

Hawai'i Review

Spring 2010 | Issue 72 | Volume 32-1

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Hawaii Review

Spring 2010 Issue 72 Volume 32-1

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ISSN: 0093-9625

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P.O. Box 11674
Honolulu, HI 96828

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Hawai'i Review is a member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, is indexed by Humanities International Complete, the Index of American Periodical Verse, Writer's Market, and Poet's Market.

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Toby Idian



Anonymous

Some poetry will be printed this way.

Breaks from one page to the next
indicate line breaks.

Please flip the page (and your book)
to see what we mean.

Mahalo.

Grimy April III

The Robin sings a short song near a window of words.
in his every spring rental of the grape arbor
the same cannot be said of you leaning over your hands
against the clammy spring Pear and Magnolia birth
we hear their sullen silence, although they deal with it nicely
bud pink and white familiarity;

the birds seem depressed on such a day
again you were listening for some sort of absent hilarity
you want lunch at the beach every day,
an impossibility...
with work piled up in the dining room
no possibility of meals there!
they're hushed and cold
with no sun;

...a bar is a compelling retreat
but we wouldn't know
when to stop... but we all should... be out in the streets
fighting repression;
never do, about anything,
so don't go there;
we rarely walk at demonstrations anymore
very content in the every day-ness of boredom
I invent monstrous activities for fun
still the people suffer as always and the situation only worsens.

Joan Payne Kincaid

Repetitive rain again often as in England
in our springs;
why do we consent to these outlandish mamby-pamby mambos?
there isn't room for it here in the writing room imagining things
poised for collapse to pass the time
under the grey cloud of governance;
not far off finches chase each other
the blooming trees recede
in inky collage of vague aspirations
on this grey afternoon,
the little terrier curls up behind you
at the keyboard;
she remembers the woods and streams searching
where we still don't go again.

Joan Payne Kincaid

In a Wicker Chair IV

Don't you know, this may be like a dream of heaven
Oh to be able to find time to crash...
open windows and doors!

perhaps we would laugh more in a sauna ...
perhaps we would laugh and shrink ...
and be ridiculous with something like a lime drink

come tonight to the bonfire under the full moon with a shady mob
I whisper I really can't tolerate those snobs- never- the- less;
neighborhood voices can be a bother in a warm season...

we never get enough latitude from society;
we might study sunlight on your charming arm ...
the first eighty degree day is liable to be the other's sweat;

to watch the windy leaf eyelashes blink;
sit in a wicker chair's front porch shadows
to stop you babbling about a curious rash act

as you know no one hoots or chokes on it
waiting for the Nightingale's closing;
eating and sleeping sensuously closeted

at a hotel with crunchy chicken and listen to wind chimes tickle
have a pickle for a nickel! Oh tell us the winding plot that ensues;
this early spring wobbles behind a fat bee bumbling

in myrtle bloom blue on blue- green ...no make it green- blue is better;
magnolia's event is it's sad flowers falling;
why don't you try to look and see the view here and there?

come out of that gloomy room of baggage
engage my dear friend in some folly and falderal!
there, even the turtles are funning on logs.

Jade Eckhart

Sixteen Weeks

Will I
know you
will I love
you
will I let you
come to me
I don't know
I don't know
What do I know I have
fourteen weeks to
get rid of you
that I know
I may never know you
never meet you
do you want
to meet me
do you want
to be
here
walk on cement
and breath dirty
air only to meet
dangerous people
heartbreaking
situations just to
know and love me
I have sixteen weeks
A choice to stop your life
to never look at you
that's kinda
sick I think
sixteen weeks
isn't that a human
they say its not
they say its not
killing
but I kinda think
its killing
its my choice my body
but your
body is in my body
It's not only my choice
but yours too
Having a choice just makes it harder.

Darrel Epp

Pick a Letter

homeless guy no. 3
asks pedestrians if
they're saved. my
former better half

goes overboard on
the nytol. you cheat
at scrabble solitaire,
wear a mask to hide

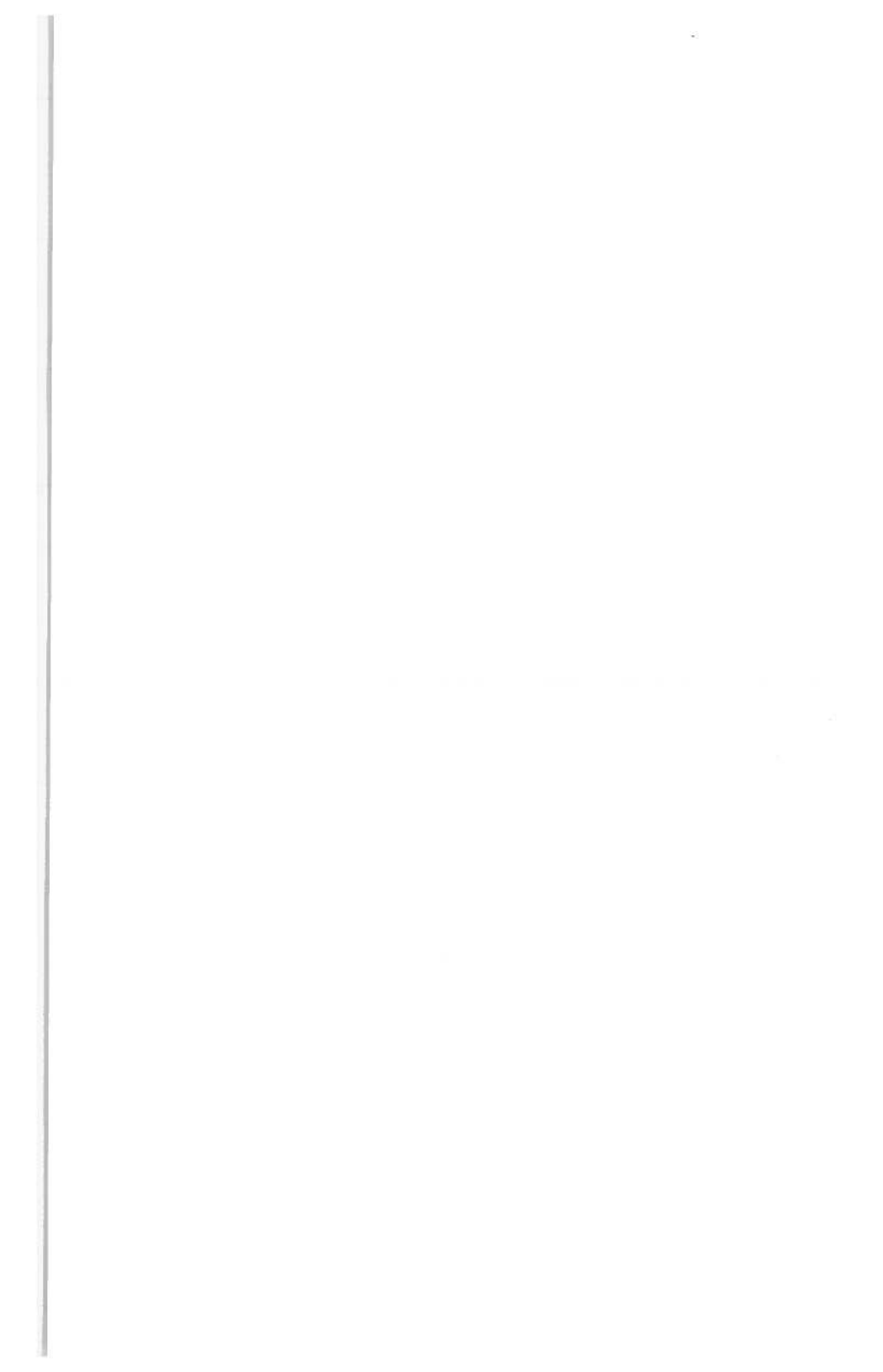
your mean streak as
thunderclouds throb
like tumors. some cop
gave a veteran a ticket

for loitering and an ant
ran away with my bagel.
i'm shopping for houses
in the country just so i

can say goodbye and
good luck to you, with
your fistful of consonants
and your q without a u.

No Sweat

scrubbing mildew off the bathroom tiles
it's hard not to wonder
about the miniature armageddons
being acted out in the neighbouring cages,
the variegated forms of lust and pity,
the so-called living rooms,
the marathon runner
too dehydrated for tears.
a monosyllabic curse
crawls in under the door.
'i could have been a v.i.p,
a captain of industry, if it
wasn't for you, you, you.'
like a creepy idiot savant,
hamilton ontario Canada
is awesome and oblivious
and no help at all: should
I apologize on bloody knees,
or join a traveling circus?
it would be easier if it was a math problem, robotically
unambiguous, no sweat,
just integers, fractions,
and negative numbers.



Jeffery Ryan Long

Defender

Every day I think about Shaun Francisco and what I'm doing with his wife.

My roommates don't know, would probably care less if they did.

That's the great thing about these people: they don't care about you and they don't know you.

When we're all around the television set—Dave on his fold-out mattress, Aaron in the wicker seat, and Cindy next to me on the sofa—it's startling how close they are, with no awareness whatsoever of who I am or what I've done. When I'm standing in the kitchen eating a bowl of cereal over the counter, and Aaron walks in for his Triscuits—or when I pass Cindy on her way to the bathroom and say good morning—when Dave places a Dos Equis on the table as I'm reading *The New Yorker* under the good light—I'm amazed at how we've learned to live together with our pasts blank, no reference point beyond the shapes of our clothes on our bodies.

No one knows I was once praised for my thick head of hair, that I once drove a foreign sports car and went to work in a pressed suit, that my wife was dead at thirty-three. They don't even know I had a wife. What I appear to them now—a former alcoholic, maybe, a washout, barely scraping by—makes far more sense than who I was before. They

Defender

might assume that I had, at one point in my life, a nervous breakdown. Actually, I was a Public Defender for the State. I spent years failing to protect the ruined lives of men guilty beyond a doubt.

Every day I think about Shaun Francisco and what I'm doing with his wife.

But I saw his wife take off her ring and give it to the prison guard while he cried on the other side of the glass.

On the television, a dad calls his son a dumbass and my roommates laugh. I pretend to laugh in the same way. I don't follow jokes all that well anymore. I have a hard time answering questions, too. I can talk well enough, but as soon as someone asks me something—I don't know. I can't say anything. I'm wondering what they want to hear.

My roommates laugh again, but now I'm too uptight. Side effects. Living in this kind of environment—this anonymous good will—is comforting sometimes. But sometimes it makes you feel like you don't exist and never did.

Lehua calls, says she'll get me in twenty minutes. When I hear her voice disembodied over the tiny phone speaker I'm here again, I'm real again, and all of a sudden I feel like the sum of something more than just the bland and easy-going fellow I play in this house. All of a sudden I've got a dick and prejudices and a sense of righteous wrath. I slide past the backs of my roommates' heads with my plastic Safeway bag of things and close the door softly when I leave. Here, I'm all about not disturbing anything.

Lehua's coming from work, day shift at Big City Diner in Kaimuki. Usually she works Sunday, the breakfast and lunch crowd, but today she switched with—Shannon-Tina-Leopold—I don't know their names. I only know that everyone of them, according to Leahua, has such a strong and peculiar way of interpreting events in the dining room, constructing a version of reality unto themselves in which they are never wrong but eternally suffering for the iniquities of others. Since she traded shifts we'll have Sunday to spend at the beach with Analy and Tracey.

And Shaun Francisco's probably rereading *The Da Vinci Code* on his prison bunk, or bench pressing at the rusty weight set, breathing the sour

Jeffery Ryan Long

smell of big bad men always crowding him, taking his fresh air, using his things. While I fuck his wife and play with his kids. First there will be a ride in the '99 Camry from Manoa to Kalihi, where Lehua will pick up the kids from her mother's house, then to her apartment in Kaneohe, *their* apartment, where I'll lean on what used to be his counter, open his refrigerator, and lie in his bed.

After I get in the car I put the plastic bag between my legs on the floorboard. She's smiling with her sunglasses on, and it takes me a few seconds to understand I should kiss her. I can taste her whole rotten day over her lips.

"That plastic bag again," she says, pulling onto Oahu Road. "Why don't you let me buy you a backpack or something?"

"Well," I say. There are actually several reasons why I don't buy a backpack, good reasons, but faced with her stark question each carefully-meditated-upon explanation buries itself under dirt, under lead, under a substance it would take impossible amounts of time and effort to displace.

"Never mind," she says, freeing one hand from the wheel to stroke my cheek.

"Dave was really on a roll today," I say, pulling the windshield shade down over the descending sun.

"Oh," she says noncommittally. She knows how to communicate with me. I lose my voice when the stakes are high.

"This time it was about *Eyes Wide Shut*. Stanley Kubrick dead before the film was released. Apparently, he got too close to how rich people really spend their money—expensive prostitutes at ritualistic mask parties, stuff like that—it turns out they assassinated him. Those kinds of parties happen all the time at this place on the Russian River, those mask parties—and it all goes back to the Skull and Bones Club, where the initiation for new members is to have gay sex in a coffin with the disinterred bones of Geronimo."

"Wow," Lehua says.

"I guess there's documents from a certain Indian nation demanding the return of the bones from the head of that fraternity, or whatever

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it is.” Dave’s catch phrase—*it’s all documented*. Mostly on obscure court transcripts, decades old, reproduced on internet sites.

Lehua’s day, she tells me, is populated by the kinds of ingrates I’ve found reappear in all of her tales of the restaurant. Ghost stories, mostly: old men and women doomed to return to the same local diner weekly, despite never being satisfied with the food, and their hatred and hostility towards the wait staff. In different tellings these restaurant daemons change shape, inhabit new bodies, wear new faces, each model invariably older and grumpier.

“Three orders of eggs before the flabby bag finally thought they were runny enough, but not too runny. All this back and forth from the kitchen in a room full of customers. I wanted to punch her head.”

“Eggs—they’re a tricky business.”

“They’re not a tricky business. She made them a tricky business. ‘Eh, you know what over-medium means, or what?’ What the fuck? Of course I don’t know what over-medium means because it doesn’t mean shit. There are two types of eggs—hard and easy. All that ambivalent shit doesn’t exist to me.”

“It’s the system that’s flawed,” I say.

The other characters in her ongoing tragedy are the fat teenagers ordering sundaes for dessert after a breakfast of French toast, the babies flinging mushed-up pancakes into her hair from the high chair, the low-carb dieters, the carnivores, the vegetarians who refuse to eat around the meat, the ones who don’t want beans in the chili, the loners with their open papers, the Bloody Mary crowd. They are all vessels for her contempt, and their roles are usually interchangeable.

I wait in the car while Lehua talks to her mother—and Analyn and Tracey race out of the front door as if they’ve just eaten a whole birthday cake, their sugar-filled mania bordering on bloodlust. As soon as I spot them near the car I roll up the windows and lock the doors.

Analyn, at six a year older than her sister, tries the handle. “Open, Uncle, open up, open up!” She moves to the back door and I point to my ears, pretending not to hear.

Tracey mimics her sister’s every move, and when they’ve tried all

Jeffery Ryan Long

the doors they stand level with my head and pound their open palms on the glass. "Open up! Open up!" they scream along with the pounding, while on the other side of the window I put my hands together under my cheek, pretending to sleep.

When Lehua opens the door Tracey nearly tackles Analyn into the wide back seat. "Hey, you guys," I say. "I didn't notice you out there."

"We're girls, not guys," Analyn shouts, still not in full control of her voice. Then a hand comes from behind the headrest and cups my throat, and another on my cheek near my nose, another on my ear, another at my forehead.

"Uncle, Uncle," they cry, pulling the skin on my face back.

"Hey—hey! Cut that out. You folks sit back and buckle those seat belts." Lehua looks over the rim of her sunglasses at them, her body twisted around in the driver's seat. "You want Uncle to play *Rainbow Magic* with you? Huh?"

Rainbow Magic: game board in pink, built-in failsafe so there are no losers. A comforting game. The printed words along the checkered track are big enough for me to see without my glasses.

After a dinner of boneless chicken breasts and macaroni and cheese we play the game. My wishes come true, just as everyone else's do, when I make it to the end. Then Lehua and I put on Winnie the Pooh for them in bed—I play Eeyore and Piglet. The two of us shower together, and she kisses me while I lather her breasts and nipples and her Caesarean scar. Warm water falls hard over our bodies and we embrace.

I turn from my side to my back on the damp sheets, breathing hard, laughing. "Oh my god," I say, throwing my arm over my head.

"Why are you laughing," Lehua says, poking me. "Don't try to answer that." Nuzzling at my neck, the motion of her chin and lips and nose vibrating upwards—she breathes lightly in my ear, and through the whoosh of wind I hear a soft "I love you."

I turn towards her face and close my eyes. Every declaration of love is followed by an unspoken question, an implied request for a response. "I love you—*do you love me?*" The question now lies dormant between silent ellipses, but I can see it through my closed eyes hanging above the

Defender

bed as if illuminated in neon.

I know she's looking at me, waiting. Instead of acknowledging the bright quiet question, I open my eyes and it disappears.

"Thank you," I say, taking her statement as an act of grace. After all that's happened, I feel grateful that someone will tell me they love me.

The next morning I wake up while Lehua sleeps. Before I get into my boxers I go through my bag, carefully, but the plastic still crackles and hisses. Under my surf shorts and my second-hand Kinkos shirt are my keys, my wallet, some pennies and dimes—but the pills aren't there. The pills aren't there. I lay out every item on the floor, open, unfolded, flattened out, every card removed from the slots in my wallet. Standing above the assembled pieces of evidence I conclude my medication is certainly not there, that it remains on the top of the dresser in my closet next to a pile of folded jeans. Maybe it's no big deal. I've gone a day or two without pills before. But I can't, not this time, not with Lehua—we'll just have to drive back to Manoa when she wakes up.

Or is this a test? To see if I can maintain without the drugs?

If I can hold it all together?

After I dress I sneak into the kitchen as I did on the weekends when Rebecca was alive. She was the kind of person that could enjoy sleep, while I needed facts to flow through my head continuously, terrified I'd forget them. Rebecca also enjoyed a long, drawn out Sunday breakfast, on the one day she didn't care what she put in her mouth. The whole week she'd punish herself with bran twigs and soy milk and grapefruit, just so on Sunday she could relish waffles, pancakes, spam and eggs, loco mocos, fried rice, whatever I'd bought the day before. I'd watch her face over the *Advertiser* as she languorously slid each greasy, sticky bite from the tines of her fork with her teeth, and the successive joy that broke out all over it. When the dishes were done we'd wreck our stomachs with a whole pot of French Roast between the two of us and talk for an hour about whether to go to the beach, the movies, or the mall.

I pull Lehua's big pan from the dish drainer and set it on the stove. There's maple syrup in the refrigerator, which leads to the thought of pancakes—but inside the flour jar are the brown corpses of suffocated

Jeffery Ryan Long

insects.

Having scrounged a half-loaf of Love's King White, four eggs, cinnamon and sugar, I heat the pan and slide a square of Blue Bonnet over the Teflon surface. Tracey and Analyn, in large t-shirts (their father's shirts?) come into the kitchen as I drop the second piece of dripping bread into the pan.

"Are you making breakfast?" Analyn says.

"Uncle is making breakfast!" Tracey shouts. There's one of them at each of my legs. "It smells good!"

"This isn't for you, it's for me and your mommy." I flip a brown, butter-soggy slice onto a plate. "You kids are getting gruel and Brussels sprouts for breakfast."

"What's gruel?" Tracey says, jumping to get a better view of the plate on the counter.

"Uh," I say.

"Oh, Eddie, you're making French toast!" Lehua says, coming up from behind to kiss me on the cheek. "You didn't have to—"

"A good, solid breakfast equips us to deal with the excruciating pain of a new day," I recite, a line from my long gone marriage. As an addendum, I turn down to look at the children. "When you get older, you'll learn that life is, essentially, a misery." But now Analyn and Tracey are pulling on the sleeves on each other's shirts, each one trying to drag down the other.

"Oh stop it," Lehua says. "Analyn. Tracey. Go get into your swimsuits while Uncle finishes your breakfast. After we eat we'll go."

"The beach, the beach!" they cry, in unison but not in harmony, and they hop out of the kitchen to their rooms.

I decide that it's unnecessary after all to take a trip to Manoa for pills.

Lehua rubs sunscreen on the girls' shoulders and backs while I cover our store-bought lunch with my shirt and lay out my towel. "Come with us," she says, as Tracey and Analyn break from our place and run full speed into the gentle shore break.

"No—I'm going to lie in the sun a while. I want to be nice and tan

Defender

for my interview tomorrow.”

“That’s right, your interview,” she says. “I still don’t know why you need to get a job right now.”

“It’ll be good for me,” I say. “It’s something to do. And it will bring in some extra money.”

“Just keep talking and don’t let them ask you any questions,” Lehua says. She kisses me and I watch her adjust the seat of her bikini from behind as she steps from the wet sand into the foam. The way each cheek of her ass wobbles with each footfall—immediately I feel the welling of an old guilt, guilt in eternal rising and recession. I squint against the flat, scarred ocean. For a moment, every black dot against the blue glare is Shaun Francisco.

When I saw her take off her ring in front of her husband I had come to O triple C to visit him, as a friend, since I was all used up as his lawyer. I tried to visit all the convicts who’d been clients—all the ones who hadn’t been shipped to the mainland, who didn’t want to kill me for not getting them off or failing to be awarded that shorter prison term to which they felt entitled. Shaun wanted to see his babies, but Lehua wasn’t about to bring them to the prison. He wasn’t going to see them for eight to ten years.

After she had left the room I took a seat in front of the glass, looking at Shaun with his hands over his face, his fingertips pressed tight at the edges of his newly-shaved hairline.

“I’m sorry,” I said into the intercom. He stood up and, wiping his nose, requested the guard to lead him back to his cell.

“Fuck,” I said, resenting that Lehua had to pull this stunt now. I was being selfish, but—I needed someone to talk to, and at that point Shaun Francisco was the best friend I had. A month earlier, Rebecca had been thrown fifteen feet from her bicycle while riding home from work—a Forerunner taking a right turn at a red light. When I rushed to the hospital, I couldn’t help but think how embarrassed she’d have been to put that big knot into traffic. Not until she was buried did I understand she was dead.

In that period, despite the influx of important cases that would

Jeffery Ryan Long

decide men's futures for five years, ten years, life, I focused on wide blank spaces in the courtroom as judges and lawyers and witnesses spoke. I wasn't eating, sleeping only when I couldn't help it, smoking cigarettes in a lawn chair in front of the house instead of reading up, planning, doing my homework. I thought Shaun Francisco, a man whose life for the past two years had been a tragedy in which, Oedipus-like, he had had full, yet ignorant, control, would be the one person who could understand me.

If he hadn't gone to prison for selling ice while under the influence of his own product, and committing manslaughter of an elderly couple practicing ballroom dancing as he crashed his rust-spotted Cutlass Supreme into their living room, we might have been friends on the outside. Instead, he'd made a decision to provide for his growing family in procuring, packaging, and distributing crystal meth.

He was articulate, well-read, and had an encyclopedic knowledge of jazz music. His father had been a professional musician who played electric guitar with a hapa-haole outfit in the hotels. During his trial, after all that preliminary talk about defenses and statements, we'd talk records and who played on what. It was Shaun who finally articulated the defense for *Bitches' Brew* for me. A guy like that in prison—well, at least now he can play chess and read every book he ever thought about.

The day Lehua gave back her ring I saw her crying in the corridor as I walked from the visiting area, her back against the white wall, her hand over her eyes. I pulled some napkins I'd kept from my uneaten doughnut and held them out to her.

"Lehua," I said. "I'm sorry—" Out of all the millions of words I'd spoken as Public Defender, those were most frequent.

"I just don't know why he's acting so surprised," she said. "He knew it was coming. He knew it. I told him before, before he—you know—before then I told him 'you cut that shit out or I'm walking, and the girls are coming with me.' But it was always one more time. Just a little more. We didn't even need a little more fucking money."

"I know," I said—I'd heard Shaun's version of events, which was remarkably similar. Unlike her husband, Lehua did exactly what she said she'd do.

Defender

“It’s not like I don’t love him anymore. It’s just that—this situation, it’s just not *feasible* anymore. His own children are gonna forget what he looks like—”

“Shaun’s...a good guy,” I said weakly, knowing that this sort of appellation probably would never apply to him again.

“Fuck,” Lehua breathed, struggling to suck something stuck up one of her nostrils.

“Look, I don’t have to be downtown for a couple of hours,” I said. “You want a cup of coffee or something?”

She blew her nose and looked at me, her eyes clearing, finally noticing my physical—no longer abstract—appearance. “Okay,” she said. “Eddie, what happened to you? Your clothes don’t fit anymore.”

“My wife’s dead,” I said, finally giving verbal confirmation to what, until then, I had only silently grasped. I took her by the arm and led her to the parking lot.

“Weird how we both—lost someone, like that,” she said, looking out the window of the coffee shop. She turned back to me suddenly. “Thank you, Eddie, for all you did for Shaun.”

“It’s my job,” I said, sipping the cold remnants at the bottom of my cup.

“No, it wasn’t just your job. You treated him like a human being. That was hard for even me.”

“Yeah.” I looked to the window now, at the reflections of two wrung-out people that had been twisted until there was nothing left in them.

“It must be hard, having a job like yours. Defending guilty people, trying to keep them out of jail.”

“They’re not all guilty—I mean at least technically. I mean, isn’t everyone guilty? But these guys don’t get busted for nothing. The cops, the feds, watching them for months. Undercover, setting them up for the sting. This case—I mean from nowhere, they pulled seven guys who testified to buying ice from him. Can you—I’m sorry.”

“No. There’s nothing we can do about it.”

“I wish I could have done more,” I said. “I liked the guy.”

“I married him.”

Jeffery Ryan Long

Two weeks later I lost every case to which I'd been assigned. Defendants had a way of making me personally accountable for their jail time and I began to see my work through their eyes—I'd failed my clients in every possible way. At home there was no one. Soon I had acquired 360-degree vision, seeing my surroundings all at once—the layers of prisons in which I'd placed myself—my clothes, my car, my house, my job. I sold them all, the Lexus, the suits, the home, now barren, and when Rebecca's sister pulled into the driveway, her headlights stripped the darkness from around my sleeping bag on the lawn. She explained, quite calmly, that I'd lost my mind, which seemed perfectly reasonable.

After the hospital and the sessions and the drugs I had only a surplus of money and my freedom. Everyone thought I'd buy everything back—instead I got a new wardrobe from Goodwill and placed a three hundred dollar deposit, plus first month's rent of six hundred dollars on a room in Manoa, where I wouldn't be alone but could leave when I wanted. Lehua was the first person I called. In that time, and in Shaun Francisco's absence, I'd taken it upon myself to be her protector, her defender from all the shit in the world.

And now I was acting the lover to my friend's wife, the father to his children, despite that they called me "Uncle." Weren't these, of all crimes, capital offenses, worthy of imprisonment?

At lunch time the girls air dry across the street from the beach on a stained bed sheet laid over the grass, eating sandwiches and chips. Lehua doesn't want them to get sand in their food. I sip at a can of warm iced-tea and watch them—if I mentioned their father, would they know who I was talking about?

Lehua strokes my hair but pulls her hand away quickly. I know she's been watching me, wondering why I'm so quiet, why I stare down every person passing across the field or along the sidewalks, seeing someone who's not there. But she knows better to ask me any questions. And I know better to open my mouth because the first words out will be Shaun Francisco. Forgotten in prison. I haven't seen him since—since Lehua gave back her ring. I wouldn't blame him if he killed me when he got out.

Defender

At Lehua's that evening I remain planted on the couch while she puts the girls to bed. The television helps, though between the commercials Shaun Francisco walks through the door. He doesn't aim a gun at me, doesn't draw a sword—he looks at me, and in that look I read “TRAITOR” in capital letters, in bold.

“I'm sorry,” I say, as usual. “I was just trying to help.”

“Fuck you,” he says. “You knew exactly what you were doing.”

Lehua comes back into the living room in her sleeping tank top and her panties, pulls the remote from my limp grip, and turns off the television.

“You weren't watching that,” she says, pulling her legs up under her as she nestles into the couch, resting her head between my neck and shoulder.

“No,” I say softly, terrified of the black television screen

“You must really be nervous about that interview tomorrow,” she says.

I hadn't thought about it the whole day.

“You'll do fine, Sweetie. Besides, it's no big deal. We don't really need the money.”

I don't. But you do. I'll buy the school supplies, the new clothes, the dental insurance. I am the usurper.

“I wish you'd just move out of that house and stay here,” she says, her mouth away from her face, her words squirming away eel-like. “I mean, you're already paying rent for this place.”

“Jesus Christ!” I shout, springing off the couch. She catches herself from falling over with an arm. “What have you got me into?”

“Eddie—what—”

“What the fuck do you want? Huh? Your husband's in jail for Christ's sake. And here I am, all tangled up in his shit—”

“His shit?”

“I can't—I can't be this. The guy's in prison, and here I am feeding off his life like a goddamn leech. Why don't I just write you a check every month? You can buy whatever you want.”

“You think—you think this is all about money?”

Jeffery Ryan Long

I wipe my hand across my face and look around the room at nothing. I've lost the gift of 360-degree vision—all I see is a dark shadow in a cage deep inside me, a ranting, foaming soul no one would hear if I didn't lend him my voice. "I'll do that, I'll write a check. What else am I good for, right? Here I am, stealing someone else's life—"

"You—ass," she hisses, pushing herself off the couch and glaring at me eye to eye. Her mouth opens. No words form. She swivels toward the door, but before she's out of the room she turns back to me.

"Shaun gave up his place in this family when he did what he did." She looks down and a drop of water splatters on the floor. "I didn't want your fucking *help*, Eddie, I wanted you too—" When she goes into her room I barely hear the door close behind her.

The little ape inside me has retired to his pallet on the floor of his cell, leaving me to deal with the consequences of his raving. It seemed so rational saying it—why would it hurt her so?

I fall into the couch and close my eyes. I should go to her room to apologize. But I'm tired of saying I'm sorry, I'm tired of everything, and in the blissful few seconds before I fall asleep none of it matters to me—not Shaun Francisco, not Rebecca Ramos, not Lehua and the girls—nothing matters, and finally I can be without thinking about it.

The ride back to Manoa the next morning is silent. I think I'm being wise not to force the situation into a crisis by being bewildered about what I've said. I know what I've done, and to say that person who said those things wasn't me would be the same thing as saying last night didn't exist, which we both know is false. Everyday I think about Shaun Francisco and what I'm doing with his wife. To deny responsibility would not only be cowardly but a waste of time. In the end, though, I pray there will be mitigating circumstances for all I've done.

When she pulls up to the curb outside my house Lehua keeps her foot on the brake, instead of shifting the car into park as she usually does. Usually we spend 15-20 minutes making googly eyes at each other before we part. She's caught by surprise when I don't go for the door handle but suddenly, rather forcefully, twist my body over the upper gear shift and fall into her unprepared arms, my face sinking into her hair

Defender

scattered over the headrest. The car jerks forward a few inches until her foot finds the brake again.

“I don’t want to lose you,” I say, burying most of my voice in the upholstery. “I love you.”

The weight of the inevitable question falls upon both of us, and I shift, a cramp tightening in my side. Lehua wriggles in discomfort—and I feel the soft pat of her hand at my back. My words, though unanswered, have been accepted.

“Don’t let them ask you any questions, Eddie,” she says.

When I walk in the door Dave is in the living room, working on his Tesla coil. A wooden box, with a grill built into one of the sides, serves as the foundation for a glass tower capped with a circular platform ringed with tubes and threaded with wires, standing about chest high. Each of the tubes contains a thin plate of metal and a particular gas—hydrogen, krypton, argon, helium, neon and so on—and when plugged into an electric socket, the machine sends out waves of bio-electric energy to and through the body, energizing the human cells. I once suggested that it sent out “good vibes,” but he got upset.

“Think about all the structures we inhabit through the day, everyday,” he once told me. “Cars, buildings, elevators—and these are all made out of what?—steel and concrete. In the old days, people spent all their time outside. Now we just sit in the air conditioning, jacking off or whatever. By being inside all the time, we can’t get the universal energy that’s a by-product of the sun’s heat, the revolutions of the earth, the rotations of the planets. That’s where this machine comes in. Spend three or four minutes in front of it and you’ll feel good as new.” He wants to market it as a new age health treatment.

But for three months Dave’s machine hasn’t worked. When I first moved in he switched the thing on after his sales pitch—then a crackle, a loud snap, and nothing.

After my pills are taken and I’ve showered and changed into clothes for the interview (slacks, white shirt) I sit watching him screw a base panel back into place. Several thin bulbs around the circular surface at the top are black inside, burned out.

Jeffery Ryan Long

Dave sets the screwdriver on the coffee table, dusts his hands, and reaches behind the television set for the power bar, which has been plugged to near capacity—the TV, DVD player, VCR, fan, leg massage—and in the last empty outlet he inserts the rubber coated, three-prong plug.

“It won’t blow up,” I say, but with little confidence. I actually see the glass tower explode into thousands of scattered shards, cutting us both into torn shreds of skin, stabbing out our eyes. Dave, skeptical of the government to the point of obsessive paranoia, is only a little troubled by the possibility that a large vessel of gas conducting electricity might detonate in our house, disfiguring, blinding, or killing us. He flips on the switch and, instead of clear sharp darts piercing my chest and face I feel a current move through me, vibrating each bone and blood vessel as it reaches past my body into the space beyond me. There is a shocking sense of displacement, as if the energy moving in has pushed something out of me.

The sound of channeled electricity barely held in check spits and crackles inside the wooden box base—through the grill I see flashes of purple fire. Dave takes up a gas filled rod, arm’s length, from the floor and holds it to the tower: a bridge of lightning forms between the rod and the circular platform. His closed fist around the end of the rod pushes it closer, compressing the lightning, and when he pulls back it stretches into thin, fine, spider web lines. The wooden base coughs and the lightning dies—before Dave has the chance to kick it, the machine hiccups twice and the scattered bolts of electricity awaken inside the box once more.

“It doesn’t work perfect, but it works,” he shouts over the noise.

I’ve rolled up the legs of my slacks mid-calf in order not to attract cut grass and other species of damp, loose vegetation to the cuffs of my pants as I walk out of Manoa up towards Punahou. It’s rained this morning, as it always does, giving the dead remnants of lawnmowers enhanced clinging properties. That there are no sidewalks in this part of Manoa, I think, has partly sabotaged my previous efforts to secure a job—it wasn’t until the third interview I realized the cuffs of my pants,

Defender

as well as my shoes, had been dusted with grass and other lawn detritus, giving the appearance that I had traveled through a swamp from the depths of a forest. With my trusty plastic bag swinging near my knees, I'm soon past the high school and down on the level streets with the buses and traffic.

I cool off on a bench outside the Capitol building, going through my interview monologue once more:

Yes, I'm aware that the duties of an administrative assistant are not comparable to the responsibilities of a Public Defender, but that is exactly what interested me in this position. Not that I'm looking for some easy job, but if you want someone who can do the work, that's me, just look at my education and professional experience. It's right there. Over-qualified? There's really no such thing as over-qualified, I think, because although I do have the qualifications to be a lawyer, I have little, well, maybe some, of the qualifications to be a secretary. I mean administrative assistant. The point is, I'm willing to learn, and it is the opportunity to learn that makes this position so attractive.

In the office I say hello to the receptionist, decline a cup of coffee, and stand stupidly smiling down at her as she phones the person in charge. Shouldn't have eaten two pills this morning—I thought the extra one might make up for the one I didn't take. But of course it never works out that way. My surroundings—all that exists in the world, really, are comfortably distant, as if I'm viewing everything from the other side of a soundproof window. I could shout, flail my arms about, or hold a smile for a full minute and no one would notice.

Two women approach me together. Without looking too hard I know they've been talking out of the sides of their mouths as they come up the corridor to the offices. One's shorter than the other, the taller one younger, and before we enter the conference room to the rear of the cubicles—I hear the swivel of office chair wheels as the secretaries turn from their computer screens to size me up—the tall woman, Shari, suggests I leave my plastic bag at the receptionist's desk.

Automatically I say "No, I'd rather keep it with me," and lead the way to the conference room. But then I lift it up, staring through the milky plastic at my cell phone, keys, pens, address book, and a condensed

Jeffery Ryan Long

history I just bought at Rainbows called *The Guns of August*. World War I. I should have given it to the receptionist.

We all sit down facing one another at the ends of a long, wooden meeting table, the projection screen on the opposite wall half-rolled up. I might have liked a cup of coffee. The framed Successories poster depicts Jordan, body splayed in mid-air, rolling the ball off his fingertips over the rim of the basket. “Rise to the occasion.”

“As you can see,” I begin, “I came in a few minutes early—punctuality is, professionally speaking, one of my most esteemed virtues. And I don’t mean just coming to work on time, I mean starting work on time. There’s a big difference. Not lollygagging about at the coffeemaker, not checking email or fantasy football scores. In addition, keeping to the subject of time, I make it my mission to honor all deadlines. My productivity, as you may notice when we begin to work together, is not measured according to high and low points plotted in relation to output—rather, it is a high plateau, a series of plateaus increasing in size in relation to evenly administered applications, all of them mastered in a very short while. The spikes in these plateaus would reflect the personal innovations I’ve made. Performance of tasks would always remain at peak efficiency. If you take a look at my resume, which you have right in front of you—”

“Excuse me for a moment,” the younger woman says. The older one nods, and it is suddenly clear that the younger woman is being evaluated on how she will evaluate me. I look to both of them, wanting to help as best I can.

“Yes, of course,” I say. My smile drops when I sense that the smile makes them uneasy. “Let me clarify the statement ‘peak efficiency—”

The younger woman flips through my resume, a three-pager, pretending to read it right in front of me. “I look at your resume, and you’ve got all this experience—you were a lawyer, yes?—and I just have to wonder. Why would you want to work here?”

“Well—” I say, sighing, looking down.

In the past, answers—to any question, rhetorical or empirical—would be delivered into my brain with the speed of light, words exploding out of my mouth brilliantly before I had the chance to even process them.

Defender

This made me a lawyer. Now, when faced with a question, I find myself doggy paddling in deep space, an impossible distance separating me from those bright answers.

My answer? *I need something with which to justify my existence. I'm still trapped in the Puritan, pre-American ideal of work ethic as a means to emulate God, who made the world in six days. I am lonely a great deal of the time and would like to be around more people, develop repartees, laugh, repeat what we thought was funny on TV. I am bored. And the job seems easy.*

I struggle in the emptiness in my head, aware that as I make these thoughts, my interviewers are watching my immobile face, my downcast eyes, both of them uncomfortable now. How ignorant they are of the true complexity of their question! Finally, I breathe.

"I need something with which to justify my existence. I'm still trapped in the Puritan, pre-American ideal of work ethic as a means to emulate God, who made the world in six days. I am lonely a great deal of the time and would like to be around more people, develop repartees, laugh, repeat what we thought was funny on TV. I am bored. And the job seems easy."

As I take a stool at the bar I realize I've forgotten my plastic bag in the conference room, under the table. I should have left it with the receptionist. I wipe my palms on my pants as panic begins to creep along my scalp. Again, I catalog my possessions—keys, pens, address book, cell phone. It all seems unnecessary.

The bartender pulls two dripping glasses out of the rinse water, setting them upside down on a towel pad underneath the bar. "What would you like?" she says, wiping her hands on a dishtowel hanging from the sink.

"Uh," I say, looking wildly at the bottles along the mirrors behind the bar, hoping my eyes will land on something I can say.

"We have beer," she says.

"Beer," I say, relieved. "Anything. The cheapest."

She sets a bottle of Miller Light on a paper coaster in front of me. The first drink I gulp down more than I intend, and burp into my fist.

From my seat I look out from the dimness to the path of sunlight

Jeffery Ryan Long

made by the open door. Lehua would get a laugh from this one. All my failures amuse her—but her amusement makes more damn sense than me being upset about it. For the past fifteen years: one unbroken series of failures.

I take a drink and wave my hand for another. I won't fail her, though. No matter what Shaun Francisco thinks. He forfeited his right to her life, to his daughters' lives, when he killed two old people dancing in their living room. I will pay for them and protect them, defend them from all the shit in the world.

mirage

back in the day, when you found me on the road to *ngjya*,
you were a mirage in rutted tarmac,
a marriage of red dirt bullied by

silver smoke,
liquid fire,

shimmery gluts of numinous light,
flirtatious bushels of boiling ore,
your eyeballs translucent flight,
no lash liners,

and i fall
before this

retreating smithy,
not sold on the cheap at the country market,
nor stacked among pocked cabbages, and mahogany women in multi-bright headgear, bartering
as the days pass, one freaking minute a fricking second at a go.

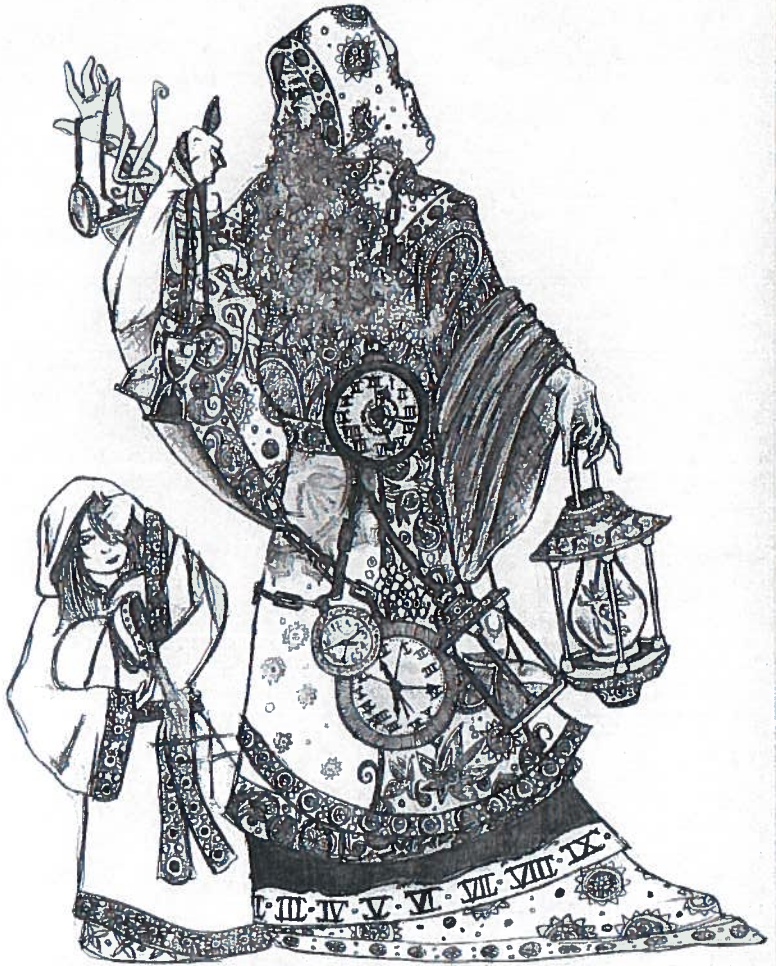
i do not state my intention,
intentions
to drink the tears of the ones you punish,
the ones who give chase
while you recede further,
wiggly, funky

perish against the kohl dark outlay of the horizon,
hawks and eagles clawing mice, and cluttering the cumulus with talons of held breath, expelled air.

David Odhiambo

knowing better,
i will still give chase,
offer you alms, give you my hard won shekels,
give up licorice root,
and my morning ritual of perforated bags dunked to yield raspberry teas,
all to paint your toe nails coral pink
while whores of debris stack against windowsills,
dangerous,
simpering, in and out of reach,
because
you are still
worth the stretch
even if this elixir will cost me ulcers, gall stones, little gestures i muster as you take three steps back,
six backward while i
pursue
ribald with slang
all the mo' better
to please you, strip tease you
as rusty tins,
empty bins, will collect each an every one of my hopeful, hopeless two steps on garbage day, wednesday.

Toby Idian



Father Time

Leaving

Sometimes to get in the car
and just drive away is the reason,
hair tugged by wind,
its laughter down my neck.
I pass river willows raining crisp
leaves. The white mystery
of water rushes to sea. Weight
is my foot on the pedal,
tempting misunderstood forces,
inertia, centrifugal.
Earth rises and falls
as I careen, my tires lifting
ever so slightly off the graveled
voice of country road,
over hills, their soft shapes
like Paleolithic smiles lining
the horizon. Apple trees sway
to the rhythm of some forgotten
paradise, a good place tarnished
by history. Oh, if he could ride
with me now! Just get in the car
and drive away.

Katie Kingston

Bicycle *for my sister*

I peddled over asphalt toward our cottage with you propped on the handlebars,
your feet on the front fender, your ecclesiastical grip on the chrome bars,
until our sense of balance shifted, and the ditch came up to meet us.
As we lay in our pile of misery, gravel worked its way
into our scratched knees, and the little grain heads
of grass buried us in their hypnotic swirl.

Hank came along with his maintenance-man arms and lifted us,
one on each hip with the handlebars in his right fist.
He toted us both, trailing the twisted frame
of our only bicycle up the road.
That was the summer
we both learned
to swim
and never went in over our heads, unless a grown-up was watching.

Katie Kingston

Translating Clouds

If I see myself in a cloud and it disperses,
then what?

Snow remembers
when the cloud was its mother.
Snow, the nostalgic one,
always lying around, staring up at sky.
Daydreaming they called it
in that time before conscience.

All this cloud wants is a one-way
ticket east, maybe a little chewing tobacco,
a renewed sense of umbra.

Even clouds have nicknames:
horsetails, wooly, shredded. My favorite
is the nimbus, because it's rain bearing
and most resembles the heart.

Nations used to dance all night for clouds.

A cloud is like love, full of the unexpected.
They even pay men good money
to predict them,
like that ugly grey one
that spit hail on my windshield last week,
then moved on as if nothing had happened.

Today the sky is full of scud,
low dark clouds moving quickly,
like stampede.

Sometimes clouds gather like grey flannel
hovering over grey puddles.

Clouds, nothing more than cumulous,
how like a woman
interpreting the shape of things.

Carolyn Dahl

Birds' Day

Under a small red umbrella
Slapped with sea spray
And a stinging rain
I have wandered
Into their morning.
The gulls don't want me.
Misty days are theirs to gather,
Dig in seaweed, watch the wind.
No need to rise and fly
To run and fear the children
Throwing things
At their soft gray wings.

I have broken rules
So go softly over the sand,
Around their swelling flocks,
Gently over their fork prints.

I have come to see
What the storm embeds:
Half a wooden boat hatch,
Plastic bottles, a tennis ball,
Dead fish with red maple leaf,
A still green pine tree branch.
To search the sands again
For an amethyst ring lost in Hawaii.
Each year I wait and watch
For it to wash back to California,
onto my unadorned hand.

Tomorrow the sun will be out.
Joggers will pound the shells down.
The homeless will gather in clumps.
Babies will walk with their mothers.
Dogs will race for the water.
No need to search tomorrow.
Magic only comes when the gulls
Walk backward into the rain.

Scott Gallaway

The Oak and the Woodpecker

To the oak, the woodpecker is a small god, unseen, eating
what eats it. Only the snow brings comfort.

His beak is used like an artist of skin, entering quickly
and drawing out design. The oak knows no anger,

just continues to grow in new directions up,
loving the cold of Minnesota, only wishing to be

and to heal its scars. The woodpecker just listens
for its meal, and jostles his brain to get it.

Scott Gallaway

Preservation

Matthew and Nathan play a game
where they race into each other,
full speed, fall, laugh, and go back
to do it again. We take deep breaths
and shake our heads.

I sometimes wonder as I watch
small boys play if preservation
hasn't been bred out of them,
if they somehow defied Darwin
and live lives teetering on stone

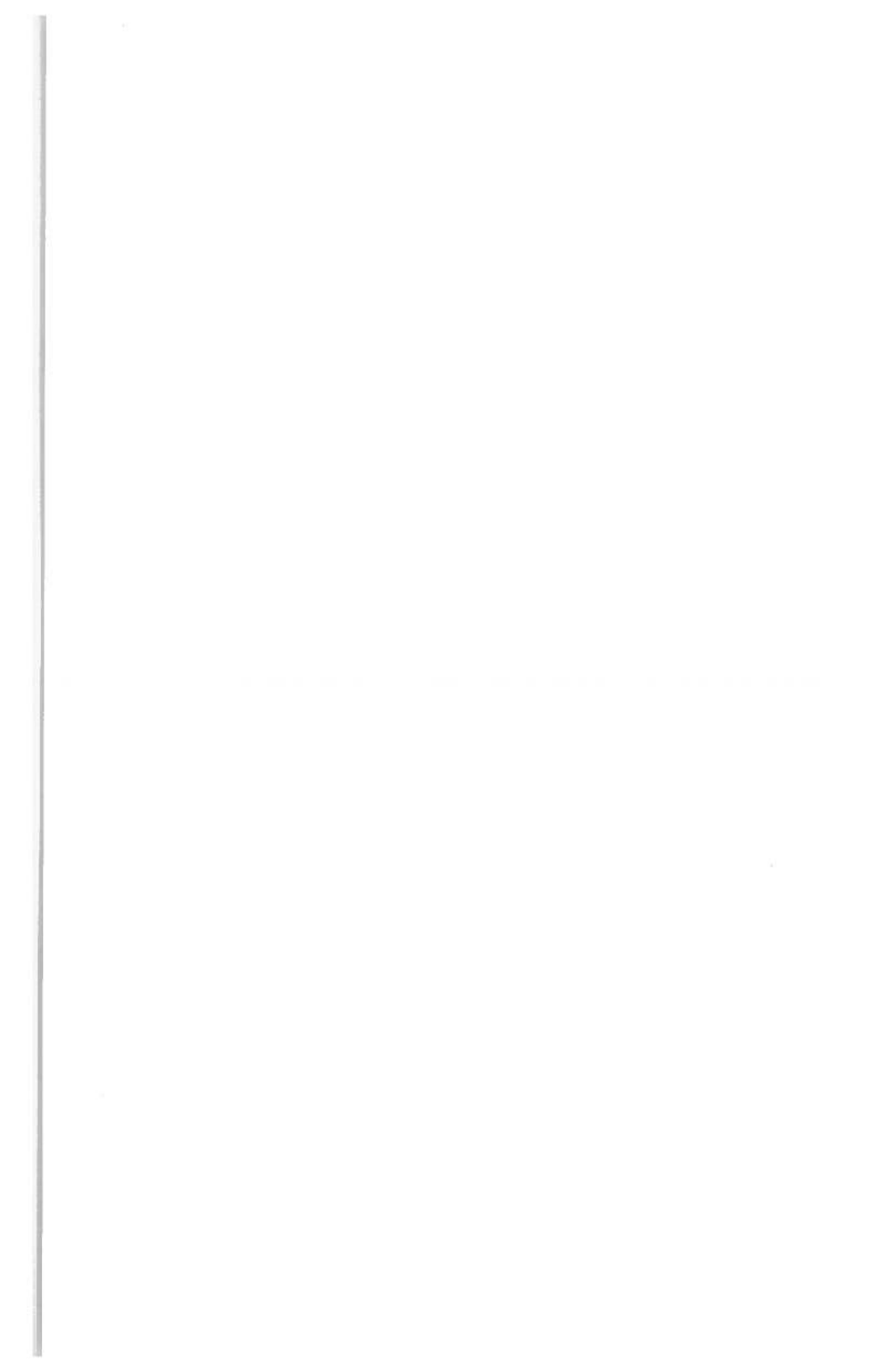
over stone. Later, a few will be
bandaged from wars or poor driving,
but mostly they will be swaggering,
offering beers to Muslim neighbors,
talking too loud on cell phones.

When they sleep, they grow,
oblivious as rivers gaining speed,
taking it all, rubbing through world
and changing it, digging down
to dinosaurs who also butted heads.

Toby Idian



Smile



Mickey Hess

A-Hole in Germantown

PROPOSAL

She asked him to marry her first, and he turned her down. They had been dating for three months, but had been roommates for two weeks before that. They were sitting in the bathtub of their crappy apartment. He said something like, “You aren’t really serious, are you?” But she was. This was before they were ghosts.

FICTION

In fourth grade, Lynn was assigned to write to a pen pal in a foreign land. Her classmates chose Paris, Australia, Tokyo, places there were movies about.

She chose Iceland.

Why? Because she knew nothing about it. Because neither did her classmates, or even her teacher.

Her pen pal correspondence with Halldor Laxness, Iceland’s most renowned novelist, was tacked to classroom walls, where it was overshadowed by the letters her classmates received.

Germantown

Her friend Sarah received letters of carefully folded origami, With her name written in Japanese characters on ornate sheets of paper made into swans. Lynn received a bag of dried fish, stories about how Iceland was founded.

She corrected these stories. She bought a pack of red gel pens and mailed the marked pages back to Reykjavik, referents corrected, tenses changed. Her mastery of the Icelandic language was remarkable, Laxness thought, particularly for a nine-year-old girl from Louisville, Kentucky.

Her concise paring of sentences, the way he came to rely on her editing: "now criticizing, now praising my work, but hardly ever letting a single word be buried in indifference."

But that last letter he got from her, just as the school year ended:

Dear Mr. Laxness,

This is the last letter I have to send you. You've been a good pen pal. Keep writing. Most of your stories are good.

Sincerely,

Lynn

*

Thirteen years later, Halldor Laxness has moved to Louisville, Kentucky. Renowned novelists do this. After James Joyce published *Ulysses*, he moved there and opened a semi truck dealership. A lot of people don't know that. Laxness has purchased a shotgun house in Louisville's Germantown area. All his neighbors are officially unemployed, except for various entrepreneurial activities such as making and selling crystal meth or running perpetual yard sales. Once, a man tried to sell him a meatball sub out of the back of his Chrysler LeBaron.

Halldor Laxness is actually the ghost of Halldor Laxness, to be accurate about things. It has been so long since he heard from Lynn that she is now 24 years old, and he is not dead anymore. He has returned

Mickey Hess

from the grave. A Nobel-Prize-winning phantasm. Laxness chose to come back as a 30-year-old. You get to choose.

But there is a reason he's moved to Louisville. He can't get that sentence out of his head: "Most of your stories are good." *Most* of them. Certainly that would indicate that some, or even several, aren't good. But which ones? When he is drunk enough, he will ask her.

MEMOIR

But that's not how it happened.

AN INVITATION

Wednesday, April 12, 2006 7:01 PM

Halldor Laxness,

I meant to ask you earlier today, but I forgot. A really good friend of mine is coming down from Chicago this weekend, and I have a babysitter. So anyway, I thought I'd see if maybe you and your wife would like to come out one night and have a drink. Is it really weird to ask that? I don't want to be one of those people; it's just rare that I get to go out, and I thought it might be fun.

So,yeah, I guess that's it.

Lynn

*

It wasn't weird. It was so *not* weird, in fact, that her boyfriend's father dropped her off at the bar. It was so not weird that her boyfriend, Darren, joined them later, at the end of the night, long after Lilja was ready to go home, after last call at the riverboat casino where Darren

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was employed. They said hello and goodbye in the same moment, so that Laxness vaguely recalls liking Darren, but could not tell you what he looks like. It was so not weird that Lilja and Lynn spent more time talking than Laxness and Lynn. Their conversations at first mostly involved explaining inside jokes to the third party. Laxness-and-Lilja stories to Lynn. Laxness-and-Lynn stories to Lilja.

Lynn showed them a picture of her 13-month-old daughter, Emma, who had adjusted Lynn's cell phone to full volume. Lynn cannot figure out how to undo this. The phone rings consistently with unwanted calls from her ex-friends.

Laxness and Lilja had been talking. They (mostly him) had been talking about having a baby.

Lynn and Darren (mostly her) had been talking about buying a house. "Germantown's pretty nice," Laxness told her. The first time she came over, four white-boy thugs were shooting guns off his neighbor's roof.

SOME QUESTIONS

Laxness enjoyed spending time with Lynn. She wrote these amazing stories about her life. They could talk about books in public, quietly, without sounding like assholes. They both liked to make fun of people.

Once, when he was talking about rap music, she asked him "Who is Mike D?" and it almost broke his heart.

Once, she asked him to kill a spider and he refused.

"I thought of the moral principles instilled in me: never to harm a living creature; throughout my life, to place the poor, the humble, the meek of this world above all others; never to forget those who were slighted or neglected or who had suffered injustice."

"Dude," she said. "Come on."

*

They spent time in used bookstores. They agreed that travel writing is bullshit, like making somebody look through your vacation photos. They found a book called

A Hole in Texas, which Laxness mistook for *A-hole in Texas*, which

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they agreed would actually make an amazing travel series. *A-hole in New England. A-hole at Red River Gorge.*

She liked jokes about grammar. She told him he didn't know how to end stories. He told her that he did—the endings just didn't *look* like endings.

*

Laxness knows he has to return to Iceland. The date is looming. As a ghost, he is limited to so many months in Kentucky. All ghosts want to live in Kentucky. There is a waiting list.

He is trying to put it out of his head.

"So after you move, we're never going to speak to each other in person, are we? We're gonna be Internet friends."

"Nooo," he said, but he knew it was true. "We have to hang out so much in the next few months that we get sick of each other. That way we won't even *want* to be Internet friends."

*

At the bar, although he sits with his arm around Lilja, and is sure that he kisses her at least once during the evening, and with Lynn all the way across the table, the people of Louisville are impressed with Halldor Laxness. Someone named Randolph introduces himself and wants to shake Laxness' hand. "Are you on a date with *two* girls?"

When the server brings the check, he places his hand onto Laxness' shoulder. "Tell me, man, how did you do it?"

Laxness believes he is referring to how quickly he'd finished his drink. He lifts his glass. "I just worked really hard."

Laxness and Lynn will laugh about this comment for days. Lilja will find it less funny.

When they are drunk enough, Lynn and Laxness will attempt to repair a light switch in his bedroom. He finds a flashlight and they start flipping breakers. She says she knows some things about wiring. Lilja says that she was sure they were going to electrocute themselves.

Before she falls asleep that night, Lilja asks him, "Am I your best friend?"

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AN OFFER

“We don’t have to only hang out when you can get a babysitter, you know. I think it would be fun to hang out while you’re watching Emma.”

At the park, he proved that he did not know much about babies. He would have believed she could sit at a picnic table instead of on a blanket on the ground. He would have given her coffee.

But he did stop her from eating a band-aid she found.

It was not entirely different, he and Lilja agreed, from watching their iguana, who also spends most of her time outside making her way to the one place you have outlawed. Laxness and Lilja had rescued the iguana from the 2nd-grade classroom where she had been tormented for the first year of her life. When they brought her home, she was terrified. She spent the first night behind the stereo with her eyes closed tight. Soon, though, they coaxed her out with a can of Veg-All. Soon, she was looking to them for protection, clawing her way up Laxness to sit on his head when a circle of squirrels seemed a little bit too interested in her. They paid ridiculous vet bills to check on things like a crooked toe, or when maybe she seemed kind of depressed.

With her, they proved they could take care of something.

With Emma, they helped Lynn keep her out of the following: mud puddles, dog vomit, and ashes dumped from a grill. Lynn disinfected her hands just in case.

Lynn brought enough peanut butter and jelly for all of them. Emma preferred the bread by itself. “This is really nice of you guys,” Lynn said. “It’s not everyone who likes hanging out with other people’s kids.”

In the back seat, on the way home, Lilja is pressing her nose to the bottom of Emma’s foot, both of them giggling.

In the front seat, Laxness is staring alternately at Lynn and Emma. “Do you think she looks more like you or Darren?”

“I think she looks like me.”

He nods, but he thinks she is crazy. That kid doesn’t look anything like her.

Mickey Hess

A DISCUSSION

"So you seem to like Emma."

"Yeah. She likes me more than she does you."

"No way."

"So you and Lynn made plans to go to the park without me?"

"What?"

"If I hadn't stayed home from work, you guys were going to go anyway."

"We were."

"That's weird."

"Is it?"

"You're both writers. She has a baby and you want kids. I don't know. It just seems weird."

It was not weird. But this was not an entirely unreasonable assumption. If he was the one who was worried, he would have been worse. He would have caused what they call a spectacle.

What Lilja did was get very quiet. She may have cried, a little.

IMPRESSIVE

"I think Lilja was pretty impressed with Emma."

"Emma is pretty impressive."

"She says maybe we can have a baby now."

"Good. Congratulations."

"Well not *now*. She still wants to wait as long as possible."

"I hear 35 is the cut-off point."

"That's what I keep telling her."

"Oh! Emma said 'Halldor Laxness' the other day."

"Really?"

"No."

"Damn, I really got you on that one, didn't I?"

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REDBOOK'S ADVICE

According to the magazine *Redbook*, male and female friends who each are in separate, functioning, relationships should spend a maximum of one hour per week together. It's been proven.

But with Lilja at work all day and Darren asleep after his night shift, Laxness and Lynn were bored and lonely. They exceeded their hour.

When Lilja indicated that it was making her uncomfortable for the two of them to spend so much time together, Laxness' solution was to stop telling her about it. This seemed like a good idea at the time.

Also, he had gotten into a bad habit of saying "nothing" when Lilja asked him questions.

As in "What did you do today?"

"*Nothing.*"

What he had done, though, was take a long walk through the park with Lynn, pretending, or wishing, he didn't know what had upset Lilja.

AGAIN, THE PARK

And this time he saw it. "Wow, you're right. Her eyes look identical to yours." He was cutting a peanut butter sandwich into small triangles. He thought some more about what Lilja had said. Was it weird?

Was it weird that he now knew where the antibacterial hand-wipes were kept in the diaper bag? Was it weird that when Lynn told Emma she could not destroy the flowers Lilja had planted, and Emma began screaming, Laxness calmed her by placing his hand, very awkwardly, onto her shoulder?

*

Since the discussion, he had started to reassure Lilja, asking questions like "Come on, who's my best friend?" and "Who's the only girl for me?" and even "Who's the only person I want to have sex with?"

Lilja usually didn't need this much reassuring. Usually it was him.

In his younger days, when faced with her own opposite-gender acquaintances—philosophy grad students, that fucking frisbee-playing

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librarian—he'd told her that it was impossible for a guy and a girl to be friends without one or the other wanting the relationship to be more than that. It was something his friend Snori had told him and, at the time it seemed like a useful thing to believe.

SOME HISTORY

The first time he met Lilja, she told him she hated redheads. "They're all fucking terrible people," she said. His little sister was a redhead, and his Aunt Betty, and his best friend from elementary school, but right then he believed her. He would have believed anything she said.

They became roommates at the start of his second year in college. By October he was failing most of his classes, preferring not to spend 75 minutes away from her. By Christmas they didn't want to leave the apartment to visit their families. Eventually she made some friends he didn't like, who he thought she spent too much time with, who thought she was cooler than he was. Eventually he made some friends who described her as "intimidating," which he took to mean too fucking awesome. For a few years they had friends together, another couple, the four of them banded tightly together against a world of frightening separation. But there were times they did things separately. Once Lilja and Johanna attended a Dianogah concert while Bragi and Halldor Laxness got high on cough syrup in the parking lot.

Lilja and Laxness were best friends. She was the only one who could put up with his shit. "It's just that you've never wanted to hang out with someone else this much," she said. "You hate people."

"What about Thor? I hang out with Thor."

"That's different. Surely I don't have to tell you how that's different."

*

The obvious solution, to him, was to ensure that Lilja and Lynn became friends. They just didn't click the way he wanted. Lynn often left their house abruptly, certain that Lilja was ready for her to leave. Lilja's job did not offer her a summer vacation, so when Laxness and Lynn could

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have sat up all night in the kitchen, talking about books and stories and making fun of people they knew, Lilja was thinking about her 8:30-4:30 shift that began in four hours.

Not that she didn't make an effort. She switched from Kentucky whiskey to Red Bull and vodka. The first time she ordered this new mix of alcohol and energy, she asked Lynn, who had once worked as a bartender, what this drink was officially called.

"Red Bull and vodka," Lynn said.

When it was 4:00AM for the third night in a row, and Laxness would have rather been talking to Lynn than sleeping, Lilja was not happy. "What bothers me most is that it's gone on this long. You know it makes me uncomfortable. You should have ended it a long time ago."

THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

The Nobel Banquet is held in the back room of a smoky bar. Man in the Box, an Alice in Chains cover band, is performing. "MAN IN THE BOX," the marquee reads, "and nobel banquet."

The band takes a smoke break and Laxness is introduced. Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson hands him the key to the city. They both pose, smiling, with an enormous poster board check made out to The Ghost of Halldor Laxness.

Laxness begins his speech: "What can fame and success give to an author? A measure of material well-being brought about by money? Certainly. And now I have been given a key to your great city. But there is someone here tonight who holds the key to something more tangible."

Lilja thinks that he is talking about her. Lilja thinks that he is talking about his heart.

"And now, in the full glow of Man in the Box's green and yellow stage lights, I have to ask this important person. I have to know. Which of my stories was not good?"

Lilja is no longer smiling. Lynn is trying to hide behind a fat woman. Laxness unfolds the letter she wrote him in fourth grade. "I have not been able to write a single satisfactory sentence since I received this

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letter, fifteen years ago:

Dear Mr. Laxness. Keep writing. *Most* of your stories are good."

The drummer from *Man in the Box* is motioning to Laxness from the side of the stage, slicing his finger across his throat like a knife.

Laxness cuts to the end of his speech: "What you need to know is that Christmas in Iceland is different. What we do first is we clean the entire house, top to bottom, maybe eat some *ptarmigan*. Then you have to watch out for the Yulemen, thirteen brothers come down from the hills. Sausage Snatcher, Bowl Licker—all very sexual. They steal your children and take them back to their mother, Gryla, who cooks them up in her pot. After that, those of us who have won Nobel Prizes smash them with hammers. We burn books we've written in large metal garbage cans, huddle around them for warmth."

Laxness returns to the table, places the poster board check in his seat. *Man in the Box* asks the audience if they are ready for more rock. But they are ambivalent, mostly.

"Ass," Lynn says. "I meant to say all of your stories."

"But you didn't say all. You said *Most*. I know I could be better at endings." Lynn is amazing at endings. Oh, you should see the way she can end something.

"But I *meant* All. All of them that I've read, at least."

"Good, because I worked really hard."

A photographer from the *Louisville Courier-Journal* snaps a picture of them, Laxness and Lynn facing forward, Lilja's head turned away. They sit quietly, then Lynn excuses herself from the table.

Lilja has become very quiet. Her face is clenched like a fist. He puts his hand on her shoulder, and it is like touching a statue.

"I think you're in love with her."

Not "I think you guys are in love," or even "I think something's going on between you two," but "I think *you* are IN LOVE with *her*."

"I'm in love with *you*."

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“You can be in love with both of us.”

“Come on.”

“There’s a certain way you look at her. It’s weird.”

*

He drove Lilja home, and though he should have probably stayed home, he did not. “Do you want me to stay here with you?”

“I want you to do whatever you want to do.”

“Don’t be like that. Can we just talk about this tomorrow?”

“Fine.”

“It’s just that I said I was coming back.”

“Fine. Go.”

He went back to the bar.

BEING INTUITIVE

“Was that about me?”

“No.”

She smiles, but she doesn’t believe him. “I don’t think we’re supposed to hang out anymore.”

They sit quietly through the encore, until *Man in the Box* begin to play songs they have written themselves, until they clear out the whole fucking bar.

REASSURANCE

What it took after that was reassuring. We’re talking loong discussions. Bali Moonlight massage oil. An all-day appearance at her family’s Memorial Day cookout—a noble and selfless act that he ruined by complaining about it on the drive home.

Still, Lilja was convinced. So convinced in fact, that she suggested they do not necessarily have to wait until she’s 35.

*

Lynn and Darren have been looking at houses. She had sent Laxness emails with subject lines like “getting in trouble.” She had made phone

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calls that began “Are you ok?” and ended with “You asshole. I can’t believe you weren’t telling her when we went to the park.”

He reassured her that the suspicions had been resolved. Convincing had been done. They were still allowed to be friends. He didn’t want it to feel weird for them to hang out together.

But maybe it always was weird. He didn’t even know anymore.

*

Originally, he and Lilja had reached an agreement that allowed him to hang out with Lynn one day per week, with the stipulation that Lilja be present.

After allowing some time to pass, he renegotiated a system by which he and Lynn could hang out, but never three days in a row, and as long as Lilja is invited, or at least notified, in the case that the hanging-out occurs during her work hours. This was no small victory, having moved Lilja from her original hard-line position of “Tell me you won’t hang out with her anymore.”

*

They do hang out again. Instead of talking, they choose to write stories for each other. They sit on distant ends of a Cherokee Park picnic table, writing in notebooks. When they finish writing they do not trade notebooks. Instead, they fold their stories into swans and set them on fire in the park garbage can.

Lynn shrugs. “So does this signal the end of something?”

Laxness places a hand on her shoulder. The first time he has ever touched her. “From the day I learned to read I have been irritated by stories with a moral, a hidden pointer, in the guise of adventure. I immediately stopped reading or listening as soon as I thought I understood that the purpose of the story was to force on me some kind of wisdom which someone else considered noteworthy, a virtue that someone else found admirable, instead of telling me a story. For a story is still the best thing one can tell.”

Lynn’s cell phone is ringing. Ex-friends that she doesn’t want to talk to. Her best friend Jill, the one who moved to Chicago. She looks at the caller ID and groans. “I’m going to be a bad friend when you move. Just

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to let you know in advance.”

Laxness isn't leaving for another two months, but she has written the ending already.

Ice Castle

White stratus cloud rises
Over limestone bluffs.

On a foggy day
The castle rises from the river
As from the fog.

White ice turrets tower as if invisible
Shadowless midway on the current,
The island invisible beneath snow
Flat over the low ground
And the frozen river.

Walls of ice
Looming out of mist
Look as insubstantial
As the ice will be
When the sun turns higher
In the hidden sky.

James B. Nicola

Crepusculars

If I watch the sun set behind you
That means you're in the West
And either leaving at the end of day
Or coming to me
Just as the night begins.
Either way, I convulse
From the way you're framed.

If you watch the sun rise behind me
That means I'm in the East.
But don't misconstrue the glow
Around me for a halo.
It's only that I'm so happy you decided to stay
And that we might enjoy the day
And tomorrow even try switching roles.

Celebration

When the fog cleared, or was rather clearing,
or before it cleared while it was still opaque,
I knew—and only then, I think (Pass the grog)
I knew that I did not know where I was
or where I'd been. And that was all I think
I knew. Well, the recollection's foggy (Have some cake)
even though I'm no longer in the fog.
In any event, before it cleared, I sensed
someone or something behind me, then over there,
then straight ahead in the distance, then not so far—
Well it was foggy, but was becoming unfoggy
and the recollection of the dissipating's foggy
so how it happened I can't exactly say
but here I am with a mountain over my shoulder
and over there an ocean and over there a city and at arm's length
was it, is it, could it possibly be you
and all along I though I'd been in a wilderness of fog
with nothing at all but, though all along I didn't know,
I'd had everything all along. The wonder of it all
makes me groggy. Have another piece of cake.

William Woolfitt

Displaced

Husband lost to the strife, two sons
to the war, all that she has left the small boy,
and the reed-basket, and the long pocked road
to the hill-village where her brother lives.
She carries a few old vegetables
from her mother-in-law's kitchen garden,
raisins, a hard black roll for him to gnaw.
She bends to offer him bread; all her life
she has bent, when fever racked her father,
in the shop to scour and buff the pale blue tiles,
scooping a baby to her hip. Her limbs
still fleshy and strong, she wishes the meat
would leave her to fatten the boy, slip between
his shivering skin and willow-stick bones.

Derek Henderson

A finger I think across.

Think I'll stockpile the psyche
with courageous self, at the forefront,
where causation lies. Yes, in an emotional
way, ecstasy must enter perspicaciously,
reattach, reattach it toward the end: to avoid
or reassert or reapproach some corner
of the body (a fingertip, yes, the webbed toes,
the end of the elbow, the ligament tucked
beneath the tongue).

(Intellect?
the done self-product of essence?
Oh, we have the world, yes, a causal god
for that, and from it, we must endebt
ourselves; or, that tried, our energies
must be at that either-or, perspective.

Ecstatic source, physical mercy, "wipe
that smile in your eyes off your face"

to what end? to perhaps, perhaps,
to the emotional clean slate)

It is
a route of continual cleanliness
to a continued cleanliness.

(oh yes, clean, so clean. yes, clean, clean.)

Plumetric Gaiameria

Matt Caliri

I am a general practitioner in a world where there's nothing but specialists,
A melting world with non-melting specialists.
("Himatanthus Willd!")
And my pain has completely lost Her voice as
Science in the last two centuries has tended to be ever-dividing-dividing with
My pajamas up since seven on the sofa now eleven...
("Frangipani!")
Where, in abundance, can we shiver the leaves and have our heads shake things out?
With them Hawaii grows so abundantly many people think they are indigenous to the
The Island System like quarreling lovers are burrowing mothers
Are sorrowful daughters, all terrible fathers we are,
And related to Oleander they are...

Pajama thirty now on the eleven-spot now "Zap-2-it" on-screen,
Humankind as the primer by which Gaia will reproduce and
I say all this because I love you and me,
Though only because you love me do I love me
And know what love means, like the poisonous, milky sap
So similar to that of Euphorbia...

Can I paint broader strokes stepping out of the window of the house

I am painting?

Paint the colors of the paint?

Paint the Carl Sagan Cosmic Viewpoint of the '59 space probes:

A planet in preparation to go to seed?

Where were you when you were born: in a house or in a womb?

On your mother or on the ground?

Alexis Levitin
(Translator)

Among Books and Letters

by Augusto Rodriguez

Wandering
among books and libraries
I lose myself, I come awake.
Soft and secret among letters
in horror I fall into the abyss
where the city is only a mirror
and the cats and rats
dance the same blind dance
and I come to my end.
And don't.
I linger for centuries filled with seconds
in cafes and bars,
I light a cigarette
I speak through its reddish hair
filled with eyes and tobacco
and I leave, I hide, dissolving, slow,
clandestine, melancholic, among books
step by step
straight to the cold pages
that await me
where bit by bit
I change
into an obscure unnoticed script.



Masks



Donald Carreira Ching

Between Sky and Sea

Mark pulled his truck off Kamehameha Highway and parked on a strip of earth just off the road. Careful of the guardrail and the door of his Datsun, I slid out from the passenger side and out into the open air. A smashed hala fruit lay in the grass near the railing; I kicked it to the side and hopped the rusted barrier, the wind carrying the fruit's smell away as I approached the ledge. Below my feet, rocks jutted down to the shore, to the black ocean collapsing in folds of velvet against the sand, its rhythm rocking a cluster of boats tethered in the distance. I listened to the hollow sound of the beating hulls and looked out towards Mokoli'i on the horizon, a shadow against the evening sky.

"Fucken hate Sundays," Mark said from behind me. "Da whole fucken week you work, fo what? One day sleep in an bullshet. Most times, wake up, spend da whole day out in da yard, picken guavas. Da whole fucken day, den what? Work tomorrow. Fucken hate Sundays."

I turned from Kane'ohē Bay to Mark's truck bed, where he already sat propped against the cooler, "Where you workin now? Same place?"

"Yeah, same shit, fawty hours, come home put in anada five. Retail worse den da guavas." He opened the cooler and passed me a beer.

Sky and Sea

“Whatchu on tonight, tchree? Lightweight ah? Come back from da mainlan, drink like one podagee.”

I reached for the bottle, “Portuguese,” twisting the cap and letting it fall to my feet.

“Yeah, yeah, all da same.”

“Think so?”

He shook his head, “You lucky stay Sunday.”

“Why’s that?”

“Cuz afta couple hours in da yard, I no get da energy argue haole an hapa.”

I laced my fingers together and held the bottle between my hands.

“How was um anyway?”

“Alright, like anything you know, has its points.”

He leaned back against the truck bed, “The wahine, what, go real nuts fo Johnny Tsunami up there?”

I shook my head, “Maybe you. Half the time, just think I’m Mexican or Filipino, or both.”

Mark laughed, “Yeah, yeah, das da light skin uh. But I know you like um ack le dat too, I membah how you was in high sku. Real prapah wit da teecha: Yes sir, No ma’am. Huh? I no stay related dose two.”

“Shit, they still knew.”

He laughed, “Daz what happen when people like fuck around. Dey going know whose who, y’know?”

“They deserved it though. I still remember you and Ka’eo showing up to the principal’s office, the look on Mr.Chock’s face.”

“Yeah, Ka’eo le dat. He knew how was, he had Mistah Chock too. Fuckah wuz always on his case, tryen fo tell um he no can find his paypah. How nex time write Robert cross da to top. Use yo propah name. English he say, english.”

I rested my body against the truck’s side, “It’s the same way, up there. They mispronounce Elani so many times you gotta start sounding it out. You just get tired of it, start telling um it doesn’t matter, y’know?”

Mark nodded, “I membah Ka’eo was what, elevent grade? Tried fo

Donald Carreira Ching

win dat contest, wrote da story bout da crack seed store down Tempoh Valley, what wen feel like see um closed down. Fuckah's gave um first place, den what?"

"Showed up for the interview, had a change of heart." I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand.

"Pau writing afta dat."

I nodded.

"What about you?"

"What?"

"Fucken Hemingway. When you gon write da nex Ol Man an da Sea, local kine, front cova: Tutukane an da rink-a-dink cadahmaran."

I smiled and shook my head, "Been working on it, tryna do a family history or something. Hard though, can't write local shit."

"Whatchu mean?"

"Just like I said."

"Shit sound local."

"It is, but it isn't, y'know?"

"What about da book? Three years ah?"

"Couple chapters away, but that ain't local."

"What is, y'know?"

I smiled, "How's Ma?"

Mark picked up his bottle, "Alright, me and Ti tinken bout moven her bumbai."

"She's gettin bad huh?"

"Yeah, Aunty Carol stay checken up on her. Da ada day Aunty caught her tryen fo use da batchroom in da sink. Aunty tried fo stop her, Ma wen push her gainst da wall started fo talk Jesus."

"She remember anything?"

"Litto bit. Pops, the war."

I listened to the thrush of sand sifting in the tide, "What about Ka'eo?"

"Every now an den, mos times jus call me up ask where he stay, if he goin be home fo dinnah."

Sky and Sea

“Maybe that’s better?”

“Yeah, but sometimes it hit her, y’know? Gotta drive, one in da morning come see her, Kaimuki to Kahalu’u. Stay da ho nite, try fo explain everything.”

“Everything?”

“Small kine stuffs. We wen learn from da first time, now jus enuff fo her stop cryen, y’know?”

“It would’ve been easier if I stayed.”

Mark shook his head, “Shit, I was gone long time fo you left.”

“That’s no excuse.”

“Yeah,” He said, “But you deserve a chance, y’know? Keep pushen, keep tryen fo get ahead. Nuten can change tings, jus how it stay.”

“I think that’s what bothers me though.”

“What?”

“Things being the same.”

He lifted his bottle, “Butchu back?”

I crouched down and picked up a rock, “You know why I can’t write local shit?”

“How come?” He said.

“Nothing to write about.”

“Das how you feel?”

“That’s what I know,” I let the rock rest in my palm, measuring its weight, “Just feel like, who am I? Where’s my place?”

Mark laughed and held his arms out, “Right heas your place.”

“That’s the funny thing, y’know?” I closed my hand into a fist and looked towards the horizon, “I keep thinking about Hawai’i, tryna define it, the way I know it. But in the back of my mind I can hear um: eh haole, why you stay writing like one local.”

“Butchu Hawaiian, no forget dat.”

“No difference.” I cocked my arm back and threw the rock as far as I could, watching its dark shape move through the of the sky and disappear, with a mute splash, into the sea, “Just like Ka’eo and the crack seed store, the story he wrote. Could fucken write good English but

Donald Carreira Ching

got stuck with Pops pidgin tongue; they didn't want him on stage: 'Ho I like tank my bruddahs.' Nowadays it's the other way. They want you to embrace the slang but, when you got white skin, it matters."

He shook his head, "You jus tink is different."

"Nah, you just don't get it, for you it's always shakas, howzit, eh Markie where you been?"

"Bullshet," He placed his bottle to the side, "How many times we go Zippys, I lose count how many people kiss your cheek, shake your hand."

I brought the beer to my lips, exhaled, and dug the bottle, half empty, into the earth, "And how about when we used to go party down Ka'a'awa. How many looks I'd get, you'd have to go talk to um. Let um know who I was."

"You forget bout Pops?"

"What about him?"

"How you gon talk le dat, all the stories he wen tell."

"Just stories."

He laughed, "Eh Hemingway, since when was jus stories."

I smiled, "Tell you the truth, the stories Pops would tell, used to think he was outta his mind."

Mark shook his head, "Some stuffs, neva could believe."

"Like what?"

"Like Papa, on Kaua'i, walken back home from da job and one two-by-fo wen fall right tchru his chest."

I laughed.

"An den Papa wen walk home wit da suckin ting still intack, pull um out, live fo one week."

I shook my head and kept laughing.

"But das da ting, y'know? All kine stories. Papa fighten da war afta Pearl Harbah. Grandma worken down dat side, pullen da bodies from da shore, tryen fo match um wit da lists."

"Yeah, but that was bigger. That's everyone down in the water, tryna deal with what was going on."

Sky and Sea

“Shet, den what bout Ma’s dad, wit da deli down Pearl City, da one Hawaiian Electric wen take ova afta came condemned. Tell me dat ain’t local.”

I stood and walked to the edge, “That’s the thing though, that’s what it used to mean, local. Nowadays, not like before. Half the island’s from somewhere else, land being sold off, fucking military, all that shit. Go down Hygienic Store, grab a musubi and a half tank of gas, gotta deal with the three crack heads who live part time under the banyan tree. Don’t even know what Hawai’i is anymore. But you know the worst part about all this shit?”

“Wuz dat?”

I stepped down onto the rocks, carefully placing my feet on the flat surfaces, each one eroded smooth in the moonlight. “Where the fuck are we in all this?”

“Dat why you left?”

When I reached the last step, I sat and took off my shoes and socks; making a bundle and tucking it into a crevice, “Remember when Dad still fished, he’d take us out to the pier, we’d pass this spot every time. I always wondered who the hell just left their boats out here.”

He nodded, tilting his bottle towards the sky.

I dug my toes into the sand and held the cold between them, “I’d always joke about coming down here, stealing one of these boats. Remember you said you had to be on crack, fo do that kinda thing. You had to be one of those junkies who sit outside the Hygienic Store, one in the morning, come down here and steal one.”

I heard a car pass, the cooler lid close, then gravel crunching behind me

“After Pop died, Ka’eo started staying out all kine hours. You were gone and I remember Ma waking me up in the middle of the night, telling me to go look for him.”

Mark’s shadow was beside me.

“The first couple nights I never knew where to go, just started driving. Went through half of Kahalu’u before I decided to head down to the pier. I remember just glancing out the window and seeing his old

Donald Carreira Ching

bike in the grass, that makeshift Columbia, fuckin rust orange, laying right there near the guardrail. Pulled over on the side of the road and ran out to the edge.”

He kicked off his slippers and sat.

“I couldn’t believe it at first, fuck I don’t even remember what I was thinking, like I was numb, y’know? But there he was, waist deep in the water, just staring out at Mokoli’i.”

“Elani?” Mark said, placing his hand on my shoulder.

I shook my head and stared down towards the sand, “I walked back to the truck and fucking drove, an hour and a half before I turned around.”

He looked at me, “Butchu came back.”

“Yeah, but between Mr. Chock and the crack seed store, I never put it together. That’s Ka’eo, y’know? The only one grad Kam, degree from UH, teaching kids how to weave lauhala at Bishop Museum. Drove an hour and a half thinking: How the hell he end up here? How the fuck he end up like that?”

“You tink das why?”

I looked out towards the horizon, an invisible space where the sky met the ocean, “The last time I went looking for him, found him further out than before. Could barely see him, had to swim out and drag um in.”

Mark crossed his arms.

“The whole ride he kept asking me if we were going home, every five minutes, and then when we pulled up, he wouldn’t get out. Just wanted to stay in the truck, had to keep telling him where we were, but he wouldn’t believe me. Just kept asking when we’d get there.”

“He always le dat?”

“Nah, it was different, like chicken skin kine. I had to watch him twitching in the seat the whole night, asking the same question, ‘Home? When we going home?’ A month before I left, a couple months before—” I let the ocean slip past my lips, the waves receding as I exhaled.

“Y’know,” Mark began, “Me and Ti tinken bout worken her faddah’s

Sky and Sea

land, maybe you like help, might be good fo you. If you gon stay.”

I stared at a boat farther out, the rod it was tethered to long since swallowed by the tide.

“Not dat hard, feel good you know, hands in da earth.”

“Maybe.” I said.

Mark nodded, and moved from beside me, “You going graveyard tomorrow?”

“Yeah, after I pick up Mom, figure while I’m here I can spend some time with Pop too.”

He walked towards the water, stopping close enough for the ocean to swallow his ankles. “You can do me one favah?”

“What’s that?”

“I gon save some from tonight, fo you go tomorrow, scattah da rest where dad stay.”

I nodded, “There gonna be enough?”

“Yeah, made two baggies from what was on da hutch. One fo tonight an da uda one fo tomorrow.”

“I’m surprised, that you waited this long I mean.”

“Fo you, Elani, not me.”

“For Pops you mean?”

He smiled and watched the waves roll back, “Yeah, him too.”

“You think he’d have understood?” I said, my right hand moving over the surface of the last step.

“Pops?”

“Yeah.”

“Dem two, dey both da same. Cut from da same kapa. How many times dey argue, dem both sayin da same shet.”

“So what, lickins?”

“You know, dey would’ve got into um. Maybe get close, Pops would’ve been hurt, y’know? But he neva would’ve touched um. Fuck maybe neva even speak, you know how Pop get, real quiet, jus staren off.”

“But he would’ve understood?”

Donald Carreira Ching

Mark shook his head and retreated back to the rocks, "To me, not about dat. How you understand someting you neva live tchrew? How you feel dat? How you relate to um? You gon be angry? You gon blame yourself? Dis," He pointed towards his chest, "Das what mattahs mos, das who you are," then towards me, "So you gon forgive. Cuz das da only way."

I turned from the ocean and looked up the rock steps, to the ledge, and the truck.

"Is like wen you learn fo swim, membah? Pop would take us out on da boat, not too deep, but deep enuff so no can see da bottom. He watch you, looken ova da edge. He know you scared, he know you no like go, but what he do?"

I pushed my body off the rock and walked to the shore break, the tide meeting the tips of my toes.

"He tchrow you in, yeah? Push you or whatevas. An I membah dat feeling right fo you hit da watah, tinken how you like push dat fuckah in, but den what? It wash ova you, yo heart start fo pump, you start fo kick back up, surface, an den you see him laughen, an all you tink is, dat fuckah."

I looked down, feeling the hair on my neck rising, the water dark and cold.

"So what?" He said, studying my face.

I stepped forward, the water slipping above my ankles, the cold beginning to ease, "Yeah," I said.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a sandwich size Ziploc, a gray powder filling a quarter of the plastic.

I walked towards him and took it, moving it back and forth in my hand, my thumb shaking as I traced the outline of the bulge. "Ka'eo would've liked it this way, a night like this."

He watched me, looking at the bag then to my face. After a moment he moved towards the rocks and climbed, "Like me wait?" He said from the second step.

I shook my head.

Sky and Sea

He nodded, and I watched him as he made his way up and out of sight. I heard the truck door open, then close. A car passed, then nothing. I turned and walked into the water, the chill of evening settling into bumps along my legs. I held the baggie tight in my left hand, raising it above the water as small waves broke against my waist, and the boats around me rocked back and forth. When the water was chest high, I put the baggie in my mouth and continued forward, staring out at the horizon, at Mokoli'i and its peak descending into shadow. I could feel nothing below my feet, weightlessness, as I looked around the space between sky and sea. I listened to the sound of my breathing, the thrush as I waded, and when I was sure I was far enough out, I dove.

Toby Idian



E.D.I.T.S.

Mimi Herman

The Storm

The storm raged without thunder
Like a debarked dog
Chasing out the usual
Bay Area fog.

Pelleted with stinging rain,
Every roof rang back,
Vicious precipitation
And counterattack.

The winds battered the windows.
Glass rattled in frames.
Water welled up in the streets.
We forgot our names.

Mimi Herman

Things Undone Around the House

The bushes need trimming.
They've needed trimming these past two years.
Dust bunnies hang out beneath my sofa,
Where they play endless poker games
For the change they find under the cushions.

The porch hasn't been swept
Since the willow oak pollinated.
No, let's be honest--
Since last fall when the oak lost its leaves.

The bathtub is as yellow as a bad tooth,
And I can't remember the last time
I brushed my hair
Or looked in the mirror
With anything resembling kindness.

Urban Ecology

Paul Sacksteder

The buildings overwhelm the city. Pushing up hastily from the ground. There is an intoxication for renovation. And the history of small things piles up. Always teetering in the background. Across alleys and boulevards. Through small windows with blinds half pulled.

Eventually. Concerned that the city would run out of room. They built up. People would live on top of each other. But away from each other. And the news would also filter upwards. In emergencies those at the top would exit last.

The heat of the desert creates a terrible space. From which the buildings arise. This necessary evolution. Creates an isolated perch. For the birds.

The Smaller Components of Driving

Paul Sacksteder

He almost ran me down.

This big truck bullying me on the highway. My wife always references small pricks. I just want to talk. I'm not sure who's more foolish.

I worry that we're all ruined.

Relationships built by hundreds of thousands of other smaller objects.

The metallic whirl of the brakes reminds me of sea. But always only momentarily. And only in its constancy. In and out of focus: this must leave me uncertain.

We are not

separate

from our

ecology. We are not always moving.

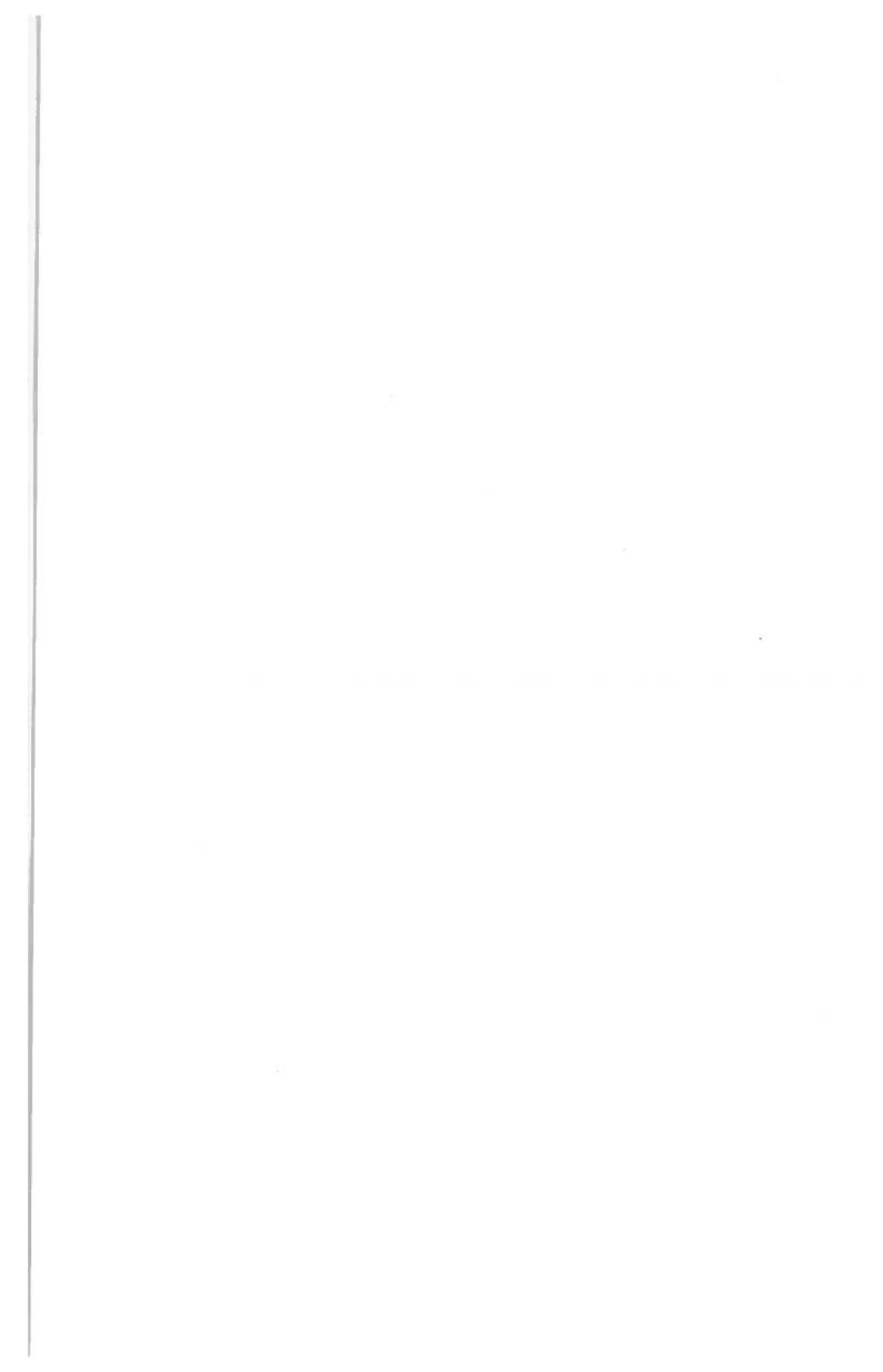
Kendall Turner

Fish

We all want to hook the big ones: fish caught from rough waves,
twenty pounds of fins beating back against our transparent lines.
We want to go home and tell the same tales: how we nearly
lost our lives catching dinner, how a monster lives beneath
the ocean's surface, how very dangerous the world is.
No one believes us, but we never told the stories to be honest.
The time you were reeling in a trout, a bucket of worms
wincing at your feet, the silver fish flew up out of water
and smacked you in the face, flapping full-body against your lips,
leaving the hook you tired to feed it lodged inside your cheek.
Look, you said, look what the bastard fish did to me.
I pulled it out slowly, the tip catching on your skin,
leaving behind a doubled-pointed wound, a tail and a head,
as if you'd been kissed by some too affectionate beast.

Parts of Speech

Adjectives are excited. That's their job. Sometimes they are also sad or salacious or, if they're feeling particularly saucy, supralapsarian. The verbs think that they're doing all the work while the nouns – people, places, things idea – get all the credit. Despite all their outward acts of sharing – infinitives, gerunds, participles – verbs don't play well with others. Adverbs, on the other hand, are all middle-school girls – they can't even go to the bathroom alone – and conjunctions are worse. Crippled, they can barely walk unless anchored to content on both sides. Pronouns are slightly better, but still can only go so long without having to phone home. Prepositions, too, are always about something else – complementing, modifying. Everything's so goddamn dependent – except, perhaps, interjections, which couldn't care less, always yelling at nothing and no one in particular, separated by a dash or exclamation, trying to get your attention, usually failing.



Scott Akalis

The G.I. Kill

He shifted the rifle from his left arm back to his right, but both needed a break. After pausing and propping the gun against a boulder, he too leaned against its rocky face. His knees were sore, he was out of breath, and his view of the fog-veiled trail behind him wavered. But he knew they were still in pursuit.

The boulders, the gravel-like dirt, the scraggy brush and trees—they all had a leaden hue. He looked upward in an effort to gather his bearings. No sun to track the time. No stars to serve as compass. There was no sun nor stars nor moon. The sky had covered itself in a warm cumulus blanket, an afghan with lighter square patches where the cloud cover was thicker. In all its coziness, the sky had overslept.

The brisk air caught up with him. He covered his neck, picked up his rifle, and began moving again. His boots threw back the chalky ground as he followed the trail around the edge of a small but jagged mountain. Only after reaching the other side did he finally see the glow of dawn behind distant clouds.

He thought about his family as he surveyed the remote horizon. He imagined he could see all the way home, to where they waited and prayed for his safe return. He missed how his two sons climbed onto his legs

G.I. Kill

whenever he entered the room, and he wondered whether they would be too big to do so by the time he saw them next. He had not held his wife for a year. When he thought about her cooking, he remembered how long it had been since he'd last eaten.

As expected, he saw nothing edible on the landscape below. He knew better than to bother looking for water in this arid region. Sleep, however, he saw everywhere: underneath that cliff, behind that large bush, and against the trunk of that lone tree loitering beside the trail. Yet he knew if he were to stop, gunfire would be his alarm clock.

The breaking daylight allowed him to quicken his pace as it illuminated the trail. He had just begun to jog when a glance backward caused him to stub his toe and trip. He quickly dusted himself off and looked for the rock or root that had sent him flying. Instead, he spotted what looked like the headlights and grill of a small toy truck peeking out from the fine gravel. He froze in disbelief. He might as well have found a mango in the arctic, so foreign was play to this environment.

He poked around the toy truck with the butt of his rifle until it was nearly unearthed. He grinned and picked it up. Unrelenting winds had rounded its boxy profile and stripped its paint down to the metal, giving it a futuristic appearance. He thought about reburying it like a booby trap, bound to trip his pursuers as it had him. However, the tin gem was too rare of a find to give up; he slipped it into his pocket and resumed his jog.

An hour later, he saw the dust-encased roof of a small shack beneath the still overcast but now fully-lit sky. A look back reassured him that there was time to duck inside. He prayed for a jar of food or a bottle of water, but the little hut offered him no such hospitality. Its owners must have abandoned it weeks before. There was one double bed with a tattered blanket hanging from the side. The shelves on the walls were barren with the exception of an empty can and a cardboard box full of yarn. In the corner of the floor, he saw a grimy pair of children's shoes with holes in the front for the toes to grow. The shoes had been baby blue but were now faded pewter. He wondered whether the family had left permanently, or if they had gone to live with urban relatives until the

Scott Akalis

war was over. Assuming the latter, he reached into his pocket and pulled out the toy truck. He tucked it into the mouth of one of the shoes, headlights-up, as if it were driving out of a tunnel.

He stepped out of the shack and gazed back up the trail: still no one. He continued on, wiping his brow as the day warmed. The mountain range in the north gave him an idea where he was. If he kept up this pace, he might be safe by nightfall. He pictured his family waiting at home, far away. He looked forward to reuniting with them during long-deferred sleep. He made the mistake of thinking about the meal his wife might make for him in that dream, rekindling his thirst and hunger.

Just as he slowed to relieve his knees, he heard gunshots echo against the mountains. He instantly crouched and spun to see five enemy combatants charging down the trail. He had two options: hide, or outrun them. He knew better than to hide; leaving the trail would mean getting lost or spraining an ankle, either of which would lead to death from dehydration. He had to run along the trail. Fast. His rifle hindered him like a lead baton, and he could not win a five-on-one gunfight. He went against every soldier's instinct and cast the gun away, wondering as he did so whether he was delirious from the lack of sleep, food, and water.

Running unarmed in front of five men with automatic weapons was terrifying, but it hastened his strides. By the afternoon, he had widened his lead to almost two clicks.

He was confirming his bearings against the mountains when something startled him. He reached for his phantom rifle. There had been movement ahead, to the right of the trail. He had not expected to encounter the enemy in front of him.

He picked up a rock and slowly stepped forward to adjust his angle. When he identified his foe—a hoary rabbit hopping for cover behind a crowd of boulders—he released the rock and put his hand to his heart. He exhaled and gave his first hearty laugh in days. Apparently the ashy sky had fooled it for nighttime. As a country boy, he had always shared a bond with animals, and at that moment, he could not help but feel a connection with the hare.

He turned to make sure his pursuers were still far behind. They had

G.I. Kill

gained. He could hear them shouting nonsense as they saw him turned toward them. One fired a shot. Like a starting pistol, it set him off at a sprint. By his estimate, he only had to elude them for another hour.

A half hour passed before he heard machine gun fire at a volume that pierced his heart. They were definitely within range. He struggled to speed over the rocky hurdles on the path but he could only go so fast. He felt a bullet spike his left calf and he fell forward, crashing against a gravel embankment. He was so close to safety that he could practically crawl there, and that was exactly what he tried. He reached forward with one elbow and then the other, pushing off with his right leg.

He heard more angry, indecipherable shouting. With eyes closed, he prayed for strength—maybe this was the moment when his lifetime of devotion to God, country, and family would be rewarded. He gave his prayer a few seconds to work and then planted both palms onto the jagged ground; he dug in his right foot and triumphantly stood up. Adrenaline numbed his left leg. He lumbered forward.

Two more shots thundered from behind. The first ruptured a rock ahead of him; the second ripped through his back with tremendous force. He collapsed again. The relief of sustained rest overwhelmed the unsettling sensation of blood gushing in places it did not belong. With the remainder of his energy, he rolled himself over so he could die looking at the sky instead of biting dust.

Like any man, the only world he had known was the one he had experienced through his own eyes. As he lay supine, his eyes preparing to close, he expected to see something special – a suitable scene to accompany the end of the world. He anticipated an azure break in the clouds and golden ramps leading up to the sun. But there were only increasingly fuzzy, gray clouds above him; dull, slate rocks scattered around him; and a flattened lead bullet lodged within his lungs. Carmine blood soaked his clothes as the world went black.

A minute later his assailants came upon the lifeless body.

The one in front called back, “He’s dead.”

He knelt down to the corpse, dusted off the face, and nudged the bottom of the turban off the forehead to be certain who it was. He

Scott Akalis

stood up and walked back to the others with a satisfied grin.

“It’s him all right. That bomb-planting bastard who shot Redd. It’s fucking Ghazwan Iqbal. We finally got him.”

Toby Idian



BY TOBY
IDIAN
6/3/06

Hollow

The Geometry of Love

There were Tony and the rock doves.
White set against white.
A war waged by birds of peace and a house cat.
I must have been near a nest, as close
as the birds would allow.
A cat and two birds, and I
on a stone white path crossing damp lawn.
Morning. Dew still spilling off green blades.
The birds attacked.
I don't think they would have stopped,
barring the perpendicular flight of a cat
bent on preventing their success. He flew
like a helicopter flies, legs as straight
as I had ever seen them or thought they could be,
teeth bared at the doves,
white teeth chattering like ice cubes in a glass.
Tony could have been a dance partner,
keeping his distance, head at my shoulders.

Claire Gearen

Waimea Rock

On the low side of Waimea rock.
caught in the photograph mid-air, mid-leap,
right arm splayed as the blade of a Kahuku windmill,
expertly. Forty feet above the water,

an army of Schofield soldiers stand behind,
at attention as a girl steps into position. First
to jump, feeling no fear. They'd have to follow.
What man who didn't could live it down?

At Spitting Caves the one who died.
No soldiers, just boys and water-
men not brave enough yet to move
on from this rite. That boy slipped,
lost hold of ash cliff.

The leap I took I offer to girls and women.
I offer moments engendered in split rock.
An offering, not to Sky, but to Earth,
a wood bowl and wood spoon upturned
like my left hand cupped in converse.

Claire Gearen

Pepe'opae Bog, Moloka'i

I.

We left the jeep behind and walked forward,
cloud clinging to our soiled cotton clothes.
It was my first time. Now outside the Ford,
I could sense the aura of the place. Our feet clopped
on the wood boards nailed together
to help the travelers like us place one foot
in front of the other. There were few sounds, yet
my ears caught the faint crunch of something in soft
earth. The miniature trees in the odd light
shone, leaves of 'ōhi'a lehua pulling
against acidic soil, height kept to three feet.
Still they towered. I leaned toward them.
The red blossoms looked like
capillaries in the white air of the hike.

II.

That time we slept on soft mountain grass,
feet just a foot from the edge of the cliff,
heads turned away from one another's.
The fog let us think we were really safe
though we lay four thousand feet above
the ground below us. We slept for hours.
When we woke the fog had lifted, a cove
visible beneath. We could have covered
but we did not. There was something in
the air of comfort, some presence watching.
The breaths we took in this place sung
and the steps we took back then--switching
across the bog, sinking down and rising
up--each movement was the beat of a wing.

Hot August Night

against the wall. Once satisfied, the goons led them to the bar in the basement down a rickety staircase, so old and splintered it was a wonder no one ever fell through.

Hugh Adams, the proprietor, agreed to give us the gig if I bussed tables between sets. The pay was shameful: two bits per player, per hour, plus meals and drinks. It wasn't until later that we realized the meals consisted mostly of greasy chicken bones with a little bit of meat stuck to them and the drinks were whatever leftover hooch we could pilfer from the half empty glasses I collected.

"I ain't no busboy," I grumbled the first night I tied the white apron around my skinny waist.

I played drums for the band. Sass Morrison played clarinet and his brother Child Morrison blew the best trombone I have ever heard; with Pa on trumpet and me, Jude Moss, on the skins, we were the Morrison-Moss Quartet because we couldn't think of anything more clever to call ourselves. Pa was the star of the show, improvising solos on that horn of his until I just gave up and leaned on my sticks. I haven't heard anything like it since, and if you haven't heard Pa play, you haven't heard Jazz.

The crowd went wild for us after the initial shock wore off. By the end of the first set they were whistling and shouting for more. We would have given it to them too, but I had tables to bus and Pa needed a rest. His health wasn't as good as it was before Ma died. It was as though he carried his grief with him like a bible tucked in a preacher's pocket and it showed in his health. He'd always been a big man. Everything about him was round, from his onyx eyes to his handsome face to his prominent belly.

"But that just makes me more cuddly for the ladies," he laughed with a wink. But it sure made it hard for him to play some nights.

He couldn't take the heat in the bar; sweat poured off him like water sluicing over stones in a brook. There were some nights I swear I felt drops of artificial rain plop down on me from the ceiling. The smell of bootleg beer and sweat permeated every crevice of the joint. Cigarette smoke hovered over the heads of the audience, so thick some nights I couldn't even see their faces.

Caroline Misner

Pa met Miss Charlene on a Wednesday night in June. The effort of blowing his horn drained him more than usual. After I tied on my apron, I led him from the stage and set him on an empty stool at the end of the bar where no one would bother him. Fat globules of sweat rolled down his face and glistened like jewels.

"Here you go, Pa," I said as I signaled the bartender to bring him a glass of water. "You just sit here and rest awhile while I get these tables cleared."

"I'm fine, son." Pa smiled at me and mopped his balding pate with the handkerchief Ma had sewn for him before she died.

Child and Sass had already left for the kitchen where they awaited their booty of half filled glasses. Pa gulped back his water, but was reluctant to ask the bartender for another. He'd been giving us that look out of the corner of his eye all night, even when Pa set upon his solo. It was the look that reminded us of our place in the establishment, and we had better not forget it.

Miss Charlene was sitting alone at a table in front of the stage. Pa noticed her right away. She certainly stood out in the crowd, dressed as she was in a short feathered gown, the subtlest shade of pink, with little sequins that glittered in the candlelight on the table. Blond curls bobbed from under the brim of her cloche hat with a big pink flower on the side. She was the only person in the room who was crying.

Pa knew a black man like himself had to be very careful when approaching an unescorted white lady, but something in his heart compelled him to go. He ambled to her table as she dabbed her eyes with the corner of a soaked handkerchief the same shade of pink as her dress. She sniffed and looked up at him. Tears pooled around the most luminous blue eyes he had ever seen and smudged the makeup on her lashes. Powder dusted a bruise on her left temple.

"There, there," Pa cooed, "a pretty lady like you shouldn't be crying." He waved his arm toward the crowd. "Not when there's a party going on."

"I'm all right," Miss Charlene replied just as her face bunched up into another sob.

Hot August Night

“My dear, you don’t look all right,” Pa said. “What could be so wrong as to make you so sad?”

Miss Charlene opened the small pink clutch purse in her lap with little sequins along the enclosure. She rummaged through its contents and another tear, grey from the botched makeup, dropped inside it.

“I don’t have another hanky,” she whimpered.

“Here, Miss, take mine.” Pa pulled a white handkerchief from his pocket, clean and freshly pressed with the initials WM puckering one corner.

“Thank you.” Miss Charlene pressed it to her eyes and it came away smudged with blue and black.

“Now what is it I can do to make you smile?” Pa asked. When he smiled, his teeth, impossibly white and straight for a man his age, shone like rhinestones in the sultry smoky weather of the club.

“You already have.” Miss Charlene returned his smile, though hers was weak and forced. Another tear dribbled from the corner of her eye.

“Would a little music cheer you up?” Pa asked.

“It always does,” Miss Charlene replied. “I go on in fifteen minutes, right after the band. I hope I can get myself together by then.”

“You must be the new girl singer Adams hired,” Pa said.

“Not exactly hired.” Miss Charlene pushed the opposite chair with the toe of her high heeled shoe. “Have a seat.”

Pa removed his hat and pressed it to his heart.

“I appreciate the offer,” he replied, “but I don’t think it would be exactly proper.”

“To hell with that!” Miss Charlene snapped and fished a cigarette from her purse.

Pa glanced around the room. No one was paying them any mind. People clustered in small groups, laughing and drinking, or sat at tables slurping their gin while I threaded between them and gathered their smudged glasses. The bartender was busy pouring drinks from an unlabeled green bottle.

“Ted! Get me a light!” Miss Charlene called, “And something to wet my whistle.”

Caroline Misner

The look in the bartender's eyes removed any doubt about Pa's next move. He bowed politely as Ted placed a glass of clear gin beside the candle on Charlene's table.

"Much obliged for the hospitality, Miss Charlene," he said, "but I best be getting ready for our next set."

Pa played that trumpet like the gates of heaven were swinging open just for him. In no time at all we had the whole drunken congregation out of their seats and stomping their feet. Even Ted bobbed his head in time to my drums. When we dove into our rendition of *Better Than That*, Pa broke away into another one of his solos. By then Miss Charlene was laughing and clapping along with the rest of them. The gin must have been getting to her. The sequins in her hat flashed like stars on a hot summer night when she cupped her fingers over her lips and blew a kiss clear across the stage. We all knew it was intended for Pa. His eyes rolled in their sockets like oiled marbles as he tried not to smile around his mouthpiece.

By the time we stepped from the stage, the applause roared around us like a hurricane and threatened to lift that old warehouse clean off its foundation.

"Here's your hanky back." Miss Charlene pressed Pa's wrinkled handkerchief into his palm. "You look like you need it more than me."

"Much obliged, Miss Charlene."

Mr. Adams leapt on stage and tried to hush the crowd with a wave of his hands. They would have none of that.

"Bring back the fat nigger!" one inebriated patron hollered from the end of the bar.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Mr. Adams called, "the band will be taking a brief respite while the drummer busses your tables and refreshes your drinks."

I seethed at his mention of me as a busboy. I am a professional. Jazz burns through my veins the way cheap hooch burns down the throats of those rich white folks who came to hear us play. Incensed, I flung a glass to the floor under the guise of innocently dropping it.

"In the meantime," Adams continued, "allow me to introduce

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Miss Charlene Chambers who will entertain you with her silken voice, accompanied by Mr. Scotti Ross on the piano.”

Groans of disappointment echoed throughout the stuffy room. People turned their backs to the stage and their attentions back to the bar. Cigarettes were lit and glasses filled. Pa extended his hand to help Miss Charlene to the stage. Venom seeped from Mr. Adams’ little piggy eyes.

Barely a ripple of applause greeted her when she took her place by the piano where Scotti sat. He was a skinny little wisp of man, barely five feet tall, with pale red hair and even paler skin, so splotched with freckles he appeared all one color. We could have used him in our band; after all, no jazz band is complete without a pianist, but he staunchly refused, claiming he would rather hack off all his fingers than accompany a colored band. It didn’t matter anyway. Pa’s trumpet would have blown him off the stage.

Charlene waited for the crowd to settle. When it appeared they wouldn’t, she signaled Scotti and lapsed into a fairly passable rendition of *A Good Man is Hard to Find*. Mr. Adams leaned against the bar, his arms crossed over his chest, and eyed her like he was watching a circus poodle jump through hoops.

“I thought you said you could sing,” he scowled when she stepped off the stage to sporadic applause. A few patrons were settling their tabs while their dates gathered their purses and adjusted their hats.

“Please don’t be mad at me babycakes,” Charlene pouted, “I can sing! They just don’t want to listen.”

Mr. Adams grabbed my arm so hard I almost dropped the tray I was carrying.

“Get your boys back up there!” he hissed, “Before the whole place clears out!”

“But we still got another ten minutes for our break,” I said.

Child and Sass were already back on stage and lifting their instruments. Pa lumbered from his barstool where he sat sipping his water. His eyes had never left that stage while Miss Charlene was on it.

“There, there, Miss Charlene,” he said as he passed her, “I think you

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sing real pretty.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wetherby.” When Miss Charlene smiled she lit up his heart.

“I don’t give a damn what this coon thinks,” Adams growled. “Just so long as he keeps them in here and keeps them drinking.”

I sat behind the drums and lifted my sticks. Miss Charlene stroked her hands up and down Adams’ arms, fluttering her eyelashes and pouting like a Kewpie doll, all the while begging him not to be angry with her. She stood on her toes and planted a kiss on his mouth. He scowled and shoved her hard enough to send her reeling into the bar. He jabbed his finger toward her table and she obediently sat.

Scotti scurried from the stage like a hare escaping a trap and we rolled into *Yes Sir, That’s my Baby* with Pa’s extra dash of spice thrown in. Several people changed their minds about leaving and took their seats again, deciding it would be worth it to stay for another drink or two.

We played that whole night without another break. Thankfully, it was a Wednesday and the place cleared out early, the patrons having jobs and responsibilities to tend to in the morning. When only a few drunkards remained lolling at the bar, we decided to call it a night. Miss Charlene spent the evening at her table, sipping drinks and flinching each time Adams walked by.

Pa was so exhausted he sank to the stage on his way down the steps and just sat there, his beefy legs dangling over the edge.

“Are you all right?” Miss Charlene asked.

“Fine,” Pa wheezed and mopped his brow with the handkerchief they had shared. “I’m just not as young as I used to be.”

He tugged at his tie until it hung like a noose around his neck.

“I wish I could have given you a break,” she said, “but I’m afraid I’m not very good.”

“Don’t say that, Miss Charlene,” he said. “You sing fine. You just need to put a little more zing in your act.”

“Is that all?” Miss Charlene laughed and swigged from the glass in her hand.

“I could teach you,” Pa offered. “It ain’t that hard.”

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"I'd like that. Thank you." Miss Charlene said. "Come by the club an hour early tomorrow. I'll be waiting in Hugh's office. I'll see if I can talk him into letting me go on first."

"Why would you want to do that?"

Miss Charlene rose and gathered her wrap and that little glittery purse.

"I don't know a lot about show biz," she said as she turned to leave, "but I know not to follow a better act."

*

True to his word, Pa had us load up Sass's old pickup truck with our equipment and drive out to the Adam's Apple an hour early the next day so he could show Miss Charlene his acumen of what real Jazz is all about. Scotti refused to participate, no matter how hard Charlene flirted with him. He glared at us with loathing seeping from his pale blue eyes, aghast that a pretty white girl would debase herself by performing with a colored band—and in public! Adams scowled at us through the little window in the door of his office. Charlene and Pa somehow managed to convince him that their performance would bring in a full house by the end of the week.

Miss Charlene's confidence fed upon itself like a steam engine gathering speed. Each night the crowds grew thicker until there was barely room to stand. The plaudits grew more raucous; a few catcalls and hisses still issued from some of the patrons, but they were quickly silenced whenever Charlene lapsed into *Body and Soul* sashaying her hips like they had come loose from her waist. I had never seen anything like it and neither had anyone else. She must have been the only white girl singer with a colored back up band in all of Detroit, if not the world.

By August, Pa devised a new act. Charlene leapt onto the table where she used to sit and danced on top of it, kicking up her legs until we could see her stockings rolled to the knees, and her skirt fly around her like an umbrella. She kicked over whatever happened to be on the table: glasses of hooch, ashtrays, even the little potted candles. Normally the patrons at that table would have protested bitterly. Instead, the lady who was sitting there, a horse faced redhead with big floppy bosoms, jumped on

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the neighboring table and joined Charlene in the dance. After a few more bars, she had every lady in the joint dancing on their tables while the poor waiter scurried about on his hands and knees and squelched the candles with a wet bar towel. We made a tremendous mess that night, but Adams didn't mind. For every drink that got spilt, another had to be bought and he made a hefty profit. We never saw a nickel of it, and I don't think Charlene did either. After that first night he had all the candles replaced with little tin pots of silk flowers because they wouldn't break when the dancing women kicked them over. It didn't matter to me either way; I still had to clean up the mess at the end of the night.

"Man, you must be either the bravest coons I've ever met or the dumbest," Scotti said at our last rehearsal. Miss Charlene and Pa were working on a new act where they would dance together around the stage. Pa was hoping to get the gentlemen up on their feet and working up a thirst.

They made quite a pair. Pa was so much larger than Charlene her waist disappeared in the cup of his hand when he placed his palm just above her hip. If they had been more proper, or at least more discrete in the company they were in, they would have paid more mind to what they were doing. In Charlene's defense, I must admit that given Pa's girth, it would have been impossible for a small woman like her not to touch his body with her own when they danced. But they could have at least tried. The instant their hands touched and their bellies pressed together, it was evident to all of us watching. A close friendship had bloomed between them over the summer, but Pa was no idiot. He knew his place at the club and in society; he maintained a respectable distance, though he never balked at the opportunity to hold Charlene's hand when she climbed onstage.

"So teach me to dance with you, Mr. Wetherby," Charlene said and gazed up into his eyes. At that moment she must have really believed that they were the only two people in the room.

Scottie leapt from his barstool and charged into Adams' office where the steady click-clack of the adding machine tallied up the previous evening's receipts. By the time Adams bolted up the stage steps Pa and

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Charlene were fox-trotting to Sass's clarinet and laughing like the world around them had disappeared.

"What the hell is going on here?" Adams demanded. He yanked Charlene off Pa so hard her blouse tore open at the collar and little opal buttons sprung into the air like hailstones. Charlene gasped and clutched her arms around her chest.

"We were just dancing..." she stammered.

"You little whore!" Adams bellowed and shoved her toward his office.

"Please, Honeycakes, I didn't mean nothing," Charlene pleaded as he hauled her into his office and slammed the door.

We saw Adams raise his fist behind the little window. It dropped like a rock and smacked into something soft. Miss Charlene cried harder than she had that first night Pa met her. Adams grunted with each blow; all the while she pleaded him to stop, calling him all sorts of sweet sounding names like Babycakes and Honeybuns.

We stood rigid in our places, our instruments still in our hands. We were embarrassed to be privy to what was going on and helpless to stop it. The look on Pa's face could have cracked stone. He stomped toward the edge of the stage, rolling his shirtsleeves to his elbows and loosening his tie.

"Don't Pa." I caught his arm before he could descend the stage. "It ain't worth it, what he would do to you."

"I've got to do something," Pa hissed, his eyes boring holes in the door.

"We all want to," I admitted, "but we can't. We'd be risking our own necks."

"He ain't no gentleman," Pa scowled.

"He never claimed to be," I said.

We expected Adams would order us to gather our instruments and get our black hides the hell out of his joint. Instead he reneged on his promise of free hooch and meals and worked us harder than ever. We had one fifteen minute break at midnight, which I spent gathering piles of dirty glasses and Pa spent wheezing at the bar. Miss Charlene never

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came back to the Adam's Apple and I never saw her again.

*

This is my daddy's vision of the truth and I believe him:

Business was slowing at the Adam's Apple since Charlene's abrupt departure and we found ourselves playing to a half empty house most nights. This worked out fine for Pa. It had been more than a week since he indulged in his early morning constitucionals by the river, a ritual he observed and enjoyed after a grueling night of blowing his horn. Since Adams worked us like mules, Pa had fewer opportunities to stroll the park as the bloated crimson sun valiantly struggled to rise above the churning waters and burn away the morning's dew. Another blistering August day awaited him and he looked forward to a cool bath before napping away the hottest part of the afternoon.

He spotted the three women sitting on a red plaid blanket on a grassy patch between the path and the river, indulging in a liquid picnic. Their laughter was high pitched and far too loud for such an early hour. When they spoke they all seemed to have something important to say, and chattered in unison so no one could be heard. Normally Pa would have passed them on had he not spotted that familiar pink hat hanging lopsided on her head.

"Miss Charlene!" he called just as she tipped the mouth of the flask to her lips. "Is that you sitting over there?"

The three women stopped tittering and their eyes rolled drunkenly toward the sound of his voice. Pa remembered one of them as the redhead who had danced with Charlene on the table.

"Mr. Wetherby!" Charlene swayed to her feet, disheveled and bleary eyed.

"We really missed you down at the club," Pa said. The other two women watched him warily.

"I don't need Hugh no more," Charlene declared, twirling around on her toes with the flask held over her head. Pa smelled the liquor on her even before she reeled across the grass toward him. It was evident she had been there all night with her friends, drinking herself delirious.

"You know this ain't the proper way for a lady like you to be

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behaving," Pa said and snatched the flask from her hand.

Miss Charlene reached for it back, but in her drunken state toppled over into Pa's arms. Smiling, she clasped her arms around his neck and swayed like a leaf on a tree.

"Oh Mr. Wetherby!" she teased and the ladies behind her alternately gasped and giggled. "You'll be my new sugar daddy, won't you?"

"Miss Charlene!" Pa gasped and pried her hands from him. "Don't you go talking like that!"

"Give him a kiss!" the redhead called and her companion fell over laughing.

"Now this ain't right!" Flustered, Pa wriggled from Charlene's grasp. "You ladies better get yourselves home and in bed before someone gets hurt."

He tossed the flask on the blanket; the three women pounced on it like three hounds after a bone. The redhead glared at Pa for having the audacity to address them in such a manner. He turned and continued along the path toward home, their laughter and chatter jangling in his ears.

Miss Charlene's two companions would later swear that they had seen her leave on Pa's arm. But the truth is he left alone and no one ever saw her again. He should have taken her home and cleaned her up and put her to bed, but the rules of propriety at that time forbade it. It was a decision that harrowed him the rest of his life. Later that same day, Miss Charlene's body was found in a ditch by the side of the road, the back of her skull smashed in by some blunt object.

*

In his grief Mr. Adams closed down the club and we were left without a job. He told his bouncers to let us in just long enough to collect our equipment and get the hell out. I thought he must be hiding something or perhaps blaming us somehow for Charlene's death. Perhaps it was a little of both.

Pa took the news especially hard. He wouldn't even get out of bed to play with me and Sass on the street corner for the pennies of passersby. It was the only gig we could get on such short notice. Child Morrison

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had disappeared and not even his brother could find him. Child had a tendency of hitting the junk pretty hard when things got tough. When he did make an appearance, he'd be glassy eyed and delirious, his arm all swelled up with little puckered punch marks. It would be days or even weeks before we cleaned him up enough to play.

We were a sorry duo on the street corner that day. I played my mouth organ to Sass's clarinet, nodding a thank you to every passerby who stopped to listen and plunk a nickel or two in the upturned hat at my feet. We barely collected a dollar between the two of us, not even enough for a meal and a few cold beers to wash away the summer heat. It was dark by the time we climbed aboard Sass's truck.

"Let's head on home," Sass said as the engine sparked to life. "I'm too beat down to go anywhere else tonight."

I nodded, knowing he was just as concerned for his brother as I was for Pa, who was alone, brooding and weeping, in the little tar paper shack we shared in a field outside of town.

A round buttery moon rose over an open field; the shadows of the trees mottled the road in ghostly light. We saw another set of shadows up ahead. At first we couldn't distinguish their faces. Their car was stopped and cocked sideways, blocking our passage. Mr. Adams stood waving his arms, flanked by Scotti and Maurice, one of his goons from the club. Sass inched the truck to a stop; I stuck my head out the window into the hot August night and opened my mouth to ask them if their car was broke or if they needed help changing a flat tire.

Maurice grabbed my arm and nearly yanked it from its socket before the door was fully opened. I stumbled into the grass as he bent his knee into my spine and fastened my hands at the small of my back. Sass made a thudding "oof!" sound when he hit the ground beside me. Gasping for breath, he staggered to his feet. His hands were bound behind his back like mine; Scotti rattled a chain like a string of bones and to my horror, Maurice had one too.

"Over there!" Adams pointed to a pair of oaks behind some brush where we couldn't be seen from the road. My heart thumped so hard I thought it would snap the chain that Maurice wound around my chest

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and legs. I was so scared my mouth went dry. Sass was bound to the other tree; his face was so wet and gleamed so brightly in the moonlight he appeared as white as the men before us. I thought of pleading for my life.

Scotti and Maurice stepped back to admire their handiwork; Adams stepped out between them. He looked Sass over, smiled and turned toward me. He stood so close I could smell the sweat in his hair and see the pocked fissures in his craggy complexion. A toothpick jutted from the corner of his mouth. It was all I could see. Fascinated, I watched that slender toothpick dance back and forth across his lips.

"Where is he?" His voice was so placid and soft he could have been addressing a sweetheart.

"Who?" I choked on the dust that filled my throat.

"Don't play games with us, coon," Maurice snarled and stepped toward me. In his hand swung the noose they had prepared for my daddy's neck.

"Ever been in love, coon?" Adams asked and the toothpick bobbed in his mouth. "Ever have the woman of your dreams, the light of your life, taken away?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," I stammered.

"Don't listen to him, Jude!" Sass screamed across the few feet that separated us. "He never loved Miss Charlene. We all saw the way he treated her."

"Shut him up!" Adams roared and Scotti gleefully thrust his fist into Sass's gut; the chain rattled across his shackled chest.

"I'm going to ask you one last time and I'm going to ask you nice," Adams snarled in my face. "Where's your daddy?"

"Don't tell him!" Sass wheezed and lifted his head. "We all know it was him who done it! Now he wants to go accusing poor Mr. Wetherby of something he didn't do."

"You've got a pretty smart mouth for a nigger." Adams didn't need to give instruction this time. Scotti smashed his fist across Sass's face. A fountain of blood spewed from his lips.

"So where is he?" Adams stepped closer. The toothpick pricked me

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in the chin.

"I don't know," I said and silently prayed for Pa to be as far away as possible.

"You're hiding him, aren't you?" Adams accused. "We've been to your house. He's not there. He wouldn't leave town without you and he's not smart enough to hide himself."

"He don't need to hide from nothing!" I couldn't believe Sass's audacity. Wasn't he aware of the danger we were in?

"I ain't seen him all day," I blurted.

"I think the coon's telling the truth," Maurice said, squinting at me. "Look at him. His eyes are so big and bug-eyed they could be headlights."

"You better be telling the truth," Adams said and the toothpick snapped in his teeth. "'cause if you're not we could get another rope for your sorry neck, too."

"Let us go!" I pleaded. "We ain't done nothing to you gentlemen."

"Coon's right," Maurice said. "It's Wetherby we want. We could let this one go."

"And what about the one with the smart mouth?" Scotti cocked his head toward Sass who spat a foamy, bloody wad into his face. Scotti snickered and wiped it away with his sleeve.

"He needs to be taught a lesson," Adams stalked toward him, "on how to have proper manners when addressing white folk."

"Screw you!" Sass was so scared his voice was edged with tears. The trio of captors laughed at him.

The chain that bound me to the oak loosened and clanged to the gnarled roots at the base of the tree. I could finally breathe again.

"Go!" Adams ordered, "Before I change my mind."

I stumbled and groped through the brush toward the road where Sass's truck still hummed and idled in the sultry night.

"What about me?" Sass screamed.

I didn't have the mettle to turn and see what they were doing to him. Laughter hung in the thick air like wet laundry and Sass screamed again. I stumbled into the truck and groped for the gearshift. Sass's voice gonged

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in my ears; I was amazed I could hear him over the roar of my heart.

“Jude! Don’t leave me! Help me, Jude! Don’t go! Help me!”

It was the last thing poor Sass Morrison ever said to me or anyone else. My heart ached for him. Oh, Sass, I’m so sorry for leaving you there like that, tied to a tree and at their mercy. Not that trash like them had a speck of mercy anywhere in their pitiless souls. I’m sorry, Sass. So very very sorry.

I turned the truck around and lurched over the rutted road, back the way we had come. I dared not turn on the headlights. I’m no fool. I knew the only reason they let me go was for bait to find Pa once they finished having their fun with Sass. I kept glancing in the rearview mirror, expecting a posse of white folk in pursuit, waving pitchforks and torches.

Thankfully, the road behind me remained deserted, allowing me time to think. I had to find Pa and get the hell out of Detroit. Even if it was proved that Pa never so much as touched Miss Charlene, the white folk in town would make our wretched lives even more miserable before driving us both into early graves. I knew he wouldn’t be at home. It wouldn’t have surprised me if Adams and his goons had set our tar paper shack afire trying to smoke Pa out. I headed back toward the river, hoping Pa was somewhere nearby.

Music drifted through the darkness and drew me to the cemetery. It was Pa’s unmistakable trumpet, playing slow and sweet and so full of soul it could have lifted the dead from their graves. He stood over Miss Charlene’s grave, the moonlight casting silver speckles in the brass of his horn. Tears shimmered on his cheeks and plopped on the fresh mound of dirt that covered her grave.

“Pa!” I hissed, trying to keep my voice low out of respect for the departed that surrounded us. “What are you doing here? We’ve got to go!”

Pa pulled the horn from his mouth and looked at me, his eyes as round and full as the moon above us.

“Judy!” he said and I cringed. I always loathed it when he called me that. Judy is a girl’s name.

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"I've come to get you, Pa," I said and grabbed his arm to guide him to the truck, but it was like trying to pull one of the oaks out by the roots.

"But I haven't finished playing for Miss Charlene," Pa said.

"No time," I replied. "You can play it later. Wherever she is, I'm sure she can hear you. Right now we have to leave."

"Why?"

"Can't explain right now." He finally allowed me to guide him to the truck. "But our lives are in danger. We have to leave Detroit."

"Is it because of that bastard, Adams?" Pa scowled as he climbed aboard.

"Yes, Pa," I replied, "it is."

I found Bootlegger's Bridge behind a copse of pines. It was a makeshift suspension bridge tethering the banks of the Detroit River with a thick cord that could be easily cut if the bootleggers suspected the law on the tails. It had been used for years by rumrunners who smuggled their contraband across the river from Canada. Adams' supplies came across that very bridge twice a week.

I contemplated abandoning the truck and walking across. The half rotted ropes and splintery wooden slats couldn't possibly support the weight of the truck. Then Pa reminded me of all the times the bootleggers crossed it, weighed down with clanking bottles of hooch. I put the truck into gear and we crossed.

I don't know how we made it. All I remember about crossing the bridge was looking down into the churning muddy waters below, moonlight dancing off the little ripples like the sequins in Miss Charlene's dress. The bridge swayed and I felt like some night bird, an owl perhaps, gliding through the hot summer air.

It was dawn when I parked the truck in a field of tall grass burnished to bronze by the heat. A plump garnet sun rose lazily over the horizon as though it had all the time in the world to shine. Pa had fallen asleep once we'd crossed the border. He snored loudly and his round brown head lolled against the back of his seat. The truck's abrupt stop awakened him and he ran his tongue across his heavy lips, blinking awake.

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“Did we make it?” he asked and squinted across the flowing grass where tiny insects darted across the tips.

“Yes, Pa. We made it,” I replied and leaned my forehead into the steering wheel. I’d never been so exhausted in all my life.

Pa climbed down from the truck, his trumpet in hand. I didn’t have the energy to stop him. I peered through the smudged windshield and watched. He stood waist deep in the dewy grass. He raised his trumpet to his lips and played Miss Charlene’s eulogy to the rising sun.

William Virgil Davis

A Morning Like This

To come out, a morning like this,
and see the sun slip over the hills,
making trees grow in only an instant;
to find spider webs fitted softly
against your face, like your broken
breath, and the path you have taken
for years, a path your own feet made
— is to be at home in the world.

William Virgil Davis

Thought

It wasn't the kind of thing
you thought you thought
about, but when you thought
about it, you were surprised
to discover it wasn't quite
as strange as you'd thought
you would have thought.

Underestimating Dirty Berber

Tonight, spot-lit by the blue pendant we bought at Lowe's
I sit at the Boos butcher block: our \$1000 counter top,
my bare toes caress the cool Koa Pergo we picked because it went with our furniture.
I think about the time when dirty Berber and the wall we'd saw down
seemed simple.

The light is warm (he insisted on halogen),
and I admire my hands above the honey-hued wood.
Try ignore the two stapled-on screens where my special order cross-hatched window
should be.

Try not to think about the weeks of paint on my hands, in my hair,
sawdust and sweat in my eyes, in my nostrils, covering my chest:
like being buried in powdered sand.

The arguments about subway tile and slate tile, quarter round and crown molding.
The moving, the staying while he took a three-week-trip-awaying fights.

The days I wept for that window.
How I cried when he left
and how happy I was.

Christina Low

Winter Storm

Tonight rain blankets Pacific Heights Valley.
Dense mist fills the spaces between droplets. Falling straight down.
I have woken to constant flickering and thunder,
dreamt of a jagged rock near a lighthouse. A small boat,
like a bouncing flashlight, fumbled its way to shore.

I rise, feet groping for my furry slippers.
Find you under the awning smoking a cigar.
Irreverent you sit completely dry.
Recall Minneapolis for me; the lost instructional video you are in
that shows What Not To Do In The Event of a Thunderstorm.

How your dimples flashed for the camera,
as they filmed you gliding atop the almost-frozen lake;
your windsurfing board, like a superhero's flying disc.
Shards of light blazed behind you,
and the roar of thunder drowned your shouting.

You put your hand on the small of my back,
and I smell the sweet cigar smoke on your exhale.
The 1:00 a.m. orange sky lights white suddenly,
and I shudder. Shoulder closer.
Your arms wrap me in. You kiss my ear.

You ask me to stay with you,
and though I came to bring you to bed,
our heads lean in, as we stare into the storm.
For long moments we stay like that,
content inside our silence.

Pandora's Brain

A feather brushes beneath my skin, tingles behind both ears,
moves across the base bulb of my skull.

It's been fifteen years since I chose to forget.

Memory comes again—a shipwrecked, forgotten thing
finally bobbing and gurgling across my brow.

What else will come aside from
un-listed errands, meetings sans alarms, tag-less names?
Will the ghost of Zebedee return, too?

The sense of ripping in half, in fourths, in eighths and six-
teenths?

Of dropping like concrete confetti?

Will it also melt away—the killing him inside my mind?

The crown of my head, my brow, my jaw suddenly free.

Shackles snap open—a cracked egg, irreparable.

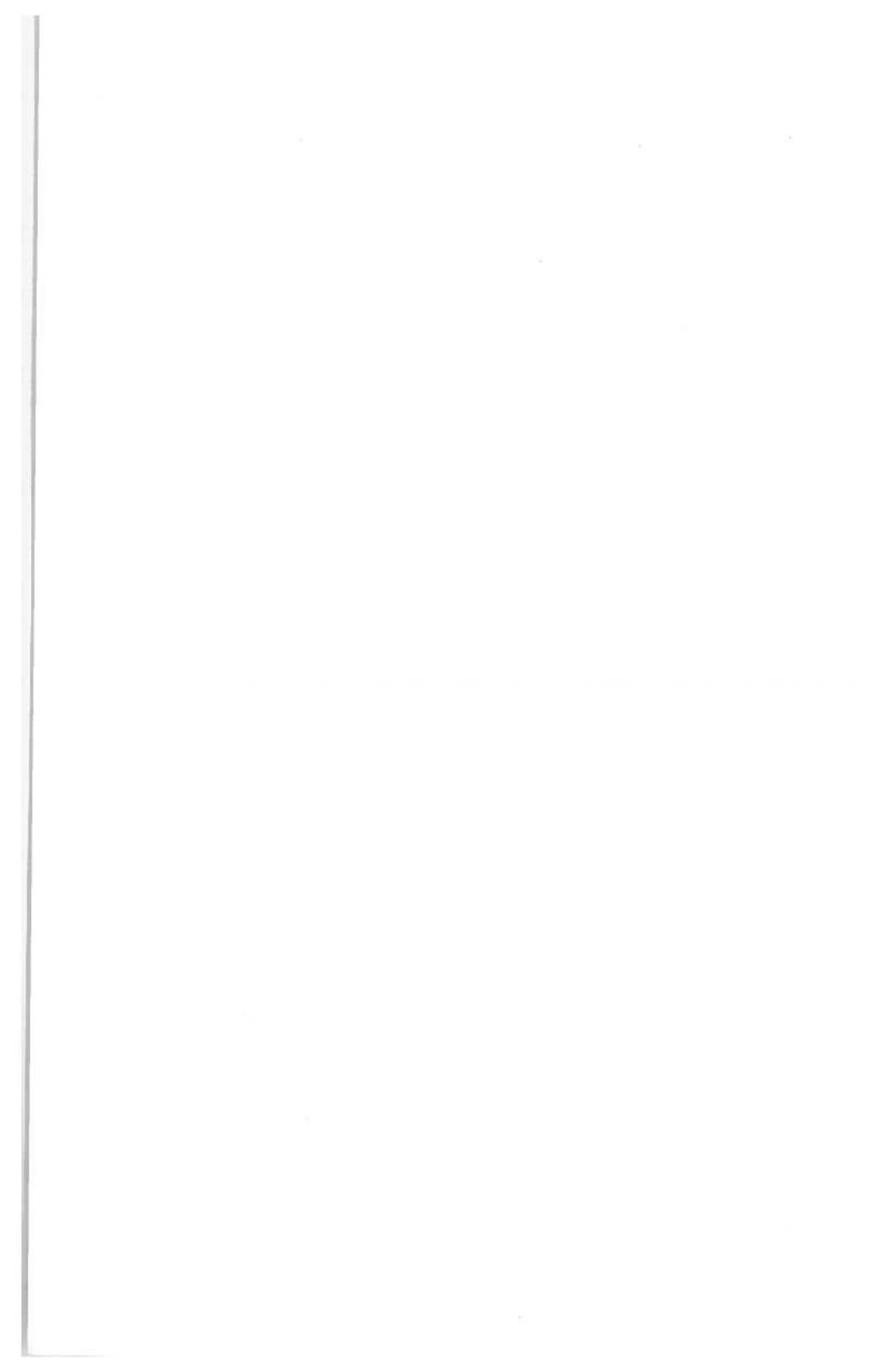
Memories seeping out in a slow trickle...a few faces, some
poems.

It's a dangerous thing, really.

What if they eat me alive, acidify everything else?

Too late now.

The darkness of forgetting is insidious. I think I prefer the light.



Baby

The afternoon sun cuts through the kitchen windows and lights the dust particles in the air. The room glows. A vibrant hum, I think. I screech open the screen door, step out of my sandals, toe across cool orange tiles.

My grocery bags are heavy with fruit and veggies, a few choice hunks of meat, and the chicken eggs that Devrani's sought out and that I couldn't resist purchasing, though we rarely eat the things. Vijay could make a curry with them, but I'll probably end up scrambling them for breakfast. I'll want them eaten up and done with; he'll take too long to get out the musty spices that prick at our noses.

With each day, Devrani's imagination grows more fertile. In response, Vijay has taken to furrowing his brow at me over breakfast, perpetually reminding me that "we need to make her more of this world so she can operate better within it." He wants her to make more friends; is concerned with how the blond-haired girls in her class tease her and say she's weird. "They call it mud food," Devrani says, pointing at her lunch, which she's been too embarrassed to eat, again. I picture those girls scowling at my daughter, scrunching up their noses, and my heart sinks. Vijay stands at the sink in his custom-tailored business suits; waits for me to do something.

Baby

Still, she seems determined to flourish. When Vijay finds her outside in the night, lying on her back and drawing with a flashlight beam to connect the stars, or singing a hapless tune to herself, or laughing at what she's just thought up but is too shy to share, it seems that I'm the one who feels the pain at Vijay's constant pruning. I'm the one who jumps out of bed to get to her first when we wake to her murmurings in the night. I'll join her on our damp lawn, enjoy the cool wetness seeping through to my back, listen to her pluck the thin strings of her voice when she sings along with the radio. I know that I am witnessing a fragile thing that needs help to grow.

Devrani's schoolbook is on the kitchen table, her crayons and markers strewn here and there. I lean across the slick wood to see what she must have just deserted: she's been tracing letters. Her practice pencil, as thick as a sausage and as long as a sheet of paper, is beside half a W that she has evidently abandoned, mid-U. Just a few days before, she asked, "Mommy, why do they call them double-Us, when my teacher draws them as double-Vs?"

I drop the bags carefully on the floor beside me and massage the dark red grooves carved into my lightly freckled shoulders. I shrug and stretch my tired arms up over my head.

"Hello? Is anyone there?" I call out to the quiet house.

"Mommy! Mommy, you're home!" Devrani rounds the island in the kitchen and clamps onto my jeans. "You took so long this time at the farmer's market! And Baba is upstairs watching one of his *games*." She pouts in her blue plaid pinafore, her fists on her hips. "Did you get them? Did you get the eggs for me?"

I smile down at her and cup her face in my hands. Her father's coloring; my cheekbones. How long will she be so small? So happy to see me, still, every time I come home? "Help me with this, Rani," I say, unpacking the bags, one by one. Into her arms, I pile three purple eggplants, plump and smooth, and watch her carry them to the fridge, reminding me of how she'd once carried kindling to a campfire. We should go to the mountains this weekend, I remind myself. Before the weather turns completely, and summer is lost forever.

Anjoli Roy

At the fridge, she slides open the veggie drawer, just her height. She's getting taller; I feel a distinct loss in each inch she gains. She closes the refrigerator door. I watch how her knees, as round as apples, joint her stick legs.

I unload the fresh-baked bread on the counter and breathe in its oaty smell. At the fridge, I file the rest of the meat and fruit and veggies that we won't eat for dinner tonight. Finally, I dash the paper carton of eggs on a high shelf and close the refrigerator door.

She has, of course, seen me.

"I want to make a baby!" she squeals, starting up the conversation we cut short before I left for the market.

I watch how her thick brown curls hang heavily around her full auburn cheeks, downy and as soft as silk. I push back the blondish strands of my hair, permed and crunchy from hairspray, and lean down to see her better.

"I want to make a baby and I need *that!*" She points an accusatory finger past me to the now closed refrigerator door.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart, but you cannot make a baby from that." I use that too-small voice that all children know, and immediately distrust.

"But what do you mean, Mommy? Babies *come* from eggs—"

"Yes, baby *chickens*—"

"*Fine.*" She rolls her eyes. "Baby *chickens* come from eggs, and they have to be kept *warm* to hatch! I learned that at *school* I can keep the egg *warm* in my *room!*" She is impatient with my apparent stupidity.

"Not these eggs, my love." I crouch down, pulling her into the crook of my legs in a quick hug. "You and I, we've had this discussion before. Besides, you know how your father doesn't like to find food in your room," I say, arching my eyebrows. She smells of the damp earth that's smudged her tennis shoes.

She melts into me for a moment, too brief, and pushes away, then straightens the pleats in her uniform. She implores with her big ink eyes. "But *why*, Mommy? Why not *these* eggs?"

"These ones come from the mother only. The eggs that bring baby chicks come from the hen and the rooster too."

Baby

I do not expect her to understand.

My mind flashes to what I saw in biology class, so long ago. The maturing eggs of the dissected chicken curled inside its body. A graduated string of pearls. All along, each one had developed slowly inside the hen to be fertilized or passed, waiting to be borne.

With her hands probing my growing belly, my midwife had told me of something similar. She'd told me about how my little one was forming eggs of her own. "Already, your grandchildren are growing. Inside this little one who's forming in you." Like Russian nested dolls. She'd told me that one day, if my girl had children, I'd be reunited with the babies who had first formed in her, in me.

I remember wondering, like many mothers, what my child would look like. I secretly hoped that she would take after her father. Brown babies are more beautiful, I think again, looking down, now, at mine. I feel a sudden rush of joy whenever I really look at her, and wonder if Vijay ever allows himself this feeling, if he too is amazed at what we have created. He hadn't wanted to have children. Did I hurt her by bringing her into this world for only me?

Devrani pauses, silent for a moment in thought, then looks up at me, excited, the blackness of her pupils seeming to bleed into the whites of her eyes. She does not notice the tears in mine. "But, Mommy! I can be the rooster! The hen, she's already done her bit!" She jumps up and down, holding out her cupped hands, proud to trump me.

I smile at her, convinced, at least, that I will not dissuade her. I turn, open the refrigerator door, and select one brown egg from the cardboard box, and place its gritty fragileness into her eager palms. In an instant, she twists away and dashes to her room to find a hiding place.

On my fingers, I count the days to when I'll have to seek out this treasure from her room. It will be after her steady patience gives way to boredom and then forgetfulness, but it must be before the heavy odor gives away our secret.

The grass is greener

On the other side
I still find
myself forced
to say your name—
it fails to roll
off the tongue
like it did
before—before it
became a point,
a pointed reference
of the past,
a curse word,
a curse that brings
me to my knees—
to the green carpet—
to the green carpet—
I plea please
camouflage me,
let me vanish
in your grassy
greenness,
transform me
into a chameleon,
paint my skin
emerald and
please oh
please shade me
from these
four white walls

Ashley Vaughan

Charge

My battered soul
a battery
positive plus negative

My pulsating heart
a pulse
beating out
a force to be reckoned with

My electric hand
a shock
to your skin
reaching out
and pulling you in

Magnetic attraction
energies intersecting

Until you
until you
pushed me away
until you
put me in a tailspin

Or maybe
it was gravity

For we all are
orbiting centers
moving in circles
ellipses
spirals

Ashley Vaughan

Oxygen and carbon dioxide

Did you ever torch or torture a thing
just to watch it burn, wiggle, squirm

to witness it flicker,
to light it, and let it die before your eyes?

You know you did.
You fed my flame with lies and

sparked my soul to see it sparkle then sput-
ter.

A thoughtless butterfly child you flutter.

I am the firecracker you sent over the lake
to see explode, the one that mesmerized

you with its beauty, dropped your jaw.
I am the firefly, magnified, my burned out

brightness suffocated, swallowed
by a black sky, dark water, open mouth.

All that's left of me is air
and dissolved ashes.

Ashley Vaughan

I want to write a poem

I want to write a poem

I want to write a poem
chock full of irony
(to make you admire me)

I want to write a poem
about why I mutter and stutter and
always sometimes seem to sputter!

I want to write a poem
but here is my excuse:
there is no use.

I want to write a poem
to help you see the subtlety
stuffed inside of me.

(Because you don't seem
to understand who I am)
I want to write a poem.



Reaper

135

character
a spotlight on th
oid looking at :

n. Carr had lost four
his alma mater. The
e.

ds "Call NOW"—with the
let its advertisements line the
pages were given over entirely
advertisements whatsoever. Even
nd in the center of the first page
es—a junior partner at their firm,
alked past the open door to Carr's

"
and leaned in. "Benton."
e today?"
ng, pushing his rimless glasses back up his
on the train coming in."
d of an outfit called 'Gadfly'? Are they some
haven't heard of? Recruiters, maybe. Somebody

had pinched features. He was the firm's junior
a volume on New York tort law with one finger
ut a third of the way through.
t a name. Never heard of them, though. Hell, it sounds
s group to me. Did you read that article about Wasserman
Right out of high school."
arr said.
ertainly need him. I hear he's ten feet tall," Chet Deming

n, at least."
l for a Jewish boy. His hands are supposed to be twice the size
ine. He can grip a basketball like a softball."

Paul Cook

Deming held up his free hand, curled as if to hold a softball. He made a jump shot with the "softball," then walked off.

Benton Carr checked his watch, took another sip of coffee. Mr. Ebee had probably only begun his journey across town for the deposition. He would be on time. Ebee was nothing if not punctual, just like Carr's own accountant. They lived by the strict laws of mathematics.

Gadfly.

"What the hell," Carr said with a shrug. He picked up his phone and dialed the number in the framed box on the front of the sports page.

After two rings, a voice responded at the other end. "Good morning. Gadfly." The voice belonged to a male of indeterminate age; he sounded enthusiastic, but professional. "How may I help you?"

"Right," Carr said, lifting his coffee to his lips. "I'm just curious about your ad in this morning's paper. The sports page. Right in the middle of the Wasserman piece."

"Yes. We're here to help," the voice of Gadfly said.

Carr lowered his coffee cup, nearly sputtering. "I'm sorry? What did you say?"

"Yes, we're here to help."

Carr sat upright. He waved to a passing colleague, this time a senior partner, a woman who was his immediate superior at Caldwell, Stern, and Portnoff. He turned his concentration back to the voice at the other end of the phone. "I didn't catch that last bit. You said you're here to help?"

"Yes, we are. Can you please hold?"

The voice cut out almost immediately, replaced by classical music which was followed by a series of clicks mimicking the language of a faraway tribe.

Benton Carr looked at the phone as if it had become something strange, before putting it back to his ear.

The voice of Gadfly came back on the line. "Yes, that's right. We're here to help."

Carr found himself momentarily without words, unusual for an assistant litigator.

"You have an ad on the sports page," Carr said.

Gadfly

“Correct.”

A pause followed. The voice said nothing as if bouncing the conversational ball into Carr’s court.

“Well, what do you do? What are you? Are you some sort of sports recruiting agency?”

“Oh, no,” the voice said with a slight bit of humor. “We have nothing to do with any kind of sports.”

“But your ad’s in the sports section of this morning’s *New York Times*. It’s read by millions of people.”

“That’s the idea,” the voice of Gadfly said with some pride. There was no elucidation to that statement, however. The conversational ball had been bounced back once again onto Carr’s side of court.

Benton laughed, checked his watch. He didn’t have time for this. “Okay, pal. Have it your way.”

Carr hung up and flung the sports page into the trash beside his desk. “Moron,” he said.

*

Franklin Ebee came to the offices of Caldwell, Stern, and Portnoff at the appointed hour, as did the other clients involved in the case. Benton Carr guided everyone through the deposition, each taking his or her turn, each providing his or her expertise. Mrs. Clayton took notes in her efficient manner.

Mrs. Clayton’s latest hire was also there, a twenty-three-year-old graduate from NYU. Her first name was Roxanne but Carr hadn’t caught her last name. He had been alert enough to notice that Roxanne had her black hair cut in Betty Page bangs. Today she dressed in a pert, charcoal business suit and also wore French heels in a light cream color. He loved the strap around her ankle.

The deposition took a little less than an hour. In that time Carr had almost forgotten all about Gadfly. At the elevator with his team of junior accountants, Franklin Ebee turned to Carr.

“Thanks for coming, Franklin,” Carr said, shaking the man’s hand. “Be sure to send us a bill.”

“We’re here to help,” Ebee said.

Paul Cook

Carr blinked at the man's words. Ebee's team stood behind him, smiling pleasantly. It had the same intonation—professional, yet friendly—as the man who had answered at Gadfly.

Ebee leaned in confidentially. "And tell that pederast Fainborough to keep you out of jail. You hear what I'm talking about?" Ebee poked Carr in the chest with a bony finger and pretended to look stern. "The man's lucky not to be in prison himself, you know."

Carr managed a smile. "Oh, don't worry. It's all just a misunderstanding. Fainborough's got us an extension until July and he'll straighten everything out. Hell, Gingrich and Phil Gramm gutted the IRS back in the Nineties and the SEC, what do they know?" He managed a laugh that, even to him, sounded hollow.

"Unless you've got something offshore, then all bets are off. Even the Swiss are sweating this thing out," Ebee said.

"I'm not in for that much," Carr insisted. "Nothing I couldn't stand to lose."

"Listen, I don't even do my own taxes. You never can tell these days. Every Republican I know is running scared, at least those who have lobbyists in Washington," Franklin Ebee said with some seriousness. Ebee then changed his tone as the elevator arrived with a friendly chime. "And how is Roberta doing? Is she well?"

"Roberta? Yes. Yes, she is. Busy."

"Good. Glad to hear it. Give her my love."

The elevator doors parted and Franklin Ebee and his team of accountants disappeared inside.

*

Carr had some minor office work to do before lunch. At two p.m. he was to have one of two meetings with the senior partners about a construction-bid problem with Krakauer and Sons that was fast becoming a donnybrook brewing downtown and that Caldwell, Stern, and Portnoff had been sucked into through no fault of their own. If the gods were in a good mood, it could go well for them; if not, it could ruin them. He would hear all about it in the afternoon. Until then, he wouldn't worry.

Mrs. Clayton and Roxanne, the girl with the bangs, walked past Carr's

Gadfly

office, heading down the hall to another conference room and some other task for the secretarial staff. Carr turned in the opposite direction and walked down Caldwell, Stern, and Portnoff's north hall of offices.

Chet Deming, now back in his office, had his coat on and was stuffing files into his briefcase. Deming looked up. "I saw Ebee leave. I guess that means you're free. You have time for lunch today? Or are you meeting Cassie?"

Carr glanced over his shoulder, back down the hallway. "Cassie? No. No. Not today."

Deming looked past Benton Carr to see if anyone had heard. No one had. "Okay. So what's going on?"

"Have you got a copy of today's paper? I want to show you something. See what you think."

"I tossed it when I got off the train." Deming snapped his briefcase shut. "I'm sure Conrad has a copy. I heard him talking to his bookie this morning. There's some horse he's traded his 401k for. Ask him about it and he'll bore you to death with the details. A horse!"

Carr walked across the hall.

Conrad Campaniero rarely left the office, not even for lunch. He was a stocky, neckless man wearing a loose tie and gold-colored suspenders. With his thick glasses, he looked like a prize fighter gone to seed. Campaniero lifted his head when Carr entered. He seemed in a trance. His field was contract law and no one in five square blocks of mid-town Manhattan knew it any better than he did.

"Connie. Listen, do you still have the sports section of today's paper?"

"Somewhere here," he said, coming out of his trance. "It's on the chair. Right there."

Several leather chairs were piled high with files and briefs, but on the top of the nearest was that day's *New York Times*.

Carr picked it up, separating the sections. "I need to ask you something. I want you to see this."

"Did you read about Wasserman at Penn? They yanked him right out of his high school. That'll make life interesting in a month or two

Paul Cook

when the season starts,” Campaniero said. “Assuming any of us has any money left.”

Conrad Campaniero had lost more money on Penn State’s football team than Benton Carr had on their basketball team. But he was always game.

“They need a man like him. Penn’s in a pickle. Hell, they should fire everybody and just start over. That’s what I would do. Those colossal idiots. Let me tell you about this filly I bought—”

Carr found the sports section. “I want you to see this. Here.”

Yanking the sports section into view, Carr paused suddenly. The advertisement for Gadfly wasn’t there.

The front page of the sports section of Conrad Campaniero’s paper bore only the story of Tod Wasserman being enlisted to deal with Penn State’s problems on the court. Instead of the modest advertisement for Gadfly’s services in the center of the page, there was a picture of a gangly, seven-foot tall eighteen year-old from New Rochelle towering above Penn State’s newly hired basketball coach, grinning like a drowning man thrown a rope.

“What is it?” Campaniero asked, leaning back. He’d put the stub of a dead cigar in his mouth and began chewing on it.

Perplexed, Carr went through the entire sports section. There were no advertisements for an outfit called Gadfly anywhere. Carr even checked the date. It was the same.

“This is absurd.”

“What’s absurd?” Campaniero asked.

“There was an ad for a company called Gadfly right in the middle of my copy of this morning’s sports page. They had a phone number so I called them. They gave me the runaround. I don’t get it. There’s no ad here.”

“So?”

“So? Why isn’t there an ad in *your* paper?”

“What’s the difference?”

“I don’t know. They were called Gadfly. I thought you might know about them. Some sort of sports free-agency outfit, maybe.”

Gadfly

"Gadfly? Sounds like the name of a horse."

"Hold on a second, Connie."

He threw the paper back onto the pile of documents on Conrad Campaniero's extra office chair. He then left for his office.

Just then, Mrs. Carlyle, Roxanne, and several junior lawyers came filing out of Mr. Portnoff's office. Portnoff himself appeared and reached for Carr's arm as he passed.

"Benton."

"Mr. Portnoff," Carr said, pausing.

Portnoff said, "We really need you for the meeting this afternoon, Benton. If we don't straighten out that Krakauer mess downtown, we could be selling shoes this time next year."

Small jewels of sweat misted Randall Portnoff's small, liver-spotted forehead. Portnoff, a very thin man with blood pressure around two-forty over one-fifty, always looked on the verge of a stroke but somehow seemed able to move through the offices like a bulldozer. He was the youngest of the surviving senior partners and had a massive eight figure income. He had his own fleet of yachts, a banker in the Caymans, and his own auditor at the IRS whom he spoke with on a regular, if involuntary, basis.

"Hedge funds. That's the business we should have gone into, Carr," Portnoff said.

Carr said nothing in response to this, letting his boss finish. "If we can get some air on this Krakauer business downtown and we can recapitalize. But we're going to need all the help we can get. This might be your baby for the next decade."

"Yes, sir," Carr said. He swallowed nervously as the group gathered around Portnoff retreated back down the hallway.

Carr entered his office, grabbed his copy of the sports section, and went back into Conrad Campaniero's gloomy office. Campaniero had returned to what he was doing, but looked up as Carr entered, cigar still unlit.

"This is what I wanted to show you," Carr said, thrusting the front page at his colleague.

Paul Cook

Campaniero glanced at the front page. "So?"

Carr pointed. "The ad! It's not in your paper. See?"

"I thought you wanted to know about Gadfly."

"I did, but . . . look here. There's no ad on your copy."

Campaniero lay both papers side by side. "So what?"

Really, Carr didn't know what to think. Conrad Campaniero knew every aspect of the sports world on the East Coast and he'd have certainly known about a company called Gadfly. They *had* to have been connected with sports. If not, why advertise in the sports section?

Now his attention was focused on the ad and nothing else. "It's strange. Why wouldn't my edition have a photograph of Wasserman and Coach Lindner? Mine has this ad. Yours doesn't. Don't you think that's a bit . . . odd?"

Campaniero leaned back. "Son, don't you have anything more important to do right now than fuss over the newspaper? I heard a rumor that you're going to be indicted."

"I'm *not* going to be indicted."

"Then go to lunch. Find something to do."

"But this ad! Gadfly. Who are they? They're in my paper and not in yours!"

"Look," Campaniero said calmly. "Forget the paper. Go to lunch. Get laid. Do something like straighten your life out. Or straighten Portnoff's life out. Forget what the paper says."

An idea occurred to Carr just then. Newspapers once had morning and evening editions. Was it possible that newspapers still produced different editions?

"Where did you get your copy of the *Times* this morning?" Carr then asked.

Campaniero shrugged. "Home. I bring it in on the train. But I didn't get a chance to read it today. I've got this Aubra Janus Steed thing here that's going to shed blood." He tapped at the papers on his desk. "Hopefully none of it will be ours. Portnoff's on a tear, you know. He's checking everything twice."

"You're out on Long Island, right? Seatuck," Carr said. "Could be a

Gadfly

different edition of the *Times* delivered out there.”

“I don’t see how it matters.”

“Bobbie and I live just a few blocks from here. I could have gotten the first edition. We’re not too far from the *Times* building itself. You could have gotten a later edition out where you live. They could have yanked the ad by then.”

“This isn’t the old days, Benton. No paper has ‘editions’ any more. We’re lucky we even have newspapers. Look, it’s lunch time. I’d get in a good meal if I were you because that meeting this afternoon’s going to burn a lot of calories. A real work-out.”

“Right, right,” Carr said. “Can I take this?”

“Sure.”

Carr left Conrad Campaniero and stepped back out into the lobby. He noticed the fresh, unread copy of the *Times* on the large coffee table along with copies of magazines and that morning’s edition of *USA TODAY*. He snatched up the copy of the *Times* and opened it to the sports page.

No Gadfly. Big photograph of Wasserman and Coach Lindner. But no Gadfly.

“Son of a bitch,” he muttered.

*

He wasn’t meeting Cassie that day. She had something else scheduled, so Carr had a lunch hour with nothing to do but puzzle through the anomaly of the strange advertisement in his copy of the morning newspaper.

Carr stepped out onto the sidewalk and found a cab that had just pulled up and dropped off a fare. The driver was a dark-skinned Sikh with a turban that brushed the roof of his cab. Carr gave the man his address as he climbed into the back seat with a rustle of two different sports sections—Conrad Campaniero’s and his own.

Normally, his single-mindedness stood him in good stead, especially in court cases and client negotiations. Gadfly had thrown him off—his mind seemed split. He’d even lost his appetite.

The driver glanced at him in the rearview mirror. “You are a busy man today.”

ork.”
“Everybody’s busy today,” Carr said indifferently. “This is

“Ah, but not so busy as to ignore trouble.”

Carr looked at the dark eyes in the rearview mirror looking at him.

“I’m not in any kind of trouble!”

“Everybody is in some kind of trouble.”

Carr scowled. “I am not in trouble. Just get me to the Tintagel before the sun sets.”

The man laughed. His toothy grin was as bright as a Cheshire moon.

“I can do that. Yes, sir!”

Carr left the taxi and its impertinent driver without a tip and burst into the lobby of the Tintagel. A small pile of that morning’s paper lay on the reception desk. Al Rutherford, the Tintagel’s uniformed doorman, came in from the back room upon hearing Carr enter. He was holding a sandwich and had a napkin tucked at his chin.

“Mr. Carr, you’re home early.” Rutherford pulled the napkin out. Rutherford looked perplexed. He pushed his hat back on his head. “I think so.”

Carr took the elevator up to his apartment. He had an idea how to get to the bottom of this. He got out on the fourth floor and walked quickly down past 407, the apartment he and Robbie lived in, and rang the doorbell to apartment 415. Fred and Arlene Beasley were their best friends and he expected they would still have their copy of that morning’s *Times* lying about.

When no one answered immediately, he knocked. The door opened and there stood Beasley’s maid, Abigail Stewart. “Mr. Carr,” the maid said, a bit surprised to see him at that hour of the day. “I was in the kitchen.”

Mrs. Stewart was in her forties, trim and efficient in her white maid’s uniform. She had been with the Beasleys for Benton Carr and his wife had known them.

“I’m afraid Mr. Beasley’s not in,” the maid said. “And N
just left.”

"That's all right, Abigail. I'm looking for the morning paper. Fred leave it or did he take it with him?"

"You didn't get the paper? We got ours. Mr. Rutherford delivered himself. Right on time."

Carr found the paper on the Beasley's large coffee table in their living room. It had been read and left in a loose pile on one side of the table. He separated the paper out, locating the sports page.

"This is what I'm looking for."

No Gadfly.

Dead center was the photograph of a happy teenager towering over his new coach.

But no advertisement for Gadfly.

"What is this?"

"I'm sorry?" the maid said, bending over slightly, concerned now over the expression on Carr's face.

"The copy of this paper is different from the one my wife and I got this morning," he said.

The maid stood holding her hands, not quite understanding what Carr was talking about. "I . . . don't know what you mean, Mr. Carr."

"You said Rutherford delivered it?"

"Yes. He came by at six o'clock this morning, right when I arrived. He gave everyone their copies. Why? Is there something wrong?"

"He delivered our copy as well?"

"I assume so. He came from that direction. Pulling that little cart of his. You know, the red one. He walked down to the Laurence's then to the Cho's. The Halletts are vacationing and I think the Muellers are in Europe. Mr. Beasley would know. So would the Home Owners Association members."

Carr threw all of his papers down onto the coffee table. He snapped his phone and hit the redial button. He knew he really should have getting some lunch and heading back to work. This was ridiculous. His phone rang just once. A different voice of Gadfly came on the line. "How can we help you?"

Paul Cook

Carr looked at his phone. He put it back to his ear and said, "All right, Gadfly. What's going on? Is this a joke?"

"A joke, sir? I don't understand."

"This has got to be a joke. It's either a joke or you're just harassing me."

"I'm sorry, sir. I don't know what you're talking about."

"Look, Goddamnit, I've gone through several copies of the *New York Times* and your ad was only in my copy of the *Times*! What's going on here? I want to know what you're up to. This definitely is harassment."

"Sir, you called us. We didn't call you. How could we be harassing you? We just put an ad in the paper offering our services."

"You put your goddamned ad in my paper and my paper alone. What's this all about? Is this about Cassie? Because if it is, I'll take you people apart."

"Cassie, sir?"

Carr paused and caught Mrs. Stewart's concerned look. He glanced to see if the door was shut. He didn't think that Roberta was home and had heard, but he knew that he'd have to be more careful from this point on. It had just slipped out.

"Then it's got to be about something else. What is it? You want money? What? Is this blackmail?"

"Blackmail? We're only here to help, not cause trouble."

"Look, do you know who I am? I'm part of one of the most important law firms in this city. We can empty your bank account and orphan your children in the blink of an eye!"

The man at Gadfly hung up.

Carr stared at his phone. He then looked at Mrs. Stewart. "That sonofabitch hung up on me! He hung up!"

Benton Carr clapped his phone violently shut and wanted to crush it in his hand. He wanted to reduce it to atoms of gold micro circuits and black plastic. He wanted to throw it on the Beasley's plushly carpeted floor and grind it—and Gadfly—to smithereens under his heel.

He looked at Mrs. Stewart, breathing hard. "This doesn't make any sense." He wanted to say, *this can't be happening*. But it was.

Gadfly

Carr turned and left the apartment. He strode down the carpeted hallway toward the elevator. He knew everyone on his floor. It was beyond Brian Laurence and wife to concoct a stunt like Gadfly. The same for retired Boston University chemistry professor, Richard Cho. The Halletts were down in Barbados and the Muellers were somewhere in Germany visiting relatives. Could one of them be operating a one-eight-hundred number across the hall? Did they have the resources to completely change a *New York Times* sports page? Did they have a newspaper press in a spare bedroom? Impossible. Their Home Owner's Association had some of the strictest standards in the city.

Carr stepped out of the elevator and entered the lobby. Lunch was over and Al Rutherford, in his uniform of crimson and gold trim, stood at his usual spot next to the large double doors of the Tintagel, ready to be of assistance.

"Mr. Carr," the doorman said, coming to attention.

Carr noticed a stack of copies of the *New York Times* on the foyer desk.

"These came with the same copies this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right."

Carr began tearing through them all, pulling only the sports section out of each copy, tossing the rest, looking for the one advertisement for Gadfly.

The papers fell in a pile around Carr's feet as he searched each one and found no trace of Gadfly's advertisement.

The doorman stood aghast at the performance.

Carr faced the doorman. "If you're in on this, I'll see that you never work anywhere in the world again."

The doorman's face turned a resolute white. "Mr. Carr! I don't understand!"

"Did you deliver this morning's paper to everyone in the building?"

Albert Rutherford held out his hands innocently. "I've always delivered the morning paper. It's the first thing I do when I come on duty."

Paul Cook

"You didn't deliver a special paper to me, did you?"

The doorman seemed on the verge of panic. "Special? What do you mean special? There was no special paper to anyone. I mean, why would I deliver a special paper to you?"

Carr had seen men sweat in court. He'd seen them sweat before grand juries. This man had nothing to hide. He was just a doorman, not a conspirator.

"I deliver the papers while the night crew is getting ready to leave. Is there something wrong? Did I do anything wrong?"

Carr thought the man on the verge of tears. No one wanted to lose their job in *this* economy. Not for a wrong newspaper.

"Was there anyone else in the building when you got here?"

"Here, in the lobby? Just Huber, the night watchman. And, if I remember right, the Millers and Dr. Stanton were leaving right when I got here. I gave them their papers on their way out. Right off the top. You can ask them."

Carr could see past Rutherford into the office where the red hand truck stood beside the doorman's small desk. The Tintagel delivered the *Times* free, as part of their service to their tenants.

"That was it?" he demanded.

"It was five-thirty. Besides the Millers and Dr. Stanton, it was just the Times truck outside. And Weasel and Kendrie, of course."

"Weasel and Kendrie?"

"The drivers. The delivery crew. They've been at this route for all the time I've been here. They dump the papers and drive off. Unless it's raining, then they'll bring them in or I'll go out and help them. The mail man comes later in the morning. Nobody else comes that early, though. Not at five, five-thirty. That's the truth."

Albert Rutherford seemed to have shrunken in his uniform.

"Right, right," Carr said, nodding.

But it wasn't right. Carr retrieved his copy of the *New York Times* where he had left it in the original pile, folding back the advertisement for Gadfly. He held it up to the overhead fluorescent lights. The ad was certainly real enough; it hadn't been pasted there especially for him. The

Gadfly

black ink of the advertisement wasn't any different than the ink used for the other ads, the columns, and the photographs. It looked absolutely normal.

*

Outside in the full light of the noon hour, Carr pulled out his phone. This time he called Cassie's number. It was listed in his directory as "William DuBose", a client from long ago, so that prying eyes wouldn't suspect anything out of the ordinary.

"Hello?"

"Cassie!" Carr said breathlessly.

"Benton," she said, clearly surprised to hear him. Her smoky, cigarette voice became cool and a bit remote. "I thought we were on for Thursday. This is Tuesday."

"Where are you?" he asked.

"At a restaurant. I'm meeting some friends of mine."

Carr paused. "You're with another client? Today?"

"No," Cassie said, as she sipped a drink of some kind. "I'm with two friends, like I said. What's the matter? Are you in trouble again?"

Carr hunched over the phone, looking at the people on the sidewalk. Mid-town Manhattan. Noon. The usual several thousand people of several thousand shapes and sizes walking from point A to point B, and not a one of them thinking of him.

Or was that not true?

"Has anyone called you? Has anyone come around asking questions about . . ."

"About what? About us? Does your wife know about us? Look, I told you to keep this professional. That's the only way I work."

A note of panic had now entered Cassie Traviano's voice and, like Benton Carr, she was now whispering low into her Blackberry. "You picked the Off Soho, not me. I told you to arrange things at your end."

"Cassie, listen to me. Do you have a copy of today's *Times* with you?"

"Why would I have a copy of the *Times* with me? I'm at Rondo's, upstairs, having lunch! What's the matter with you?"

Paul Cook

“Is there one nearby?”

“Here they come. Cleo’s with them. Gotta go. Don’t call me until Thursday. I’ll pick the place this time.”

She rang off and Carr stood on the street, trembling now.

One or two individuals who passed him gave him a cursory glance, but nothing more than that. This was New York, after all. Probably half the people on the street were having affairs. Probably half of them were being scrutinized by the IRS. Probably half of that group worked for companies whose in-house investors had lost a bundle in ‘08, all of their money having evaporated in reckless credit default swaps and leveraged investments of dubious value. And sprinkled here and there in *that* particular group were the occasional missed child-support payment for the one or two children a person might have had along the way as they became a junior partner in one of the city’s major law firms, children no one knew about except for that someone’s personal lawyer and private business manager.

Across the street, in the shade of a massive building, stood a magazine kiosk. Carr walked to the crosswalk. A digital clock hanging on the side of that building said that it was now one-thirty and he was half an hour away from his meeting with Portnoff. He found that his shirt collar was too tight and that he was unusually warm, even for that time of year.

At the kiosk were several copies of the *Times*. He bought a random one, close to the bottom of the stack, and opened it to the sports page. There was no advertisement for Gadfly. He refolded the paper and tossed it in the wastebasket that stood off to one side of the cash register. There were several sports monthlies and weeklies hanging from steel clips above the man who ran the stand. The *Sporting News* had a cover story about Kyle Wasserman and Penn State’s hopes. The cover to *Sports Illustrated* showed Wasserman in living color, his red hair big enough to be an afro, homing in on a basket, stretched from toe to fingertip to a length of at least twelve feet. Members of the opposite team cowered in awe at Wasserman’s drive to the basket. In the background, hundreds of high school teenagers were cheering the wunderkind to victory. The kid seemed so intent, so focused on the goal before him.

Gadfly

“Wasserman,” Benton Carr said out loud.

The kiosk owner, chewing on a cigar, overheard and said, “I’ve seen that boy on ESPN. I think his parents put him on a rack when he was in puberty. Stretched the shit out of him. It ain’t natural what he can do.”

“Save Penn’s ass, though,” another individual standing beside him added.

“Their ass needs saving,” another man chimed in.

There could be video cameras everywhere. There could be private detectives. The CIA. There were even reconnaissance satellites with microscopic resolution in the sky. Carr felt a chill as the sweat cooled on his skin. This isn’t happening. *This isn’t happening.*

Carr could interview everyone on his floor, but the person who delivered his paper could have been on another floor. But would they have a call-center? He could interview the delivery boys for the *Times*, but it could have been *anyone* who worked for the *Times* who planted the paper. Or someone who walked in off the street, in disguise, collar up like a spy. He could have Al Rutherford followed. He could have the man’s whole family followed, and the friends of his family. And *their* friends.

Carr hailed a taxi. One pulled up almost immediately. Had it been waiting for him, or had it merely been a synchronous event with the traffic light? He got in.

The driver was not a turbaned guru or anyone who looked particularly wise this time. He gave the address to the building that housed his law firm and settled back with his cell phone. He hit redial once more. Sweat had trailed down his shirt and down into his butt crack. He hated that. It was a feeling that conjured the worst moments of his youth, especially those of being dragged before a principal, a judge, or his father.

The number to Gadfly rang only once. A three note, atonal chime suddenly sounded out and was immediately followed by a machine voice, remotely female, that said, “*The number you have dialed does not exist or is no longer in service. Please hang up and dial again.*”

Carr, speechless, pressed the redial button and the same message sounded out. He did it yet again. Yet again. Same message, same three

Paul Cook

atonal chimes.

All of a sudden, he found that he wasn't trembling and that his breathing was now coming more easily. Sunlight came down through the avenues of Manhattan as Carr stared through the open window of the taxi. Every smell, every facet of light that autumn, every sound of mid-town New York came to him with a clarity he'd only seen before in dreams. Only this was no dream. He felt the upholstery of the back seat in the taxi with the palms of his hand; he smelled the cheap cologne the driver wore. He thought he could even smell the perfume of the man's last passenger—one of them, anyway. It would have been a middle-aged woman, he guessed, wearing a conservative floral scent designed to enhance rather than seduce. He thought he could picture her: Was she a Roberta in mid-life, happy with the stern control she had over her business affairs? Was she a Cassie, retired from her services, both rich and aloof to the world, with a rich man to go home to, a beach house on the black sands of Uruguay? Benton Carr heard the sounds of birds, the sounds of high heels and expensive shoes grinding on the sidewalks. The swish of dress fabric, the flap of an open coat. Dozens of voices speaking into cell phones as people walked by. He thought he could even see the mica crystals in the granite of the walls of a Wells Fargo bank he passed—a thousand scintillations, a thousand planes of light, a thousand nuances he'd never noticed before, tinctures of life shouting like the voice of a crowd in a basketball arena.

Tamara Moan

The Artist

A rainbow kept him afloat. Crayons surrounded him like a life raft, sticks of color broken, stunted, blunted, well-used. Bright scribbles on paper lifted and floated like clouds above the endless sea, his mark on the slate of the sky. For years he drifted, his lines on paper recording his path, marking the way both before and aft. He skirted math assignments, drew looping figures around his D+ in chemistry, bobbed to the top of composition by diagramming his sentences like a Leonardo cartoon. Mind, hand, and breath took in the world and gave the forms of triangles, circles, squares to the wonder, anger, curiosity, frustration and joy he felt. He floats today, still buoyed by color, crayons turned to charcoal, pastels, and fine-nibbed pens, above concrete roadways, phone chatter and the cashier's rattle. He is the earth's hum, a bouncing photon. Pencil in hand he is a little piece of god.

Tamara Moan

Under the Full Moon

Out the door, bare feet on damp grass,
cereus blossoms spoon out light
to the shadows around them.
In the brittle night air
I breathe in clarity and the almost-silence
of growing things.
Leaf edge against a white stone
is my new life:
simple, clear, sharp.

Tamara Moan

Waiapanapa

As clear as elemental diamond,
it had that cool smell like shady moss.
I stood on the brink,
soundlessly shivering in serene morning air,
staring hard to see if the leaf
floated on the sheer surface
or sat at the bottom.

Yes, I saw a sliver of leaf shadow
following the humps of pebbles along the floor
yet I began to believe it was only air,
I had only to descend the lava steps
to reach the dry bottom and walk back into the cavern.

But then I took a breath and noticed
a tiny ripple tease the surface.
I leapt, my shout banging against the walls,
breath scared out of my body,
water dancing, cold as crystal.

The Concussion

Quiet has a concussion
the injury invisible.

Hearing ear dogs are to be beheaded.
The deaf appeal, outspoken
when they must act as their own lawyers.
You may soon be forced
to examine yourself as your own physician,
my readers rarely able to afford
the insurance needed to read me.

Does every quiet have a concussion?
No. Some only have the effect.
If I enter a quiet will I suffer
the effect of a concussion?
Don't risk it. Breathe more loudly
and snore on silent nights.
Unicorns awarded to the deaf
as a result of their lawsuit puncture
quiet with horns.

Nathan Whiting

A Snowflake Falls Across Ranges

Piles of words rush "Me first. Me first."
One walks so actively I think her a verb
but she says "I might be a noun
or adjective. Who can tell,
flesh and how flesh acts and how flesh looks?"

"Have you been written?" I ask.
"I would rather dance" she answers.
"You can't dance here. We're in a poem."

She dances peaks and cliffs
and mist around pine needles
but no cold, no temperature.
"Are you being spoken?" I ask.
"I'm not anything you'd understand."
"I thought you were a word" I say.
"A word can be more than you expect" she replies.

Hands Amidst Laughter

After the wicked comedy show
where ribs clatter against their neighbors
hands have to clap which seems
unfair for hands fail to get any of it.
When a funny story erupts
they want to hide the laughing mouth.

Alright, we know hands lack humor
because they believe they form the world.
They come together in prayer
to raise a monument to themselves
the doers. Only lungs say the words
for they have private lines to the heart.

Hands clapped violently too long
reach to wipe tears of joy away
in a belief humiliation comes to eyes
from the spillage of excess merriment.
Hands care because eyes help
find things to fill blind ambition.

Toby Idian



Hold

Contributors' Notes

Scott Abels is originally from Nebraska. His poems can be found in print and online in *Lungfull!*, *Action Yes*, *Past Simple*, *Word for/Word*, *Sixth Finch*, *No Tell Motel*, *Shampoo*, *Sawbuck*, *Juked*, and *BlazeVOX*. Lately, he has been alternating years living and teaching on the coast of Oaxaca, Mexico, and Honolulu.

Scott Akalis grew up on the east side of Lake Michigan, in Grand Rapids, and now lives on the west side, in Chicago. His flight to fiction was not as direct; before writing stories, he completed a PhD in psychology at Harvard University and then went crazy as a management consultant. His publication history ranges from *Psychological Science and Social Cognition* to *Du Bois Review* and *The Detroit Free Press*.

Ruth Berman's work has appeared in a wide variety of magazines and anthologies, including *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Jewish Currents*, *Birdwatcher's Digest*, *Bellowing Ark*, *The Poet Dreaming in the Artist's House*, *Skills for reading*, *Nebula Awards Showcase*, etc. Saint Paul, MN has been building annual winter carnival ice castles since 1886.

Matt Caliri devotes much of his time working with special needs children in the Hawai'i Public School System. He is currently seeking publication for his first full-length novel, *Dragons*, as well as for his collection of poems (99 of them), *With the Swinging Of A Tin Drum*. He lives in Kailua with his brother and his 3rd person narrative style of describing himself. He enjoys croissants, though only in moderate consumption.

Donald Carreira Ching was born and raised in Kahulu'u and graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with a degree in English. He is currently working on a collection of short stories that interrogates multicultural identity in contemporary Hawai'i. He loves his wife and is thankful for the support and guidance from colleagues, professors, friends, and family.

Paul Cook: is a Principal Lecturer at Arizona State University where he teaches science fiction and other literature courses. He has published eight novels, the most recent is *KARMA KOMMANDOS* (from Arc Manor/Phoenix Pick at www.phoenixpick.com). He also writes classical music reviews for *THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE*, specializing in extremely modern music--the hairier the better.

Website: www.paulcook-sci-fi.com.

Carolyn Dahl works have been published in *Copper Nickel*, *Camas*, *Kalliope*, *Sojourn* and other journals, and in the anthologies *Beyond Forgetting*, *Eating Her Wedding Dress*, *TimeSlice*, *The Weight of Addition*, and *Reading Lips*. She was an award winner in the PEN Texas competition and has received residencies to Hedgebrook, The Vermont Studio Center, and The Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow. Also an artist, she has appeared on HGTV and PBS and is the author of *Natural Impressions* and *Transforming Fabric*. She raises butterflies in her Houston kitchen and has always wanted to live in Hawai'i.

www.carolyndahlstudio.com

William Virgil Davis's most recent book is *Landscape and Journey*, winner of the 2009 New Criterion Poetry Prize. He has published three other books of poetry: *One Way to Reconstruct the Scene*, which won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize; *The Dark Hours*, which won the Calliope Press Chapbook Prize; *Winter Light*. His poems appear regularly in leading journals. He has published in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *The New Criterion*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *TriQuarterly*, *PN Review*, *Southwest Review*, and in many other journals. He has also published half a dozen books of literary criticism, most recently *R. S. Thomas: Poetry and Theology*, as well as scores of critical essays. He is Professor of English and Writer-in-Residence at Baylor University.

Jade Eckardt was raised on the Big Island of Hawai'i and is earning a degree in anthropology from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. She is an editor at a local newspaper and writes essays, short stories and poems inspired by life experiences.

Darrell Epp: A collection of Darrell Epp's poetry entitled *Imaginary Maps* was published in 2009 by Signature Editions (www.signature-editions.com)

Scott Gallaway has published poetry in *Arts and Letters Cumberland Poetry Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Permafrost Midwest Quarterly*, and others. In 2005 and 2006 he won awards for poetry from the Rosenberg Foundation. He has recently completed a manuscript of ekphrastic poems in conjunction with the photography of Douglas Prince.

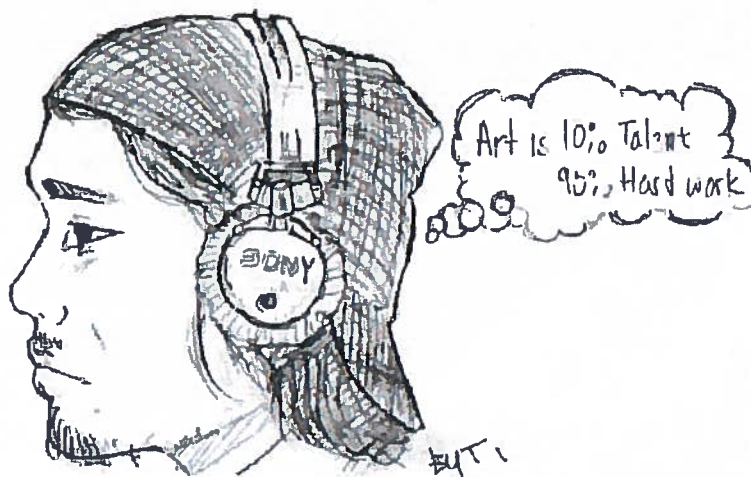
Claire Gearen currently teaches literature and composition in the Hawai'i public schools. She has been published in *Pontoon: an anthology of Washington State poets* and featured on the Seattle City Council Words' Worth televised reading program highlighting area poets. Admonished long ago to learn the indigenous names of Hawai'i places, she is making a start.

Derek Henderson is currently alive and well in Salt Lake City, where he teaches writing and literature at the University of Utah. *Inconsequentia*, a book of poetry co-authored with Derek Pollard, was published spring 2010 by BlazeVOX. At the moment, his favorite Kenneth Koch quote is "The universe was ringing with song."

Mimi Herman is the North Carolina Poetry Out Loud Coordinator, an associate editor for *Teaching Artist Journal*, and a National Faculty Member and Mentor in Poetry for the Lesley University M.Ed. program. She holds a BA, cum laude, from UNC-Chapel Hill and an MFA in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College. Her writing has appeared in *Shenandoah*, *Crab Orchard Review* and other publications. She has worked as teaching artist since 1990, engaging students and teachers with writing residencies, teacher workshops and curriculum transformation.

Mickey Hess is associate professor of English at Rider University and the author of *Big Wheel at the Cracker Factory* and three books about hip hop.

Toby P. Idian



Joan Payne Kincaid: Writer, published internationally, 10 books of poetry, Pushcart nominee; painter, many exhibits on L.I. and in Manhattan, former opera –concert artist, mom; live/ work in Sea Cliff with Rod, a rescue tabby, and a Parson Russell Terrier; avid birder and gardener. Current work in *Limestone Poetry Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Santa Clara Review*, *Green Hills Literary Lantern*, *South Central Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Georgetown Review*, *Edgz*, 88, *Modern Haiku*, *Iconoclast*, *Lynx Eye*, *Yalobusha Review*, *Mother Earth Journal*, *Tule Review*, *Cairn*, *Origami Condom*, *Unexpected Harvest*, *Anthology from Kings Estate Press*. Book of poetry, with Wayne Hogan entitled *Blue Eyes Wise and Dancing*.

Katie Kingston is the author of three poetry collections: *Unwritten letters*, *El Rio de las Animas Perdidas en Purgatorio*, and *In My Dreams Neruda*. Her poems have been published in *Atlanta Review*, *Great River Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Margie*, and *Nimrod*. She is the recipient of the 2010 W.D. Snodgrass Award for Poetic Endeavor and Excellence and has recently completed a fellowship residency at the Fundación Valparaíso in Mojácar, Spain. Currently she lives and writes in Trinidad, an area known as the coal fields, located in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range.

Gary Lehmann: Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Gary Lehmann's essays, poetry and short stories are widely published. Books include *The Span I will Cross* [Process Press, 2004] and *Public Lives and Private Secrets* [Foothills Publishing, 2005]. His most recent book is *American Sponsored Torture* [Foothills Publishing, 2007]. Look for *American Potraits* in 2010 from Foothills Publishing. Visit his website at www.garylehmann.blogspot.com

Alexis Levitin: My translations have appeared in well over two hundred literary magazines, including *APR*, *Kenyon Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *New Letters*, *Northwest Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Translation*, and *Ms. Magazine*. His thirty books include Clarice Lispector's *Soulstorm* and Eugenio de Andrade's *Forbidden Words*, both from *New Directions*. His co-translation of *Tapestry of the Sun: An Anthology of Ecuadorian Poetry*, which included work by Rodriguez, was published this past year by Coimbra Editions. His most recent book is *Brazil: A Traveler's Literary Companion* (Whereabouts Press, 2010).

Augusto Rodriguez is a thirty year old poet from Guayaquil. He wrote *While She's Killing Mosquitoes*, the book from which this poem is drawn, four years ago. I worked on all my translations with the poet in Guayaquil. So far, I have placed twenty-seven of his poems in *Boulevard*, *Evansville Review*, *Great River Review*, *Left Curve*, *The Literary Review*, and *Per Contra* (online). Rodriguez' work has appeared in Spain, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile, where he spent many of his formative years.

Jeffery Ryan Long currently lives on a boat anchored at Pearl Harbor. Commuting to work by bicycle to the John A. Burns School of Medicine every morning, Jeffery would one day like to write about what he has found under the Nimitz highway and along the canals. His next journey will be to Italy, where he will experience the residue of Roman civilization with his love and work on his novel, *Dungeon Smashers*.

Christina Low has also been published by *The Hawai'i Reporter*, *Vice-Versa Journal*, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's *Selected Papers*, and has forthcoming publications in *RipRap Journal*. She

will graduate from the University of Hawai'i in May 2010 with her MA in Creative Writing, and recently completed her first novel, *The Tree of Lee*.

Caroline Misner was born in a country that at the time was known as Czechoslovakia. She immigrated to Canada in the summer of 1969. Her work has appeared in numerous consumer and literary journals in Canada, the USA and the UK, most notably *The Windsor Review*, *Prairie Journal* and *Dreamcatcher*. Her work can be viewed on line at www.thewritersezine.com, www.truepoetmagazine.com and www.bewilderingstories.com. Her short story *Strange Fruit* has recently been nominated for the Writers' Trust/McClelland-Steward Journey Anthology Prize. She currently lives in Georgetown Ontario where she continues to read, write and follow her muse, wherever it may take her.

Tamara Moan lives in Kailua, Oahu and works as a freelance writer, editor, artist, teacher, and massage therapist. Her nonfiction has been published in *American Artist*, *Island Scene*, and *Honolulu magazine*; her poetry has appeared in *Hawaii Review*, *Rainbird*, and *Bamboo Ridge*.

James B. Nicola has over a hundred poems that have appeared, or are about to appear, in publications including *The Texas Review*, *The Lyric*, *Nimrod*, *Upstart Crow*, *Mobius*, *The Alabama Literary Review*, and *Cider Press Review*. He also won the Dana Literary Award for poetry. A stage director by profession, his book playing the Audience won a CHOICE Award as one of the best books of the year.

David N. Odhiambo is a novelist, poet, and playwright, and the author of *The Reverend's Apprentice* (Arsenal Pulp Press), *Kipligats Chance* (St Martin's Press, penguin Canada) and *Diss/ed Banded Nation* (Polestar Press). Born in Nairobi, Kenya he moved to Winnipeg, Canada in 1977. After getting his B.A. at McGill University, Montreal he lived in Vancouver for several years. Subsequently, he received a Graduate Student Fellowship and an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Currently, he lives in Los Angeles, and he is completing

a Ph.D in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Rebecca Givens Rolland has new or forthcoming work in *Witness*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Ars Medica*, *Cincinnati Review*, and *Versal*. Currently she lives in Boston and is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Anjoli Roy writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and is a recipient of the Myrtle Clark Award for Creative Writing. As an editor, she has worked for the Feminist Press at CUNY (including the journal *WSQ: Women's' Studies Quarterly*), *Kahuaomānoa Press*, and most recently, the Center for Biographical Research (including the journal *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*). She is a 2009-2010 Abernethy Fellow for *Mānoa: A Pacific Journal of International Writing*, and is also a proud coeditor of the online journal *Vice-Versa: Creative Works and Comments*, which she recently reimagined with Aiko Yamashiro and Mark Guillermo (see www.hawaii.edu/vice-versa).

Here for just a flash, she moved to Hawai'i from New York in fall 2008, and will most likely return spring 2010. She is currently writing a novel.

Paul Sacksteder is a recent graduate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas MFA Program. He continues to reside in Las Vegas and teaches undergraduate composition courses.

Kelly Talbot has been in professional publishing for more than 15 years. After working as an in-house editor for Macmillan, Pearson Education and Wiley, he formed Kelly Talbot Editing Services. His writing has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Georgetown Review*, and dozens of other literary magazines.

Kendall Turner's fiction and essays have appeared in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* and *The Nassau Literary Review*. She has also published several non-fiction magazine

articles in magazines such as *Pharma*, *Strategy + Business*, *The Leader*, and *Supply Chain Asia*, and was the winner of the Morris W. Croll Poetry Prize in 2006 and the Elmer Adler Essay Prize in 2007. Currently, she lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Ashley Vaughn holds a B.A. in anthropology and English from the University of South Carolina and a M.A. in anthropology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she is currently a Ph.D. student. The rest is a secret, for now, as she wishes to remain slightly mysterious.

Nathan Whiting has had work in the *Denver Quarterly*, *Presa*, *The Pacific Review*, *The Texas Review* and *The Best American Poetry*, 2002. My most recent book is *I a Hen Guard Myself By Me a Fox*, from Moon Press. I continue to perform and invent dances.

William Kelly Woolfitt teaches writing at Pennsylvania State University, where he is a Ph.D student. His short stories have appeared in *Sycamore Review*, *Weber Studies*, and *Portland Review*; his poems have appeared in *Shenandoah*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Cincinnati Review*, and *Potomac Review*. Poems from his complicated book-length sequence, *Words for Flesh: a Spiritual Autobiography of Charles de Foucauld*, have been published or are forthcoming in *Salamander*, *Windover*, *Rhino*, and *Nimrod*. He goes walking on the Appalachian Trail or his grandparents' farm on Pea Ridge (near Nestorville, WV) whenever he can.

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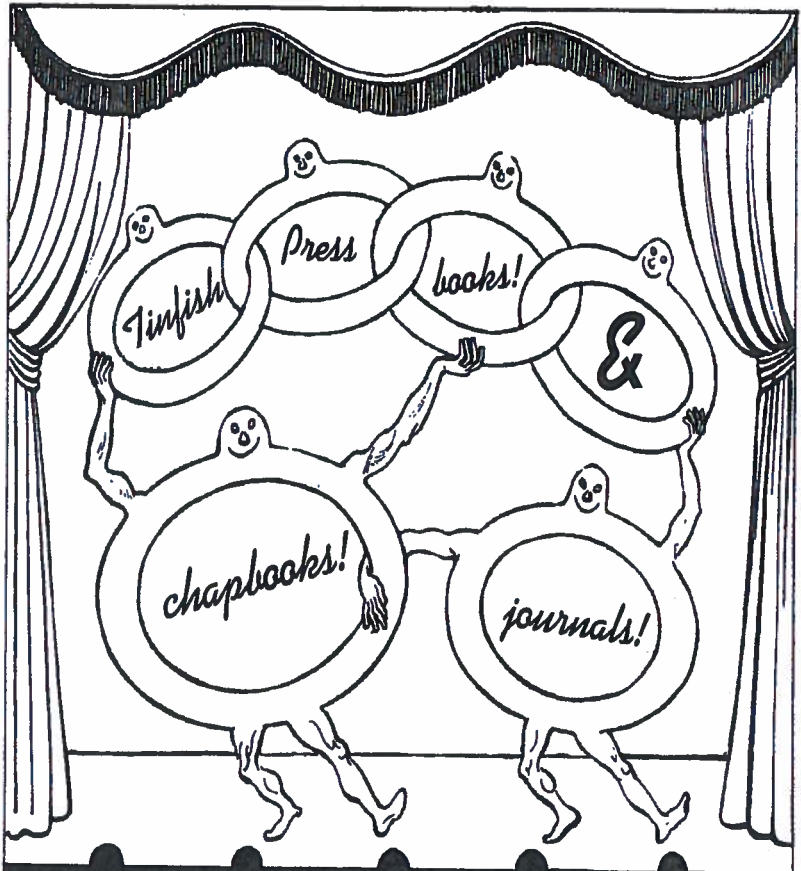
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