valleys where our fingertips touch
and slopes that we dig our feet into, wave to each other in the thinning air.
Let's shade them green, emerald green,
searching and tumbling and opening like your lips on my skin.
I'll be Lewis and you'll be Clark. Let's explore.

If I traced your eyelids with my fingertips, would I catch you dreaming of me?

I'm not sure what's land and what's ocean, where can I drown,
can I wake you up at night to tell you that I wrote a poem about you?
Is it strange if I say
I think every poem I've ever written has been about you,
but I can't breathe sometimes when I think about forever?

Anyway,
I thought we needed to talk.

Lantern Light

Olivia Hoffman



Je Suis Charlie

Brianna Blank





IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS KILLED IN THE *CHARLIE HEBDO*
MASSACRE IN PARIS, FRANCE ON JANUARY 7TH, 2015.

Headless Mary

Leah McDonald



Easter

Kate Light

Three girls in peach dresses are sprinkled
in front of a congregation, mostly visitors
fidgiting in once-a-year suits and pastels

and we all read promises from hymnals

*Will you be a family of believers
to these new daughters of Christ?*

We will, say the visitors.

A restless boy behind me breathes

Uh uh. No way am I ever doing this shit
to his brother, and I am grateful.

*Who are you going to call
in your times of need?*

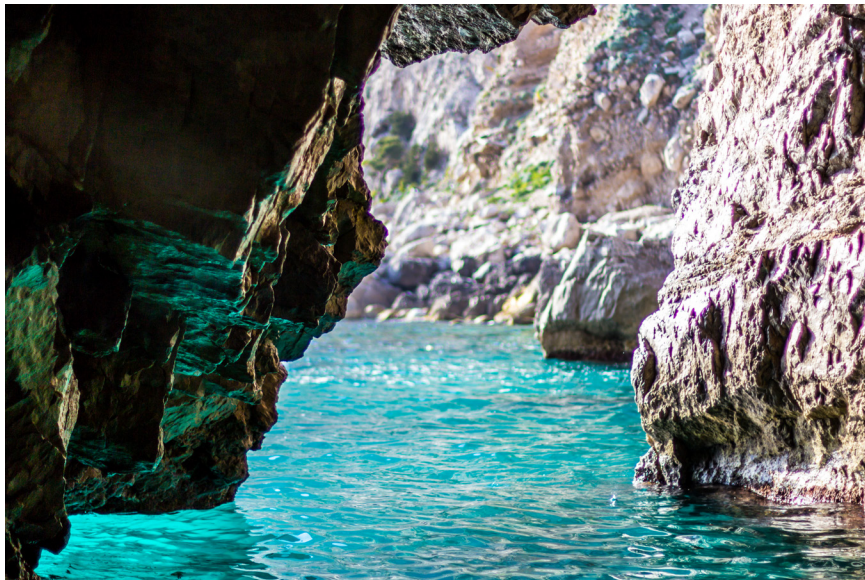
The pastor asks,
and someone in the back
whispers, *Ghostbusters*.

Thank god for heathens like me.

I was raised in these wooden seats
and now on Easter Sunday all I can think
is how easy it would be to shave
my white leg if I stretched it out
over the pew in front of me.

Green Grotto

Dylan Conroy



Charon

Alex Segelhurst

The swollen and water-rotted souls split,
giving room for my boat to dock
while I hum a ditty stuck in my head.

The line forms like every day before.
This stupid cowl keeps getting in the way
but I find the purse where it always is.

I smirk when they give me the silver,
releasing their last stake in the old world.
“Thank you. Come again.”

One steps forward with shaking, empty palms.

I roll my eyes and let out a deep sigh.
“Listen lady, you know the rules.
You Pay or You Stay. Simple as that.”

Her impotent tears start to soak my tattered robe.
The dead and forgotten lustfully crawl closer,
their hollow eye sockets flooded black.

“Hey Doll, I don’t make the rules,”

I check my bare wrist disappointingly,
“and now I’m behind schedule.”

I shove off, leaving her stranded.
Who do I look like, Saint Peter?
She decides to follow me anyway.

That was a mistake.

A thousand hands shoot from the water and grab her.
She wails as she is ripped apart in a bloody instant.
I shake my head absently and chuckle at her stupidity,
trying to remember what song I was singing when I pulled up.

Art and Paper

Marissa Verdi



Cracks

Joe Krajewski



A Doll's Curse

Aryanna Falkner

She was born in a brilliant glow of red: bursts of blood, my raw throat, and the fuzz of rose-colored hair. I named her after the halo that shrouded her head.

Her father was not there for the birth, and that should have been my first clue.

"Ma'am, is there anyone I can call?" a nurse asked between contractions. "Your husband?"

"Dead," I lied. Or maybe it was the truth. There were times I caught his transparent figure wandering the hallways, the TV's light splashing blue on our white walls when I left for work in the mornings. But his absence wasn't the reason for the goose-bumps on my skin and the cold sweat on the back of my neck. His appearance did that. I was being haunted in my own house.

The birthing nurse's eyes watered. I didn't want her to say anything else so I asked for ice to cool my mouth. My daughter decided that was the perfect moment to show up. Fashionably late, of course.

My Aunt Gale once tried to explain to me the basics of having a child by throwing a doll into my arms, flickers of ash from her cigarette sticking to the toy's velvet dress. I had been ten and perhaps too old for a doll, but it was a gift and that was good enough for me. It was supposed to have one of those voice boxes that whined, "feed me," and "change me," or maybe even "I love you, Mommy," but it was clearly broken. It could only hiss and sputter phrases slowly, drawing them out as if a spirit were crawling through its frozen, parted lips, syllable by syllable. I held it far away from my body, pinching it between my strongest fingers like I was pinching my nose, which I used to do whenever my aunt sparked a fire between her two lips.

“What if I held you like that when you were a baby, hmm?” she asked, her breaths wheezing between each word, turning the basement gray and the air heavy. “You have to hold its head or it’ll break like an egg.”

“Ma...” it started. I pictured the hard dome of its head breaking in two and suddenly wondered why I had been disgusted with it in the first place. I pulled it to my chest. “Ma...”

With the live wire loose between her teeth, my aunt waved her hand at me. “There. You’ll be ready for your own soon. Take after your bitch of a mother—don’t repeat that word.” I wondered which word she meant. “Don’t just stand there. Bounce it around!”

I didn’t understand the command, so I jumped up and down, jostling the toy enough that it cried out: “*Change—change me...*”

My aunt huffed and the doll’s complaints grew louder, dancing with the smoke in the air, twirling faster and faster until I couldn’t distinguish which one made me dizzier. She yanked the yapping baby out of my arms and turned it over before smacking it on the back with the flat of her palm. “*Mommy...*” it drawled once more, then went silent.

Aunt Gale laughed low and hard, her voice rattling all the way up her throat and out of her lips. “Sometimes you have to do that, too.”

She wasn’t wrong. When my daughter was born after a long seventeen hours, the doctor cut her cord and hit her on the back until she cried out. I unfurled my arms, wiggling my fingers as if that would bring her to me faster. I put her against my naked chest and felt her shallow gasps slow to a normal speed. We were in sync.

I took in her every breath, felt her tight fists try to uncurl on my skin, and heard her small whines. I couldn’t contain my smile. “It’s okay. We’re okay,” I said, my cheeks tingling from stretching the muscles around my mouth that had never been worked quite so hard. I could tell immediately that she had fire in her core from the way she warmed me. She was an inferno so bright that only I could hold her. She appraised me skeptically, asking with her river-colored eyes,

Well, what now?

“We’re in this together,” I told her. And I intended to keep my word. I clutched her closer to my body. I would never let her go, I would never let her burn me.

There was a moment where my daughter finally quieted enough to sleep, her warmth spreading from where she rested in the center of my chest. Dust particles hung suspended in midair, the sound of the nurses’ scrubs brushing together disappeared as they ran to a patient that would not make it, everything was alive in that moment. I was alive, at last, after twenty-five years. I felt my chest flutter like a baby bird trying to fly for the first time. I didn’t realize what was happening until I felt it in the spots right underneath my jaw, around the pale veins in my wrists, and in the place where Rose slept. My heart beat that day with her against me.

She was the only thing worth loving.

I was eight when I learned about my family’s curse.

Jeremy Shumaker had passed me a note on the playground, its corners smudged with Oreo crumbs, asking if I wanted to kiss him. I was supposed to circle “Yes” or “No.” The “n” was backwards—that should have been my second clue. I had no pen or pencil to fill out his form, so I ran to where he was pushing a Kindergartener off of the tire swing. After the kid went down crying, Jeremy hopped onto the black rubber and patted the spot next to him. I wiggled onto the seat, feeling as though I was sitting on a throne.

We were a hot item for the rest of recess.

By circle time, my seat next to Jeremy Shumaker had gone to Ramona Reynolds. I came home in tears, my fragile heart no longer touched by his snot-coated fingers.

“Girl,” Aunt Gale said the moment I walked in the door, “stop your crying—my soaps are on.”

I sniffled and dragged my backpack across the floor in front of her propped-

up feet. I knew I was being as slow as molasses, something she told me often, but I was weighed down by a sorrow I had never felt before.

She sighed. "How am I supposed to see Rodrigo's evil twin if you're blocking the view?" Then, softer: "Cassandra."

I faced her, wiping my eyes with the rough canvas of my jacket's sleeve. I left streaks of red across my cheeks.

"Jeremy Shumaker—" I began.

"Ungh!" my aunt scoffed. "That's what this is about? A boy?" I nodded. "No point there, sweetheart. Boys give our family nothing but trouble. Your grandpa left before your mom popped out. And have you ever seen an uncle walking around here? That bastard took everything from me, down to my last cigarette. They say they love you until they find someone else with bigger—uh, hair. Don't even get me started on your mother. She followed your daddy around like a puppy until he squeezed the last breath out of her." Her mouth turned into a tight screw. "Cassie, you listen to your aunt now, you hear? There's nothing worth loving. Boys, kids, not even me." She turned back to the television, cranking up the volume. "All we'll do is break your heart."

"Rodrigo!" the pixels on the TV screeched. "I thought you left!"

"Rodrigo? No. Rodrigo is long gone."

I should have known in that moment that my daughter would face the same fate.

I wanted to listen to my aunt but I could never seem to keep a safe distance. Broken things were too pretty and my husband was the fairest of them all: his evaporating tears, calloused palm around mine, and the promise of a child were the ingredients to a sweet concoction that I drank like ambrosia.

Before our daughter and frantic nuptials, he convinced me to sneak into a New Year's Eve party where beer was flowing like Niagara Falls. His hands were at my hips, my waist, the small of my back. He never stopped touching me. As long as there was contact, the spell was at its fullest power.

The countdown was an omen. The party's chants mixed with my beating heart, making me believe that it was racing more than it truly was.

Ten. I was the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen.

Nine. Was I cold? He gave me his jacket.

Eight. He was too tall for me to look into his eyes, where they wandered over to the college girls doing shots faster than the seconds left in the year.

Seven through three were each of his fingers intertwining with mine.

Two. He asked me to kiss him.

One. I said, "Yes."

He lasted as long as the New Year, but he was gone once the countdown started again.

Now, I count my knocks on Aunt Gale's door: one, two, three, four, five. Each rap is two years that have gone by since I've seen my aunt.

I used to take Rose to see Aunt Gale as often as possible when she was younger, but when she was eight I saw her gnawing on a cigarette butt that was freed from the cracks in my aunt's hardwood floor. She thought it was candy, or maybe she simply wanted to try it to see if it would light on its own from the fire within her.

She stuck her tongue out, pinched her eyes together, and shook her head as if she could physically shake the tar off of her taste buds. "Mommy," she said, "I think this is expired."

Aunt Gale walked into the hallway and froze at the scene: Rose's sour face, my nostrils flaring, and the soggy end of a cigarette still in my daughter's hand. She doubled over, placing her palm on the strained spandex over her gut. I might have been worried, but the volume of her laugh cracked holes in the walls, slapping me in the face like she would do if I had misbehaved.

"That's the funniest shit I ever saw," she said. Tears streamed down her face. "How dumb can you be, girl?" I couldn't count the number of times she said the same thing to me. I placed my hand over my cheek.

"We're leaving, Rose." I grabbed her hand. And we never returned.

So why am I here? A paint chip sticks to the knuckle on my left hand's ring finger. I look at it with detached amusement. It's the closest I've ever come to wearing a wedding ring.

The door opens. In front of me is a woman whose head would not meet the middle of my chest. She's wearing a decade-or-older leopard jump suit. Her stomach no longer protrudes. Her cheeks aren't colored with pale pink blush, but instead hollow, stretched tightly against her skull. She is bald, and she has a lit cigarette in her mouth and the next one on deck between two fingers on the hand that rests against her hip. She recognizes me immediately.

"Well, shit." The words spell out in front of my nose in smoke. "Who died?" I notice that the cigarette she held onto dropped to the ground. *She must be dying herself*, I think, *to let go of that*.

"Gale," I say, tasting her name in my mouth. It burns like a pill going down dry. "I don't know what else to do."

She raises her eyebrows—or at least, I think she does. Her forehead wrinkles into an accordion. "Spit it out, child."

"It's Rose." I let the words fall from my mouth like the start of a mudslide. "She's missing."

I have no evidence besides a feeling in the pit of my stomach.

The feeling had only happened once before, when I woke up to an empty bed for the second morning in a row. It wasn't like it was the first time Rose's father went away for longer than a night—he left for a week once and came back and said, "*Where's my sandwich?*" I pointed to the fridge even though it was mostly empty, he grabbed a beer instead, and that was that.

But one morning I opened my eyes and put my hand to my bloated stomach. I could tell that emptiness was swishing around in there like a tidal wave, and I thought that I should have tasted salty tears but my face was dry. I lifted myself out of bed and spread my fingers on the line just below my belly button once,

twice, until I could feel the bloating resist against the pressure. I went over to Rose's crib, scooped her up, and held her to my breast, walking to the kitchen with her wrapped in my protection.

I checked the refrigerator—he had taken all the beer with him. That told me that it was a permanent arrangement.

My hands are wrapped around a plastic cup with lukewarm tea slowly coagulating like blood. ("I don't got those fancy-schmancy mugs, girl—you sure you don't want this Irish whiskey? Mm, suit yourself.")

"Still driving buses?" Gale asks. I nod. "How's that?"

"Fine." I don't want this small talk but I feel distanced from my body. Whose hands are these? I flex the fingers. The nails are covered in red polish. Rose's choice, I remember, she wanted to paint my nails last week: "Mother, you cannot deny yourself the joys of getting pampered!" and "Red is your color. You'll have everyone falling all over you—even your professors."

They've started to peel. "I'm taking night classes at ECC," I say.

That was also Rose's choice. "Mom," she said once, popping her head into the bathroom when I was taking a shower. "Have you ever thought about the importance of a college education for yourself?"

Before I could reply, her mouth was running faster than the waterfall over my head, explaining how to apply, where to go, and which major to choose. Education, she said, because I loved children, and besides, I was good at lecturing.

"I'm trying to shower," I said, suds in my eyes.

"You should go to college."

"Aren't you late for school?" I asked.

"It would change your life."

And, in the end, she was right.

I was content with our humble life, even the nights we spent fishing for loose change in the pockets of the couch: pennies were copper koi, and the silver scales of slippery minnows were an enviable twenty-five cents. But I wanted her to be

proud of me.

"When'd you see her last?" my aunt says, snapping me out of a haze.

"Two days ago. She—" I hesitate. "She tried to introduce me to her boyfriend."

"It's the curse," she says, shrugging, trying to light another cigarette with the bones at the end of her hands.

She shakes like the last leaf on a tree right before winter sweeps through to coat its pulse in thick ice. All at once, I can't bear to stay another minute in this house, with my dying aunt and the smell of Death's laughter on her skin.

There is a layer of grit on the floor that Rose would have loved. She was always polished: her fiery hair fell in perfect curls, framing her round cheeks or sitting on top of her head in a bun like a crown; her fingers, with manicured nails, were slender and danced fearlessly on the keys of a piano; and her outfits were planned a week before she wore them. But she didn't wear shoes. She loved the feel of gravel and dirt in between her toes, as if they were sparkling grains of sand, warmer than a blanket.

Is, I correct myself. Rose is always polished.

I stand up to leave, knocking over the cup of tea in my hurry. It spills over the round table and onto the floor. The liquid seeps through the cracks like blood at a crime scene. I don't bother cleaning it up.

"Cassie, wait," my aunt says, following me to the door. She catches my gaze for a moment. I think we have the same eyes: still, dry, and as gray as the clumps of dust in the corners of her house. Her eyes have always been clouded. Perhaps mine are the same. She opens her mouth before quickly shutting it and looking at her feet. "Light this for me?"

I can still feel the indents on the pad of my thumb from striking the flint when I was only six years old and she was too drunk to do it herself. I light it on the first try.

"Shouldn't you..." I trail off, glancing at her gaunt cheeks. She sucks her death through those thin lips so deeply that her face might cave in. *Don't die*, I think suddenly. *You're the only mom I have*. But I know that this will be the last time I

see her.

"I'm already dead, Cassandra." She pauses. "Best if you think that for Rose, too."

After checking the apartment one last time, I drive to the police station, remembering when Rose wanted to introduce me to her boyfriend. She never told me his name.

"Can I invite someone over for dinner?" she asked. I took my jacket off, and started walking into my room to change out of the bus company's orange polyester uniform.

"One of your friends from school?" I called with my door mostly closed. I would have to dip into the money set aside to buy Rose a new charm for her bracelet—which I got for her on her thirteenth birthday and added a charm each year—to have enough food. Her birthday was only in a few days.

"Well," she said, "not exactly." I finished changing and walked to the living room.

She was looking down at her phone but spoke when she heard my footsteps. "He graduated two years ago. And he's...sort of a boyfriend."

My stomach clenched.

My aunt's laugh echoed in my ears from when she met my husband for the first time: "*Good luck keeping that one, honey.*"

"What do you mean a boyfriend?"

Her eyebrows pulled together. "Why are you upset with me?"

"I'm not." I folded my arms over my chest. "I just think you're too young to date."

She put her phone down. "Too young? I'm turning eighteen in two days."

"You have school to think about, your grades, and you don't want to lose your friends, and you have college applications—"

"Why can't you let me be happy?"

"He has nothing to do with your happiness—"

"Yes, he does! Mom, I think I love him!"

We were both screaming. I felt my heart disconnect, unravel at the seams, as a blue vein struck down my forehead like lightening. I heard rain outside.

"You don't know what love is, Rose." But I knew. I knew what it was like to wake up for the first time. I wanted to scream, *You'll be dragged down. He's a drug. You might think you're awake but it's only a dream. Aren't I enough? Don't you feel alive with me?*

"I'm leaving," she said, the anger dripping out of her mouth as steady as the storm she would walk into. She pocketed her phone and rushed past me to grab her coat. Her feet were bare.

"Rose—"

The slam of the door was an expletive against my ears.

I paced, made soup for when she came back but I didn't eat, and finally settled in the armchair, staring at the wall. Rose didn't need me the way I needed her. That was my third clue.

She started having fantasies about leaving, finding an adventure, when she was five and she wanted to be Tarzan, meaning she tried to run around in nothing but her underwear. I made her a costume using her old clothes so that it looked like she was wearing a loin cloth. The other girls in her class were princesses, but she had other interests. I hoped that meant that she wouldn't wait around for a prince to save her.

"I'm going to live in the jungle," she said Halloween morning. "Like Tarzan!" She was so matter-of-fact that I saw her transform right before my eyes. Her hair was unkempt already, knotted with her forgotten dreams. I tried to smooth it down but a wild girl, after all, cannot be tamed.

"What would you eat?" I asked.

She considered the question. "Bananas."

"Where would you sleep?"

"In a tree," she said. She had all the answers.

I walked away from the sink and picked her up, bouncing her against my hip.

“Wouldn’t you miss Mommy?”

“The gorilla would be my mommy!”

I pursed my lips. “But could your gorilla-mommy kiss your tummy when it hurts? Or make you toast and chocolate milk? And you would have to hang upside down all the time—like this.” I wrapped an arm around her stomach and grabbed one of her legs so her head was pointed towards my bare feet. She laughed and squealed, exclaiming, “More! More!” until her face bloomed the color of love.

I positioned her right-side up after a few seconds and gave her a serious look.

“What about school?” She shook her head back and forth hard enough that her arms swung with her. “Well, wild girl,” I said, putting her back on her feet, “the bad news is that you live in the city, so you have to go to school.” She pouted, then brightened.

“What’s the good news?” she lisped, her front teeth still missing.

“The good news is that it’s Taco Tuesday.”

She curled her lip and snarled at the prospect of eating the cafeteria’s meat. I didn’t blame her. I reached behind me and grabbed the brown paper bag with her lunch in it. I looked around for a Sharpie marker and when I found one, I wrote in big letters across the bag: The Real Good News.

From that moment on, it became our gimmick. We delivered the bad news and then the good news: “I have good news and bad news, Mom,” Rose would say. “The bad news is that I fell asleep in class and I have detention. The good news is that I aced the midterm.”

“Rose, bad news: I have to stay late at work. But you can order a pizza for dinner, that’s good news!”

“Uh, the bad news is that I broke the vase we have in our living room—did Aunt Gale get that for us?—but I’m not hurt.”

Before long, we stopped telling each other the news face-to-face. Sometimes Rose would forget the system. My phone would buzz with a message: *I’m not going to make curfew*, was the bad news. I waited for the good news but there wasn’t

any. Rose often forgot the punchline to the joke.

After our fight, I heard the door unlock at two in the morning. She rounded the corner and stood, soaking wet, at the entrance of the living room. I couldn't tell if she was crying or if the tears were raindrops glistening on her cheeks. The clock inside of my chest started ticking again.

"I'm back," she said. *Tick*, my heart said.

"I'm sorry. My fault," I choked out. *Tick*.

I walked over to her and wrapped her in my arms. She hugged me back. The inside of her wrist was gilded with the stain of alcohol, but her eyes were clear and her breath smelled like coffee beans. I didn't notice that her bracelet was missing. *Tick*.

"I'm wet," she said.

"I love you."

"You worry too much."

"I know," I said. She detached herself from me. There was a moment where my hand grasped at hers and we were finally connected again. She didn't look into my eyes as she let go.

The next morning was my only day off of work. I rushed to the jeweler that was crafting Rose's birthday present before she woke up. I couldn't wait, and I planned to give it to her a day early. That morning she ran through the kitchen, slipping on shoes that she would not leave on.

"Where's the fire?" I smiled to show her that I meant no harm. She leaped over to me and kissed my cheek. Her lips left a searing imprint on my face, and I placed my hand over it to keep it there. I expected to feel my cheek turn to ash, and to smell smoke billowing from the burn. I felt only the sticky texture of her lipstick.

"See you later!" she called, walking away from me before I could stop her. *Wait!* I wanted to shout out. *Don't leave, don't leave, don't leave.* She didn't notice the present.

Tick. I thought that time was moving forward but the clock was unwinding,

spinning in reverse like a piece from Dali: melting, drooping, before stopping all together.

"I'm here to report a missing person," I say to the receptionist at the police station. She hands me a form and sits me in a room that is empty apart from a woman with a baby carrier at her feet. The woman is bundled up with a scarf around her mouth and a hat pulled nearly all the way over her eyes. My coat sits at my feet.

The form is standard: my name and contact information, relationship to the missing person, and, finally, Rose's information: 5'7", red hair, blue eyes. I realize that her birthday was yesterday when I put in her age. Eighteen. Legally an adult. My mouth goes dry.

After I attach a recent picture to the file of the two of us, I stand to return the form to the receptionist. On my way to the desk, I notice the woman holding the infant in the crook of her arm. She tries to lift the carrier in the other arm but the handle sticks. The diaper bag falls off her shoulder, the baby starting to wiggle in her arms. I walk over.

"May I...?" She nods. I press a button on the side of the carrier and click the handle into place. "How old?" I ask her with a smile.

"Three months," she says through the material wrapped around her neck like a boa constrictor.

"She's already holding her head up," I say.

Her eyes wrinkle in the corners. "You must have kids of your own."

Yes, I should answer, *a daughter, who hasn't been that small in a very long time.* Instead I say, "No, no kids."

The woman's baby coos before wrapping her small fist around her mother's scarf. She pulls tight. The left side falls away from her skin, exposing her throat and mouth. There are bruises on the side of her neck, as purple as a plum, in an outline of five fingers. The corner of her mouth is scarred—or maybe it is an open wound: drops of blood dribble out like a teething infant's drool when she

gasps.

"Oh!" she exclaims. "I'm so sorry."

I want to tell her that it isn't her fault, that she is a good mother, doing the right thing, but my name is called and I walk away. I look behind me but her eyes are only on her baby.

There are two officers that ask me questions about Rose. What her after-school activities are, and the names of her friends, and if she's seemed different lately.

"Now, it says here that she's eighteen," one of the cops says. His partner exchanges a look with him. "Do you two fight often?"

"No," I lie. "She's a perfect daughter." He makes a note on the file.

"Does she have access to a car?" I tell him that she has a bike. It's still in the garage. "Has she ever threatened to run away before?"

What does it matter? "I want to find my daughter," I say.

The cop closes his notebook, gets to his feet. "Ma'am, we will continue to look into the case, but more often than not they come home when they're hungry or when their boyfriend breaks up with them."

"Rose wouldn't leave me," I say, "she wouldn't—we have a bond. It was just the two of us growing up and I did everything by the book. She wouldn't just—just..."

"Ma'am—ma'am? Take a deep breath." What a ridiculous request. My only source of oxygen has been taken away from me. I think about Rose and how she doesn't wear shoes even when there's snow on the ground, and how she needs an inhaler during the start of spring, and chicken noodle soup was always her favorite but not without crackers. I think about Aunt Gale and this is how it feels not to be able to breathe, and I can't break Death's choke hold on her. I think about the woman in the waiting room, with a baby and bruises as cold as the tendrils of winter. I think about my curse and how it has never been about boys not loving me enough. I have a doll's curse: I am loved, and I am left.

My lips shape around the words “No, no” or it could have been “Rose, Rose” but I see stars on the ceiling, and I tip backwards. A second before I hit my head on the corner of the table behind me, I see a flash of red hair in the reflection on the window. Then my world turns black.

The hospital is nice for the first day, wiped clean of any traces of the real world. I am a shell of a person that says “please” and “thank you”—especially when they distribute the meds. I’m not allowed to have shoelaces still, even though I was brought in for a head injury, so I walk around barefoot like she used to. Turns out the hospital isn’t as clean as I originally thought. I collect dirt like a vacuum.

The next two days are uneventful. When the doctors decide that I won’t fall asleep and never wake up, they slap a bandage over the ragged staples on my skull, decreasing the pain medication. I can feel again, but at least I have my shoelaces back.

The doctor that discharges me feels it necessary to call me a cab, and she slips me a twenty dollar bill, “for the ride home.” It isn’t hard to visualize the pity I invoke. Air whimpers in the empty spaces within my chest, looking for contact but finding nothing. I am surprised that the doctors could hear a pulse. My heart is missing, my eyes as empty as a doll’s and my skin as hard. But I have no voice, no string to pull back. There is no way to hear my cry.

As I walk to the front of the hospital, I see a woman cloaked by shadows around a corner. She unties a scarf around her neck and my entire body pins. The woman from the police station.

She looks up. “Fancy seeing you here,” she says. Her words slur and she gives me a lopsided smile.

“They brought you here, too?” I ask.

“The cops? Yeah, they didn’t think I was ‘fit’ to take care of a child until I got checked out.” She holds her arms up to make quotation marks with her fingers but she has a bottle of wine in one hand and a flask in the other. She shrugs instead. “I’m—” she belches, “fine.” Now that her scarf is removed completely I

can see a jagged hole above her top lip, and a tooth is missing.

"You're drunk," I say stupidly.

"Amen to that. Come, sit, drink."

I fold my legs underneath me on the sidewalk and take the bottle of wine from her. I lift the whole thing to my lips and take two gulps. Heat trickles in drops from my tongue into my chest before rolling to my stomach. I haven't felt warm in over one hundred hours.

I wipe my mouth. "You are a mother, aren't you?" she says. It's more of a statement than a question.

I shake my head. "My daughter died," I say. I don't know why I say it, only that there's something sad about the way she snuck out of the hospital in the middle of winter with her white scrubs still loose around her frame and scars on her pretty face, getting drunk off of cheap wine.

She winces. "Drink." So I do.

We sit in silence for a few more moments and my stomach already begins to slosh. My head swims and I think about Rose.

"It's not fair," the woman says suddenly, "that we can lose the one thing that we really love."

"You'll get your daughter back," I say, "she'll come back." I nearly believe it myself. When my fingers start going numb, I get up to find my cab. To go back to an empty dollhouse. Maybe to throw up in the hospital's shrubbery, too. I almost laugh. Rose would have.

"What was her name?" the woman asks before I'm out of earshot.

I don't think I'll be able to say her name, to make it real, but without hesitation I reply, "Rose."

She lifts her flask in the air, pulling at the top like a baby with a pacifier. Then she pours wine into the cracks where I was sitting: a sacrifice to the gods. "To Rose," she says.

The moon is out and I look at it with wonder. It is whole, luminous, hundreds of thousands of miles away. Yet I can see it clearly, held perfectly in the middle of

the night sky like my breath that fogs out in front of me. I can see the moon as it wanes, and Rose is nowhere: her scent barely lingers in the air and I know that it will be gone before too long. The sound of her voice as she spoke passionately about books and her twinkling laugh as she said, “*Mom, listen to what happened to Jenny O. today. Three boys asked her to the dance and she said yes to all of them!*” is only a memory.

I can see it through the window in the apartment, and Rose is everywhere: books spilled out on the kitchen table, their spines cracked and their usefulness dying with them, laptop out of battery and open on the couch, pictures in every corner. She is beautiful. The moon is, too, even when it hides during the day, behind clouds, playing with the stars. They wink at me as if they have a secret to share. I listen with rapt attention.

There’s something in the fact that the moon is always there, bathing our kitchen floor in light, following me when I drive my bus in the early mornings like a thumb on the side of the highway. People have gone to the moon, taken pieces home with them, and it still sits in its spot in space, galaxies away. Whole. Glowing.

And maybe that is the good news.

Down a Venetian Alley

Katrina Cosgrove



Ithaca

Darby Ratliff

The wives' support group
disbanded when our husbands returned
from the war.

People said, "Oh, Penelope,
aren't you glad he's home?"
but we never thought he'd
have to go in the first place,
that he'd be called out of reserves,
redeployed for twenty year-long months.

He came home, broken down
to Nothing—the sole survivor
of IEDs and "Oh, please, save me's,"
but he came cloaked in a disguise
that he has yet to take off,
somehow decades older, and
I have yet to believe that this is my husband.

Sometimes, he tells me stories
of his "Odyssey," of what came after the cities
burned. The doctors talk of the fire in his mind, that
epic tales are coping mechanisms,

but I fear he is lost at sea.

Our son listens each day to tales
of men called pigs, lost comrades
reduced to animals for slaughter,
of prizes of war, the Bronze star
tucked ashamedly into his desk,
of war making men of boys, some
of whom didn't come home.

I wait and weave, navigating the personal perils
of Scylla and Charybdis, and wonder
who has the greater burden—
the man made mythic,
who sings of his glories or
the woman who holds his hand
when his tales turn against him in the night?

Lilith

Megan Smith



2013, aluminum, wire, blind rivets, 52 x 20 in.

Like Atlas

Natalie Medina

Mother holds me up like Atlas, settles
her hands along my trenches and mountains.
Her knuckles itch and her wrists throb,
but her hold is steady.

Her torso curls in on itself,
stomach taut with tension
as her thighs stiffen in pain.
The ache in her muscles
are thousands of years old
and have never been soothed.

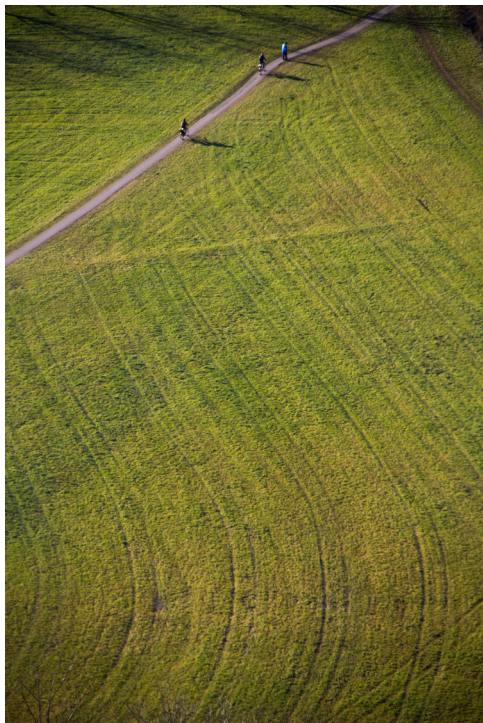
Slowly, she shifts me to the back
of her shoulders, presses me close
to her head and I can hear her swear
that she knows me like the contours
of her own hunched spine.

Mother persistently cradles me,
worries for my unsteady seas
and quaking land formations.
She exhales healing breaths
into my ozone.

Her knees begin to bend, threatening
to buckle as I grow heavier.
I encourage the shaking in my opposite ends
desperately, so that she may release me,
but she holds me tighter, convinced I
can't keep myself from falling.

Waves of Austrian Landscape

Katrina Cosgrove



Klimt's "The Kiss"

Aryanna Falkner

We fall to our knees during the shower of stars,
embracing underneath an umbrella of cloned cloaks.
She prays to stay young, to lay in a casket made of canvas.

Gilded wishes whisper against her skin,
and she is not afraid of the drops
that trap her in the void between Here and There.

My eyes are fixed on her, as immobile as the field
beneath our bent legs:

a bouquet of painted petals,
pale against the flushed
sunrise on her cheeks.

The god's hand looms
inches from her face.

She is art that he creates with his paintbrush—
a scythe that turns her into a moon flower
before the dark coaxes it awake: still,
breathing, but never to hear midnight's toll.

I pray for his mercy,
and he sketches my lips against her cheek.

A final swirl of the god's magic kills
the love we had and immortalizes the beauty she craved.
But, at last, I can rest with our eternal kiss.

Pizzaman

Dylan Conroy



Once Removed

Neil Savoy

Right now, my father is probably smoking
a cigarette he rolled himself, pinched between
tobacco-stained fingertips as a cassette plays
the wavering voice of Neil Young
in his basement apartment. I imagine
he's sitting on that couch older than myself,
off-white with fabric like burlap ready
to have lint picked off. Cans of Campbell's
chicken noodle soup spaced out in the
cupboard next to the pill bottles with long
names I could never pronounce or remember.
A 12-pack of Natty Ice waits in the fridge,
the same kind I sipped once and spat out.

He must still sleep on the same twin-size mattress
without sheets, only the thick, coarse
blanket with faded umber frogs on each end.
A jaundiced pillow soaked in the oil of his midnight
hair and the skin of the full moon
on the back of his head. On the other side of the room
is the one I slept in, a double from his father that I used
to drag into the family room to watch
The Simpsons in grayscale, crushing Pringles

against the roof of my mouth with my tongue.

I wonder if he still keeps a second toothbrush
in the bathroom, or if he still buys extra maple syrup
for me to soak my frozen waffles in and leave
the sticky amber plate unrinsed in the sink.

Bare

Bethany Dudek



Tiny Seedling

Magdalena Azmitia

The night you first sprouted
from between the cracks
of the earth: just down the
street I could hear the high-
pitched grind of crashing
metal on metal, followed by
sirens.

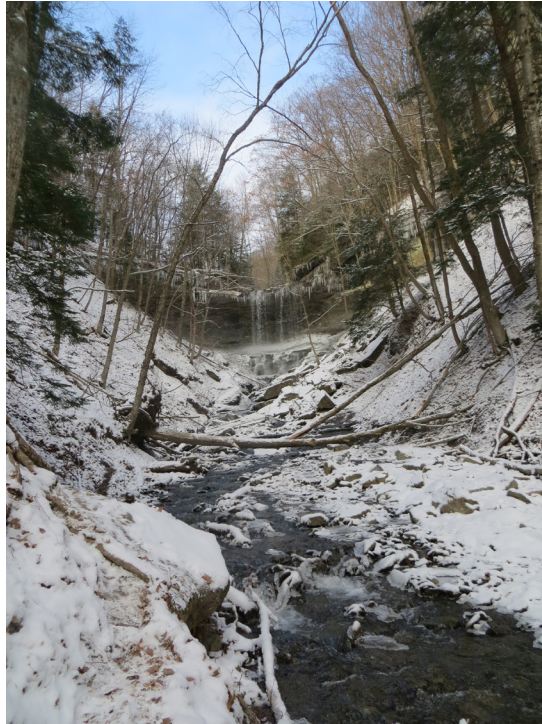
Nearby an elderly woman with
only half of her mind remembered still
to hug her purse close to her breast as
she scurried from the check
cashers, after all this time still so
weary.

Upstairs we curled ourselves into
our sheets to block out the neon
red of the “XXX” signs below
us, bars on the window to separate
us from the ill-intentioned figures
that sometimes peered in from the fire
escape.

Still, I remember you as I wade into
sleep, budding from between cracks
in the asphalt, reminding me that
beautiful things can still bloom, even
here.

Little Falls

Morgan Rodriguez



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Canisius College Community for their being our devoted readers for 63 issues.

Contributors

Teresa Alessandra graduated in 2013 with a B.A. in Creative Writing and English and a minor in Studio Art. When she is not taming unruly audiences as the House Manager at the Jewish Repertory Theater, she is painting with bright colors and glitter, making quirky odds and ends to sell at local art festivals, not finishing three novels, helping market a new local home goods and accessories line and, you know, just generally taking it easy. She is thrilled to be a part of this year's lovely *Quadrangle*, and although she loved her time at Canisius, she is thoroughly enjoying just being a student of life.

Shai Alfarhan is a senior Communication Studies major with a minor in Art History. When Shai isn't making collages, she is drinking tea, listening to *Boy & Bear*, or aimlessly walking around Buffalo. She is also an art collector and a big advocate of the arts. Shai plans on moving to Europe after she graduates and hopes that all her friends will visit. Or at least send postcards!

Magdalena Azmitia is an English and Creative Writing major and a Classics minor who hopes to publish graphic novels. She enjoys food puns, freshly-sharpened pencils, and the occasional existential crisis.

Brianna Blank is a 2014 Canisius College graduate who received her B.S. in Digital Media Arts and Communication Studies. Luckily she did not live in a box selling art on the streets for long after graduation as she is now a Video Studio Editor at Fisher-Price. In her spare time, she enjoys buying real estate in imaginary places.

Victoria Clafflin graduated in December 2014 with a B.A. in Communication Studies and a minor in Art History. Tori thrives on making the arts accessible and happily works at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. She is truly honored to have been co-editor-in-chief of this year's magazine and hopes *Quadrangle* will continue to inspire others year after year.

Kelsey Colwell is a junior working on an English and Creative Writing degree. She is a devout flower lover, sun chaser, nature-obsessed bookworm with a perpetual need for

those Chips Ahoy cookies that have the brownie centers.

Dylan Conroy is a senior Biology major who will be attending medical school next year. However, one of his greatest passions lies in the arts, be it photography, music, or writing. He is never without a camera in his hand or a song on his mind.

Katrina Cosgrove is a senior Journalism and Religious Studies major. After graduation, she will continue to pursue her dreams of being an owner of a rescued lion and a traveling cultural photojournalist focusing in on environmental sustainability.

Noraa Sue Danielle attended Canisius as a Religious Studies and English major up until last year. She spends most of her time wondering what the world would be like if Pokémon really existed.

Bethany Dudek graduated in 2014 and is a graphic designer and nighttime poet. She spends her time enjoying the outdoors, visiting farmers markets, as well as the Wild Wings Bird Sanctuary. Vintage typography, antique oddities, hand-lettering sketches, and letterpress printing are her creative passions. Smile, and keep making the world beautiful.

Hanna Etu is a senior Creative Writing, English and German major. She's an avid Wholockian, Netflix extraordinaire, and suffers from a mild cupcake baking addiction. She enjoys cheap flights, hostel lodging and attempting to speak German. She is proud to be co-editor-in-chief of this year's *Quadrangle*.

Aryanna Falkner is a sophomore English and Creative Writing major. She wants to be a writer, or an editor, or a professor, or possibly all three. If she doesn't have a book in her hands, the world is probably ending.

Julia Green is a recent Canisius College graduate who enjoys freezing moments of time with her camera.

Olivia Hoffman is a junior Animal Behavior, Ecology and Conservation major. She hopes to work in the zoo field after she graduates. She loves Disney movies, listening to music,

and sharing random facts... Did you know that a narwhal's horn is actually an elongated tooth?

Lee Ann Kostempski is a senior Creative Writing and English major with a minor in Classics. She knows more about the lore of various fictional universes than she does about real-world history.

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Leah McDonald is a senior Health and Wellness major who is committing to a year of service after graduation. Her long term goals include attending medical school and making a lasting impact on all of her future patients.

Natalie Medina is a junior Creative Writing and English major who aspires to work in publishing. She is fascinated by the strangeness that is human nature and hopes that through her writing she'll be able to convince others that the strange is worth embracing.

Hannah Olek is a sophomore Art History and Philosophy double major with minors in Studio Art and Women and Gender studies. A member of the Canisius Swim Team, she

spends her time between practices managing to finish her school work and having just enough leftover to devote to drawing, painting and photography.

Sarah Pozzuto is a sophomore English and Creative Writing major. She writes obituaries for a living. Yes, really. Her primary interests are fiction writing and nail polish. Her only dislikes are crumbly blue cheese and misogyny.

Nicole Ratajczak is a senior Digital Media Arts major with an Animal Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation minor. After graduation, Nicole is going to work down in Walt Disney World for about six months doing the Disney College Program. Nicole loves to travel, and everywhere she goes, she has to buy a pin to document she has been there.

Darby Ratliff is a junior English, Creative Writing, and Political Science major. She spends time running all over campus, likely walking into something as she does so. Platonically married with two college-age children, Darby loves making corny jokes, bragging about her teddy bear Falsworth, and reading.

Morgan Rodriguez is a senior majoring in way too many things. When she's not buried under a pile of homework, Morgan is busy going on adventures anywhere her bank account can afford, like The Shire, Aruba, Hogwarts, and the Death Star.

Marie Rossi is a senior Creative Writing and English major who will read pretty much everything (even nutrition labels if there's nothing else around). After graduation, she will be attending the Publishing Institute at University of Denver, where she hopes to break into the world of publishing.

Neil Savoy is a senior English, Creative Writing, and Spanish major. When he isn't feeling nostalgic for his year abroad in Spain, he's planning his return for next year. He would like to thank Canisius's Creative Writing Program, his family, and friends for all of the support and inspiration they have brought him over the years.

Megan Smith is a junior Communication Studies major. She enjoys art, singing, acting, and pretending that she is flawless like Beyoncé. She also has never been to Disney World so

if any kind soul feels compelled to take her, she would not hate that.

Alex Segelhurst is a sophomore English and Creative Writing major whose favorite pizza topping is pineapple, so his friends no longer ask his opinion when they decide what to put on their order. But, being a strong proponent of civil protest, he makes his demands known whenever a pizza is ordered, regardless of whether they ask him or not.

Marissa Verdi is a senior Environmental Studies major who loves arthropods as much as people. A good day for Marissa involves sunshine, a butterfly net, and a kill jar.

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Front

Shai Alfarhan, *Untitled III Fishbowl Series*, 2014, found images.

The two figures in this collage are from a reproduction by Ilona (Hélène) Máté, *Fashionable people*, ca. 1906. Color lithographs (undivided back). Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Archive from *The Postcard Age*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Back

Teresa Alessandra, *Flora Cluster III (Single Line Drawing)*, 2013, Sharpie on paper, 15 x 10 in.