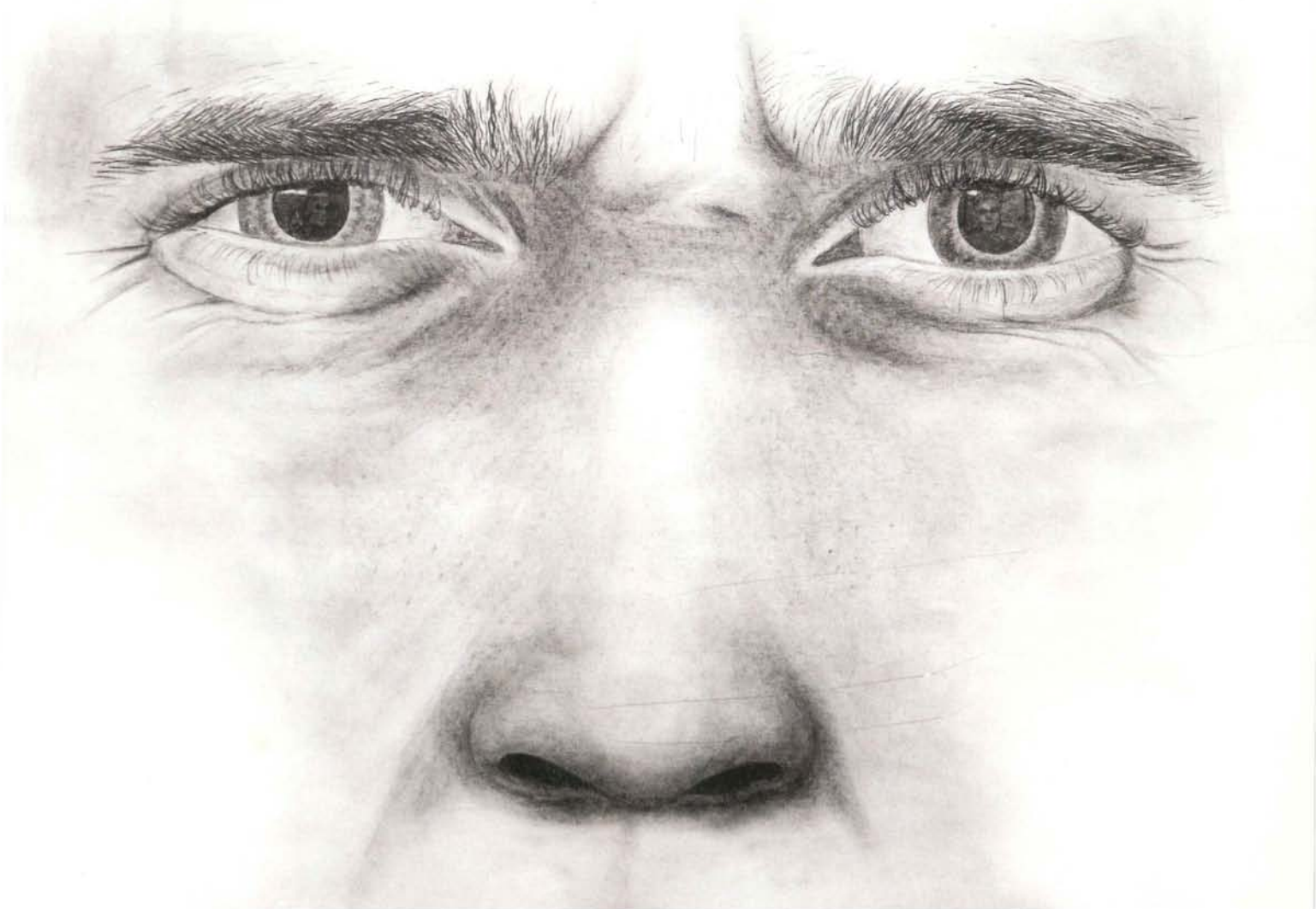


# kiosk

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

2008





# kiosk

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VOLUME 70

2008

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE  
OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

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**Ann McTaggart** is a local artist and resident of Sioux City with a painting studio in the Commerce Building downtown. McTaggart first earned a B.S.N. and B.A. in Studio Art from Morningside College, then continued at the University of South Dakota to obtain a B.F.A. and M.A. in Painting and Fine Art Studies. Ann has exhibited locally and throughout the Midwest.

**Darren Maurer** attended Southeast Community College in Milford, NE, graduating at the top of his class in Graphic Design and Illustration. He has worked as a designer and illustrator since 1986.



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Until the fourth grade, I loved drawing. I would dump a box of Crayola Colored Pencils on our living room floor, grab a stack of paper, and draw for hours. I would draw anything—lizards with wings, wizards with wheels for legs—whatever crept into my brain.

But in fourth grade, we started having very structured art lessons. Good old Mrs. E. would show us an example of what she wanted, and then we had to recreate it as best we could. We were on our way to becoming carbon-based copy machines, and I was no longer feeling

like much of an artist.

One day, she gave us a little more leeway. We could draw any animal we wanted. The catch was that we had to use a photo from *National Geographic* as a reference—and we would be graded on accuracy.

I chose a penguin, but soon realized that penguins make pretty boring subjects for drawing. So I spiced him up: My penguin soon sprouted green feathers, goat horns and a pogo stick.

Mrs. E. walked by my desk, took one look at my drawing, and said, "That isn't right. That isn't what a penguin looks like. You need to start over."

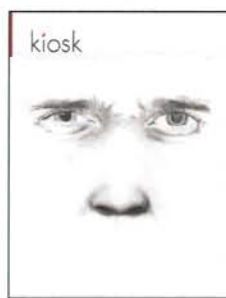
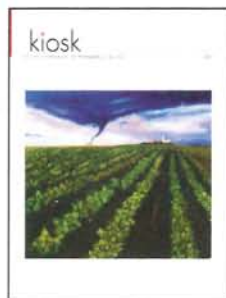
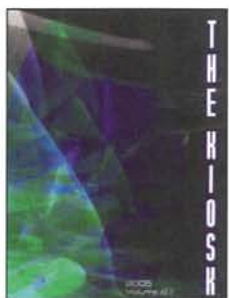
I was crushed. I crumpled up my work and threw it in the bin, along with any remaining courage I had for the medium. Never again would I draw anything for public consumption.

But courage is exactly what all artists and writers need. It takes courage to lay

your soul on the page or the canvas and try to create something without knowing in advance whether it will turn out to be a beautiful work or a waste of time and resources.

It takes even more courage to put that finished creation out there for others to see and judge. I applaud everyone who submitted their creations to the *Kiosk* this year, even if they weren't accepted. We learn by trial and error, and rejection is an important part of becoming a better artist. Be braver than I was as a fourth grade artist, and keep plugging away.

These days, when Simon Cowell is reviled for telling people that they can't sing well enough to be given a national recording contract, we realize that it also takes courage to evaluate the work of others and make decisions that will invariably overlook some promising work. I want to thank this year's editorial staff, especially the Visual Editor Kate Kes, for her hard work and courage in making the *Kiosk* possible. On behalf of the whole staff, we also want to



thank President Reynders for his generous support, art department faculty members John Kolbo and Terri McGaffin and English department secretary Marcie Ponder, who helped me do countless things along the way. I also cannot give enough thanks to Steve Coyne. Without his guidance, I wouldn't have had the courage to take on this enormous task; I wouldn't even have known where to begin.

KIOSKS OF THE PAST  
from left to right  
2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

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All entries are considered objectively by the judges with no artist name or special consideration for any piece. Assistant editors are eligible for contest placement but not prize money.

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# TILL KINGDOM COME (OR THE COW COMES HOME)

BY DORAN ABERNATHY

Hams Prairie, Missouri. The clouds kept falling and the rain begun to drop. The leaves on the trees turned green shades of monochrome and rattled their little pinnate tambourines. Cows up the hill, on the other side of the house, chewed the last of their cud and walked gingerly to the trees. Peter Pickenpaw stood in the drizzle rain, next to the carport, expressionless, furrow-less, but that tall gray suit that hung forlornly off his shoulders like a smoking jacket on a sales rack. In a metaphor, the albatross lay snug around his neck.

Peter, slunk at attention, stared blankly at the pink Cadillac in the carport. It was his wife Constance's car. She sold Mary Kay Cosmetics in the Greater Missouri Valley and had apparently just slept with a nineteen-year-old boy named Ben Hummerstrum. There is no way of telling how many ways there were of knowing, even if they were all just inferential subtleties... Fool me thrice shame on the both of us.

Ben's truck was parked adjacent in the driveway. Peter's baby blue Pinto was

BARN  
by John Page  
digital photograph, HDR





sideways in the grass. Ben was a local kid Constance had hired to paint the carport puce. An overturned ladder and an open can of Sherwin Williams' was all Peter could see had been done since he'd left. He'd gone to work in Jefferson City that morning, where he used to be a weatherman for Fox KZJZ Channel 3. He was home early, fired for forecasting eighty-eighty and sunny (it was sixty-three). That and he'd been recently alleged to be an odds fixer for an illegal gambling ring. As would be later reported in the *Jefferson City Gazette*, Peter had owed a large sum of money to a St. Louis outfit for gambling on the weather. Weather gambling was all the rage in Missouri. (The pay out from beating the odds on an inch of rain during the second week in December was better than the Rams beating the point spread on any Sunday.) Peter had gotten into trouble by betting the house, quite literally, on three inches of rain during the drought in June. As compensation for his mistake, he'd agreed to fix his ten-day forecast and keep the house.

Unfortunately for him, he'd left a paper trail at the weather desk. Hack meteorology and his wife's infidelity was just the beginning. He was starting to go bald and gray, and he was only forty-three. His father's land, the land he'd inherited and lived on was about to be foreclosed by the mob or some such subsidiary. The jig was up, his wife was a sleaze bag, he was a sleaze bag, and he probably just had a hit put out on him for botching a weather job. You couldn't see it in his face, but a coil had sprung loose in his brain. The jack in the box had most definitely come out to play. He just had a funny way of showing it.

Back on earth, Ben Hummerstrum walked out onto the porch, zipping his fly, and was startled to see Peter staring

at him from the carport. Ben was sort of handsome, Peter supposed, a stocky kid, with a big nose, gravy brown hair, and a Gumby drawn jaw line, sturdy on his feet, but noticeably nervous.

"Uh, hi, Mr. Pickenpaw...didn't get a chance to start, couldn't find a stirrer...and I had to go back to the paint store to--"

"Cover the earth!" Peter exclaimed, putting his fists in the air in a rah-rah motion generally reserved for pep rallies. The Sherwin Williams reference was lost on Ben, who just stood there dumbly, not sure what to do, but ready to make a break for it. Peter put his hands back down. His rectangular, hollow face retained its unscrupulous shape, which to Ben was even more unnerving than the sudden outburst.

"Are you okay sir?"

"Me, oh yeah I'm fine. How are you Ben?"

"Um fine... it's starting to rain."

"Oh, you can't paint in the rain!"

Peter said grinning again, pointing a finger in Ben's general direction.

"Yeah I know, I was just going to the bathroom, before I--"

"Where's Constance?" Peter asked in earnest, still standing by the carport, staring off into the fog.

"I think she's taking a shower upstairs, I uh... heard the water running"

"Did you flush?" Peter asked, staring at him again, feigning seriousness.

"What? No... I mean yeah, I did... sorry," said Ben.

Peter scowled, "That water gets scolding hot when you flush Mr. Hummerstrum!" Ben was starting to panic. He hadn't even gone to the bathroom, although he had thrown the condom Constance gave him into the toilet... Had he flushed?



There was a long drawn out pause. Peter was milking the pail full, down to the last squeeze. "Well..." he said, after a moment of staring straight up into the air, squinting with his long brow wrinkled in contemplation. "Constance won't be happy. You better go. She gets quite irritable when people flush... Bad plumbing." Ben had already begun stepping tentatively to his truck.

"Sorry, Mr. Picken-paw, I'll start first thing tomorrow... if the sun's out."

"Oh it will be son. The sun is always shining somewhere... Cover the earth!" Peter had his fists in the air again.

Ben had no idea what Peter was talking about. He just got into that truck and leapt off into the fog, fast as he could.

Peter kept his hands in the air for a moment, standing by the carport, as the rain began to run off the tin roof and onto his crew cut. He looked up at the green gable of his house, and out to the hill where most of the cows had lain under the cottonwoods. Then he put his hands down and walked briskly to the shed behind the house, smiling mischievously the whole way. In the shed, he got a length of rope, turned around and trotted off, up the hill, where at least one cow was about to cow home. That last part he said to himself, (in the present tense of course) smirking like a twelve-year-old with a frog in his pants.

Wrangling a cow wasn't as easy as Peter had hoped it'd be. He'd never had much to do with cows, except when he stood by the fence and fed Matilda mixed greens. Matilda was the smallest and oldest and dimmest of the cows. Peter had named her Matilda after his grandmother, a little spry woman that lived till she was a hundred-and-three. He hadn't named the rest of the cows, they weren't his cows. The dairy farm down the road just rented the land so they could eat his grass. Peter didn't mind, or particularly care for the cows, except Matilda, she was the sweetest, dumbest cow ever to be sent out to pasture.

Peter had hoped he could just put his jacket on a post, roll up his sleeves, and put a lasso around some poor saps neck. It turned out to be a great deal more trouble than that. The herd scattered when he came near them, and after some grass stains, a wet pant leg, and a waterlogged loafer, he was about to give up. Then he saw Matilda down stream, drinking out of the ravine. She was a skinny old heifer, part Holstein and part Guernsey. Demure as a daisy, dried up like Bisquick, sweet as buttermilk. Peter gingerly slipped the noose around her neck as she lapped-up water in a placid little pool off from the stream. Matilda was meek, and mild, and dumb enough to go along with just about any cockamamie scheme. It didn't hurt that she was four-fifths oblivious.

They walked daintily down the hill, a little slick now. The rain was coming down steady as they walked, past the cottonwoods down to the gable house, as the gray mist enveloped the rounding hill and faded the house away into one oblique nowhere.

And out of it came Peter and Matilda rounding the hill from the bleak Missouri



UNTITLED  
by Kim Jessen  
digital photograph



nowhere, walking hand in rope through the gate, down to the driveway, where the willows stood in a chorus line rattling their little pinnate tambourines.

With a little elbow grease, Peter got Matilda up the porch steps, through the screen door and into the living room. From there he started gently leading the little old cow up the stairs.

Constance was just getting out of the shower. She took very long showers. She had a very meticulous routine, and loved prune fingers for some reason or another. She had just toweled off and was putting on her robe, when she heard strange noises coming from the hallway.

Matilda was starting to panic. Every cow has a breaking point. She had no idea what she was doing up those stairs. She started pulling away, as Peter stood there, palms claming, frantically trying to hold onto the skittish bovine. They played a sort of man versus beast tug of war for a moment, breaking a leg off the banister and knocking a periwinkle vase over the railing. Then came Constance, running barefoot into the hallway, cursing something awful. She saw Matilda standing there and slipped on the hardwood, hitting her head pretty good on the door end. Out cold. Matilda stopped fussing. Peter stood wide-eyed, a cow in hand, an unconscious wife on the floor. What now cow?

Constance came to, in the gable, in a chair, in her make-up room, bound and gagged by duct tape. A cow eating a salad on her right, and Peter pacing to her left is all she could see. There was what felt like a flexi-straw protruding through the tape over her mouth, and what tasted like a chocolate Slim-Fast strapped to her chest. She wished it were strawberry, but it goes without saying that was the least of her concerns.

Constance was beautiful from a distance. She was built like a waitress at a Doowadiddy's, with a platinum blonde bob, and a bosom you could take a nap in. The closer you got though, the more you came to notice that all that was a body suit and a wig on an old maid. She had a murder of crow's feet, fake eyelashes, and the dullest sadness in her irises. Her lips were perpetually agape, showcasing her snaggleteeth, and that one gold crown that shown brightly from the recess of her hole. Not to say, aesthetics have much to do with beauty, but Constance was a looking glass in the mirror. Peter wasn't much better in most respects, but at least he was somewhat interesting.

"Mmmffffhshshshshshffckrrrrr!" said Constance. Peter stopped pacing "Honey, I can't here you with that tape over your mouth. You're all consonants..." He was staring at her now, rather creepily, and then he stopped and looked at Matilda, who was just finishing her bowl of mixed greens. He opened his mouth to say something, and then clutched his teeth again, standing there in bewilderment with his hands extended out in front of him.

After a moment, he blurted out, "I'm not sure why I brought Matilda up here, I thought it was a metaphor or poetic justice or something, but now I just feel bad. She's such a sweet cow, Constance. Cows can't climb down stairs you know; they're top heavy, they'll buckle their knees from the weight and fall face first into God knows what. I suppose you'll have to knock out the wall and get a crane or something and put her in a harness. Oh Jesus Matilda, a harness..." He was hugging the cow now, after pantomiming like a low front was coming in on the green screen.

He collected himself, and knelt



down on one knee in front of Constance, who was writhing and cursing incomprehensibly.

"Listen to me. I'm leaving. I'm taking your car and your money from Mary Kay... and your mom's jewelry. You shouldn't have slept around, and I shouldn't have bet on the weather, but maybe things will work out better this way." Then he smiled that sly sideways smile and said, "You can screw Ben Hummerstrum whenever you please."

Just as he said it, he knew he shouldn't have. Peter recoiled in horror as Constance got up on her feet, hobbling, still taped to the chair, and charged at him with a ferocity he'd never seen before. It all happened so fast. Peter ran by the window to get behind Matilda, who was starting to panic again. Constance lunged at the both of them just as Matilda had had enough. She struck a mighty blow for such a little cow, head-butting Constance in the side of the chair. Peter stood, panic stricken, watching in horror as Constance lost her balance and fell headfirst, screaming into the windowpane.

Everything came to a slow crawl. Constance was slumped over in the window, her hair still wet, with shards of glass imbedded in her neck, twitching. Chocolate Slim-Fast ran down her pant leg with the blood that was beginning to pool at her feet. Matilda and Peter were in a state of shock. Peter walked over slowly to see if she was dead, just as the twitching stopped. She was...

Peter did a curious thing after that; he lay down at her limp, dragging feet and started laughing and weeping uncontrollably. The tears streamed down his cheeks, in tributaries along a wrenching expression emptying into a river of blood and Slim-Fast. It was strange behavior for a strange scene, a sort of out of body expe-

rience. Peter was beside himself, he could almost see himself behaving so absurdly, but could do nothing to control it. It felt like someone had put a nerve agent in some laughing gas, and thrown it into the hallway. The laughing turned to weeping, the weeping turned to laughing, and so on. Matilda didn't know what to do.

After some time the absurdity subsided. Peter came to some of his senses, stood up, and took Matilda into his bedroom. He left the room for a while, as he cleaned up some of Constance's mess and came back into his bedroom with a salad bowl of water in one hand, and mixed greens in the other. Peter kissed Matilda on the nose as he set the bowls down in front of her. Then he grabbed the jewels from the jewelry box and the money from the make-up case, said one last farewell to Matilda and closed the door behind him.

When he walked out onto the porch, the clouds had dropped all around him. The sky was falling, as the rain washed everything from memory. He walked whistling to the carport, got in that pink Cadillac and pulled out the Rand-McNally from the backseat. He decided to head west on the red roads, not the interstate, less conspicuous, and besides there was plenty of banal, beautiful countryside ahead of him. As he drove down the gravel, the willows in the rearview shook their leaves and waved their little pinnate good-byes.

Near the border of Kansas, the weather was getting particularly nasty. A low front the weathermen in the know called an Alberta Clipper was coming in head-over-toe. Ominous signs in the sky, lightning and thunder surrounded that pink blur speeding through the whiz and whirl of John Brown's carnal hills. God was having a bowel movement and

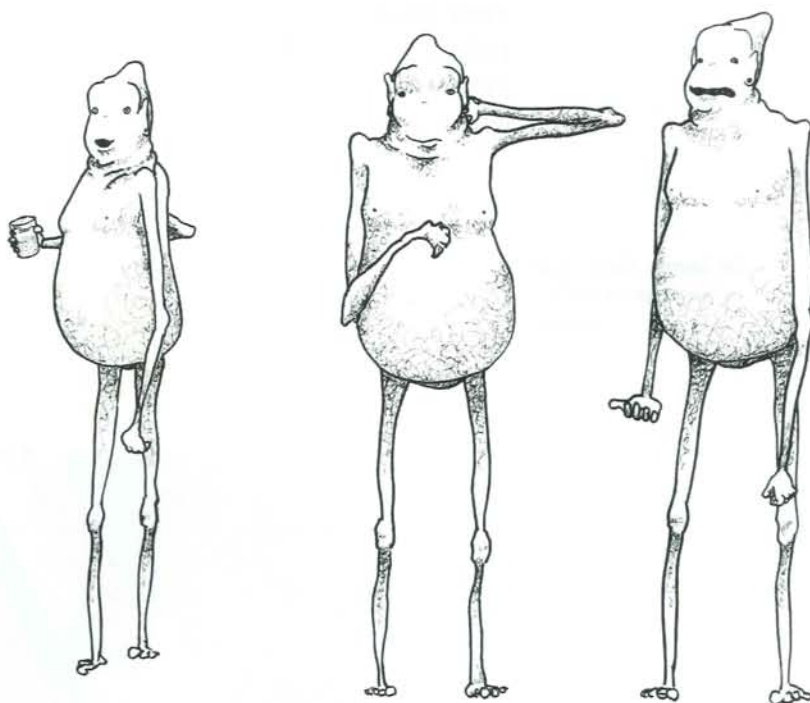


about to shit all over the sunflowers. Peter didn't mind, he and God had already soiled his gray suit, and he was beginning to feel as light as a Coo-coo feather again. Peter drove that redline, pell-mell in the rain, from the bloody tributaries of the Missouri River to Bird City. He had an inkling he was destined for Kingdom Come (but had no idea how right on he was), and laughed maniacally when he saw a bumper sticker that read, "In Case of Rapture, Car Will Be Unmanned." Peter wanted Jesus to descend from heaven that instant and cause a million car pile-up from sea to shining sea. He grinned at the thought of that and hollered, "Cover the Earth! Pave the planet!" at on-coming cars, as he tooted his horn to the rhythm of the windshield wipers and swerved erratically. Peter knew the rest of his life, and his old one, were closing in on him. From here on in, he thought, the rest of this story would write itself right off the page, and into the blissful abyss. To that, he dropped the hammer and with it, came the earth...

Ironically and regrettably for Peter, his life did a contradictory thing and wrote itself right off the page and into the back page headlines, bylines, and prolonged infamy of the American Dream gone awry. A grocery store manager from Walla Walla, Washington found the pink Cadillac, abandoned in the loading dock of a Piggly Wiggly's. When the deputies arrived, there was an owl on the hood of the car, biting off the head of a mouse, blood splatter on the windshield, and running down the side. The next day, it was the front-page picture in the *Walla Walla World Herald*. There were reports of a dimwitted thirty-something waitress from Big Al's Diner in Bird City, Kansas that had disappeared with a mysterious man in a gray suit with grass stains. He'd

reportedly walked in, flirted with the aforementioned waitress, ordered a hot roast beef sandwich, and ate it with giddy delight. After he'd finished, he wrote something on a napkin and slipped it to her as she picked up his plate. The next thing Big Al knew, his third best waitress was leaving abruptly in a pink Cadillac with said man in question. Two days later she was found half-naked in the hallway of an Indian casino in Idaho, coked out, blathering about a cow in a gazebo and a

THE UGLIES  
by Mack Maschmeyer  
pencil



man named Peter Chickenpaw who had promised her she was going to be a Mary Kay cover girl.

That was that and this was something else...

The last paragraph of Peter Pickenpaw's life ended three days later at the Kingdom Come Inn, in Portland, Oregon. It was a slum hole motel, right next to the airport, with three channels of porno, but no HBO. In room 12B, Portland

police found the body of a man who had signed in at the Kingdom Come under the assumed name Esau C. Sorrow but was later identified as Peter Pickenpaw. There were signs of forced entry and a single gunshot wound to the head, with a note on the nightstand that read, "NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE WEATHER." Peter was slumped against the headboard, his pants off, his jacket on, smiling with a frown on his face. The burden and ecstasy were protracted expressions of nothing more. You could almost see a dead albatross around his neck decomposing right before your eyes. As of late, Peter was right under the skin of reality, decomposing in the blissful abyss.

## Epilogue

Hams Prairie, Missouri. Matilda was put in a harness and lifted out of a hole in the gable. She was set down, nice and easy, with only minor injuries, and sent out to pasture again. She had shat all over the bedroom, which Ben Hummerstrum was paid to clean up. Officially, Peter was charged with first-degree manslaughter, illegal gambling, and capital fraud, but none of the charges were ever taken to court. The carport did get painted puce, but Ben was never compensated.

THE SNAPPING TURTLE'S HEAD  
by Shannon Sargent and John Bowitz  
mixed media





## WATCHING THE MUSTACHED MAN CLEAN THE GLASS DOORS

One light turns on  
    then another  
in the thick dark.  
    When the world should  
still be sleeping  
there is a man wiping windows  
for the coming rush  
for the parade of oily fingers  
                    and palm prints,  
which leave their trail  
                    their clues  
by half past ten  
and this Sherlock  
    will be here  
again  
when the world should  
still be sleeping  
wiping away the evidence  
they left behind.

He surveys the work he has done  
pacing in front of  
    the window  
tearing long sheets of beige  
paper in large crumples,  
spraying electric blue liquid  
    into patterns  
-polka dots here,  
    horizontal rows there  
wipes the window  
-wax on  
    wax off-  
with a scientific  
attention to detail,

He has done a good job.  
I wouldn't even know  
the glass is there.

AUDREY HANTLA

A courtyard and a straight-up fountain  
where the water rose until it blossomed  
at the top and shed wet petals, which  
splashed back into the urn and made  
sounds like static—white noise for a wedding.

The minister's voice was just a murmur  
under that racket, and for all we could tell  
this pair might as well have taken their vows  
from the fountain. We careworn couples,  
scarred by the love wars, might have cried  
had we heard the usual promises, so impossible  
so sincere. No, it was a relief to hear  
what the fountain had to offer instead—

It advised rising. Rise and do not worry  
about the fall to come. Better emerges  
from worse, health from sickness, and riches  
from poverty. The heart jets blood toward  
the sunshine of thought and the sky of breath,  
but sobs come tumbling back and pool  
in the chest. No matter, the fountain said.  
The heart goes on with its work, like  
a proper marriage, fed by its own failings.

STEPHEN COYNE

# WHERE ARE MY GLASSES?

BY COLIN O' SULLIVAN



A relationship's survival often necessitates that visions of a loved one be blurred. The mind distorts inconsistency and airbrushes over imperfection. I open the door to three happy dogs. Tongues are lapping, tails wagging, paws pawing at my blue jeans, a blend of their odors all about. Their back paws dance on the blanket Laura got for Christmas, once muted lavender, but now dirty purple and stained, a fur infested mess. It's a mess in there, but I'm not surprised. The dogs haven't been let out. There is urine and feces on the rug—that's a lovely smell.

The living room is padded with blankets, a comforter, shoe boxes, bed and throw pillows, a sack from Target, another from Kohl's, and raw hide bones saturated with the dogs' saliva and blood. The dogs are methodically wearing away at an incomplete frame-decorating project. Some pictures and seashells are glued to frames, some portraits are helpless and decapitated, heads and torsos ripped and torn. Spots of white shell dust on the carpet indicate some shells met a similar fate.

"Shit!"

"Hey honey, what's wrong?" Laura says from the bedroom.

"Oh, one of the dogs shit," I say. "Either Sara or Otis. Gracie's would be larger."

"Mere!" says Laura. It's her cute way of saying come here. Everything she does is cute.

"Just a second."

I have to let the dogs out, then clean up the poop. I'll need one paper towel to pick up the poop and three to soak up the pee. What would I do without paper towels?

I walk around the corner of the living room. Laura's arms are stretched out, palms pointing at me, and she has a wide smile. "Mere!" Speaking makes her smile open up as the "-ere" is drawn out, sounding like a cartoon bomb falling off a cliff.

She is pinned against the bed. An unseen force has held her in bed for days, maybe weeks. Or has it been months now? She is in bed waiting for my embrace, needing it, squirming for it. I stumble over the clothes, and shoes and such. I fall into her arms. Her whole body wiggles, I force my hands under her back, her arms around my neck. She kisses my cheeks, like a woodpecker hunting for food. Her smell is strong and sweet, body mixed with bed odor. I roll myself over to the other side of bed and settle in next to her.

"Hi!" I say to her.

"Hi!" She returns. "So how's your day?"

"It was ok; calculus was kind of rough," I say.

"Yeah," she says, and then kisses my nose.

I am so close to her face that my eyes cross. We have a long kiss. Our tongues tangle, let my hands explain calculus and chemistry, her fingers tell me about the last episode of *Next Top Model*. This bedspread has to go. I taste the salt on her neck; my feet and hands push and tug at the covers. The area behind her ear tastes sour; the smell of her incubated body, trapped under the covers, is free. It intoxicates us. I am not out of control, but under a new control. A powerful king has risen, and he has a plan for his kingdom. The boundaries are redrawn, the fields tilled, and the peasants rise up in glory, a new king has been crowned and the future looks good. The mood settles, somewhat abruptly, and we enjoy a smoke. The TV is playing, but I can't focus. I flick my ashes in the overflowing tray resting on my chest.

"Do you have to work?" she asks.

"Yeah, at two," I say to her, staring blankly at the television.

"That's not bad, when you done?" she asks.

"Six or seven," I reply.



"I wish you never had to work; I wish we could be together all day long—forever."

"Well, I have to work," I say. She turns her attention to the TV. It is as if I have to defend the need to work. I don't know if

breath entering my nostrils, track it as it flows into my lungs, I imagine it traveling deep into my belly. As I exhale, I imagine the air being drawn up the length of my spinal cord and over the top of my head. I place my attention on the air leaving my lungs, exiting through the nostrils. My body is moving like the waves of an ocean, a rhythm of waves throwing themselves at the beach and getting pulled back by a relentless and powerful sea. I am shocked into a reality of Laura digging into a bag of potato chips, every movement of her hand releases disruptive crackle-waves. I raise my head off the pillow to look at her. She points the open end of the bag at me. "No" I say. My head returns to the pillow. I add the crackling sounds of a Hy-Vee brand Doritos bag to my mantra.

It has been seven months since Jon died. He was her brother and my best friend. His death has been hard for both of us. I too am intimate with the pain she feels. She struggles hard with death's demons, but today decides she can return to work. Not just any job though, she doesn't want to work at some mindless job making no money and working for some creep. But that's every job. It is hard for her to look for work, which in itself is a big step that will take time to be ready for. She has many ideas. She could work at a veterinary clinic, she loves animals. She can see about working at...well...she likes animals. I have a hard time feeling sorry for her during this job quest. Maybe it's because a quest means one has to leave the house. When she does leave it's after five in the afternoon and almost always in the direction of a bar. I have asked her if staying up late at night is why she can't wake up until after three. Her answer, "You're an asshole." She has to take baby steps, can't walk through Rome in day. There are days she wakes before



UNTITLED  
by Josh Beckwith  
mixed media

she means it that way. Am I just being too sensitive? I have to pay the mortgage, buy groceries, cigarettes and gas. There really isn't an option. I have three hours until work, and I figure a nap would be fitting. I look at Laura. She is knee deep into a reality TV show. I recognize the one hit wonders and now-grown-up child actors. The show makes me want to puke a little bit. Laura notices me looking at her.

"What?" she asks.

"Nothing, I think I'm going to take a nap," I half say and half ask.

"OK."

She has the bedspread wrapped around her like a flannel cocoon. I grab the blanket off the floor and pull it up to cover my ears. I begin a breathing exercise; I focus on the



me. For a time my vision of her clarifies. But this promise to find a job returns me to my myopia.

Her hair is in tangles, smoke seeps out between her lips in a slow and steady exhalation. She nervously taps her cigarette. Her attention is on the computer screen of her laptop. She takes a drag from the cigarette then returns it to the ashtray. Something is wrong; she is avoiding interaction. A thick shield protects her from interruption. I imagine what is going on in that head of hers. The weight of sadness slows every action, depresses the flow of signal molecules across synaptic junctions. Is it hard to get the air into her lungs? Are her ribs fighting movement? Laura's upper right eyelid spasms, telling of a struggle between her mind and body.

At times she can make me feel like I am the most important person in the world by her smile or the way she holds my cheeks between her hands to lightly support my head as we kiss. She can also be so far away in her own existence that I feel irrelevant. Her mind is her lover, her friend, and protector. While in these trances, nothing else matters; I don't matter. Sometimes I will feel it when she holds me—as if forcibly pulling, holding me tight against her reminds her we are here. But will I ever understand, be allowed to understand? She is a mysterious sea of want and denial, a home to countless shadows. In these shadows, I cannot see reality clearly.

"Hey." I say. I am happy to see her out of bed.

"Hey."

"What's up?" I ask

"Nothing, I woke up early." I try to catch her glance, but no use. "You want breakfast?"

"Nope," She says

Gracie, our Husky-Dalmatian mix, is curled up tight next to her. Laura is Gracie's mom, and I the step dad. Gracie's brown

eyes follow me as I cross the living room. Our two Boston terriers, Sara and Otis, prance behind me. Sniffing and snorting as they struggle to step on my heels. Gracie is comfortable in Laura's world of dissociation, a privilege one earns with tests of reliance and endurance. Such a struggle for a gift that is so easily withdrawn. Gracie's knowledge of coexisting with Laura and her shadows is far greater than mine. I go to the kitchen and grab a glass of water, start some coffee brewing and let the dogs out to the back yard. I come back into the living room. Gracie offers the only eye contact in the room. She has what I want, a place next to Laura, a seat in her inner circle, the role of protector. I don't like being on the outskirts of her world. On the outskirts I am always sorry for no reason. I am at a loss for words. Laura looks up at me. Her pupils are wide and her expression is dull.

"Gracie get," I say with a snap of my fingers, she harrumphs her way off the couch. I settle in next to Laura. I put my arm around her, but earn little response.

"What's up?"

"I'm MySpacing." She says.

"So?"

"What?"

"I have a new restaurant idea," I say.

"What?" she says.

"I want to call it Gary's Philadelphia Chinese," I tell her.

"Do I even want to know?"

"This is going to be awesome. See it'll be gourmet Philadelphia Chinese." I explain. "You'll have your moo goo gai pan, Szechwan beef, general Tzao's chicken, sesame shrimp, all that stuff. Sizzlin' hot Chinese food."

"That sounds great."

"Oh, that's not all," she knows that's not all; I know she knows. "So you have this awesome Chinese, but then you top it with cheese, gourmet cheese. You can choose



from sharp cheddar, Colby jack, Swiss, all of them. You hungry yet?"

"And..." she says.

"Then you melt the cheese," I continue, "Bake the crap out of that cheese until it's golden brown."

"That's really gross."

"Just wait. Then you throw sautéed onions and green and red peppers on top, shazam!"

"Doesn't Chinese already have peppers and onions?" she asks.

"Yeah, but this way the peppers are on top, ya know?"

"You are an idiot," she says.

I like getting her out of her head. I like to see her let go of the mess that surrounds her. I like it when she smiles. She thinks I'm funny. She laughs when no one else gets it. For reward I get to be with her, cuddle next to her under the covers. Chill in her cave, learn her. And this works; this makes sense to me. The one I love needing me, and me needing her. During the eighties and nineties everyone was against codependency. Now I am in a relationship that thrives on it. We depend on it, and it depends on us. This is safe and simple.

"Hey, Herold and Jen want us to come over tonight."

"OK, what are we going to do?" she asks.

"I don't know, just hangout," I say.

"Let's see what's going on."

We end up going to Jen and Herold's. She is a different person in public. She is all laughs, excited about life and happy about us. We hold hands and whisper in each other's ears. We have inside jokes about chameleons and zucchini. Our noses touch, and cheek is next to cheek. She treats me like a man; she sees me when I walk into the room, notices when I leave. Her long dusty blonde hair frames her beautiful face. She tells everyone how much she loves me.

She talks of our plans for the future, and it is wonderful. She dances in circles with their kids and tells them memorized Dr. Seuss rhymes. "Not in a box, not with fox," she says. "Not in a train, not in a plane." Jen and Harold's three children laugh and squirm as she tickles their bellies and riddles her words.

"Hey, tell them about your new job," I say.

"Oh, yeah, I got a job at Buffalo Alice," Laura says. "I'm only working weekends, but there's always shifts opening up."

Buffalo Alice is a bar downtown, on Fourth Street. I have to say, having a girlfriend working in the bar should not be a bad thing. The positives are I get any drink for a dollar, can always get beer after two, and I don't feel weird going to the bar by myself. Sounds great right? The first problem is that I like to drink too much. I don't necessarily drink often, but when I start it is difficult to stop—a runaway train with no breaks and a conductor with a concussion. Cheap drinks are not the best thing for someone who's already trying to get away from life's reality. "I'll have one distorted view of reality and two shots of jealousy, please." The next problem is the after hours parties. Laura spends all night serving drinks to drunk people, and by the end of it she needs a drink. She can always find someone having a party after the bars closes, and so we go. But I don't always go, giving rise to problem number three. She's picking up shifts during the week when I have to go to school the next morning, and sometimes on the weekends I'm wasted by nine at night and need to go home. The insecurities I have about our relationship seem to have doubled. She is a beautiful girl, who also likes to drink too much. The thought of her getting drunk and hanging out with guys until four in the morning drives me crazy. See, we hooked up a few



times while she was dating her last boyfriend before we officially started going out. I lay awake at night wondering if she has tendencies of a cheater or if I am such a great guy that our experience was special. She told me, "I've never cheated before." But I was there when she did. How did she think we hooked up? Stories I have heard about her cheating ways replay in my head, as I toss and turn. Is the saying, "once a cheater always a cheater" always true?

It is nearing four AM and still no word from her. The dogs are deep in sleep, curled up and snoring at the end of the bed. It is difficult because I am happy Laura has a job but the night is now morning. How can she have money to go out and drink but not enough to help with bills? A car door slams. I hear Laura's voice through the open window. A minute later she is stumbling into the bedroom. In an instant fear and worry turn to anger. I'm mad she is getting home so late; I'm mad that I have to wake up early and I haven't slept a minute. She throws her purse on the floor and crawls into bed. She kisses me, and I act like I am just waking up. The anger is hot in my veins, and I don't know what to say. I want to tell her I can't do this anymore; the late nights are too much for me. I need more help with the house and dogs and bills. I want her here not out with god knows who. But what do I finally say?

"Where have you been?" I say. How creative.

"After work I went with Kim and Tiff to Bill's. Then we met up with Braden and we went to his house for a while and now I'm home with you. My favorite." She pulls my face to hers and shoves her tongue into my mouth. Her mouth tastes thick of alcohol and cigarettes.

"It's freaking late," I say.

"I know," She says. She positions herself on top of me and goes in for another

er kiss. She starts breathing hard. She starts licking my ear, loud and sloppy licks. I pull away "Why didn't you call?" I know where this is leading and I try to resist.

"Honey, I didn't want to wake you." She pulls at my shirt; I finish the job. She runs her nails through my chest hair and then suckles my neck. The air is sour with booze. One of my rules of engagement is to never deny your partner naughty time, no matter the time. If you say no once, it is like opening the No gate. They start saying no even when they're horny, just because they know how much it sucks for you. Her finger tips draw circles around my nipples. Once they are hard, she tugs lightly at them. I grab her hips and pull her closer, our hips move in unison until it hurts to have her on top. I move her over so I can get on top. She tries to take her shirt off while rolling over and gets tangled. I help the shirt over her head and off her arms. Helping a woman take her pants and underwear off is one of my favorite things to do in life. It may be my life's greatest ambition. I like to savor it, but Laura has no time to cherish the moment. In no time she is lying naked. We roll around like crazed monkeys.

"You're already done?" she says. Sexing it up with drunk Laura is kind of like selling a used car to a rich girl. She's never satisfied.

"Well, yeah." I say. I'm worn out and ready for some sleep, but that's not part of the itinerary.

"Oh, OK..." she says, but I can tell you it's not.

"I'm sorry, I'm tired and I guess um..."

"You know sometimes I just want you to screw me." She says, "Do you think you can do that?"

"Yeah, I want to, too." This is when the conversation gets weird. Let's just say the next few minutes are me explaining and justifying why I don't treat her like a whore. It is the weirdest conversation I

have had with a girl. It is so confusing. I was pissed at her for coming home so late, and now she is pissed at me because I don't do it properly. It just feels like a burden. This conversation is followed by her crying. She does this almost every time she comes home from the bars. She is happy, we have sex, and she finds something to argue about then ends up crying about her brother. I fall asleep holding her in my arms.

I wake up worn out, still angry, ashamed, and sad. I start my coffee brewing and try to figure out what to do. Last night was crazy. I feel so confused. I try to read the paper, but the words jump all over the page. I don't know who to talk to. This is not something you can just talk to anyone about. I want to leave her right now, I want to throw her out, wake her up

and get her out of my house. The drinking and fighting are horrible. I don't know what to do. She is so helpless and sweet one minute and then the next she is an evil thrashing little demon. I feel like I can't sit down, I can't relax, I have to keep moving. I start to clean up the house a bit then get ready for work. I take a long shower and thoroughly scrub myself with soap twice over and rub shampoo into my scalp until it hurts. Then I just let the hot water massage my forehead. Some times we can't hear our own stories. They are read to us by our daily experiences and told by the people closest to us. The shower has opened my eyes. I am ready to see matters more clearly now, so I ask myself, "Where are my glasses?"

## BONDING WITH BROTHER

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Steam rolls  
Shit  
It happened again  
Shit shit shit  
Clarabelle groans and steams more  
Open the hood and wait  
The game has become tedious:  
Wait for the car to cool  
Chat with brother  
(He knows more about cars anyway)  
Wait for the car to cool  
Kick the tire  
    (I never realized just how cool brother was)  
Curse  
Wait for the car to cool  
Pour the water  
I consistently lose this game  
Sit in the car  
Pray  
Drive home  
Cautiously and with flashers  
Ignore angry glances  
    (Who drives under 55 on the four lane?)  
Pull in the driveway  
Steam rolls  
Shit

TREY K. BLACKBURN



# THE LILY LIE

BY LAURA HOMAN

I'm getting really tired of this music. They should get some new CD's or whatever that music comes from. Being in this damn elevator every day for the past three months is a little too much, and these flowers are heavier than you'd think they'd be. The bell dings for the fourth floor, and I step off into the sterile hallway of the hospice section of the nursing home. The smell of bleach is always strongest right here. Walking down the long hallway, I pass the woman who sits in the wheelchair all day staring down the hall. I say hello to her, but she hasn't responded in weeks. The head nurse, Susie, waves at me as I walk into the care room.

"Hey Mom, how you doing today?" I say, as if she will respond. "It's beautiful outside. The birds are singing and spring is coming."

Only silence follows as she sits staring straight ahead in the angled hospital bed. She looks so weak and old. She's only sixty-eight. I never really thought of my mom as old before now. Her face is pale, with sunken eyes and wrinkles outlining every smile or frown she's ever had. Her hair is limp and scraggly. She hasn't eaten for who knows how long. How much longer can her body take this punishment?

I look around this room I've been in hundreds of times, and I notice how small it is. The room is plain with only one window allowing in a small breeze and a little light. There are a few odd paintings of unrecognizable landscapes only doctors seem to have. The bedside table has a vase holding dead lilies.

"I brought you more flowers today. They're lilies, your favorite."

"Oh aren't those pretty Miss Grace?" Susie says walking into the room.

Once again, Mom makes no response.

"How's she doing today? Anything changed?" I have to ask, even if I already

know that the answer will be the same as every other day.

The first time her disease started to show was about a year ago. I'll never forget the day I got the phone call from her neighbor and friend, Mrs. Peterson, telling me that my mother had been wandering up and down the street for hours. Mrs. Peterson had even called out to her asking what she was doing, but Mom didn't respond. I left work, headed to Mom's house, and saw her on the side of the road at the end of her block. I pulled the car over and went after her. Calling "Mom" didn't faze her, so I started calling her name. After about five "Graces," I caught up with her and touched her on the shoulder. She was startled, like she'd been deep in thought.

"Mom, what are you doing?" I said. She looked at me as though she didn't know me. It was a very strange feeling, your mother not knowing you.

"Do you know where I live?" she said like a small child.

I must have given her a very strange, confused look. I can only imagine what it must have looked like. My mom couldn't remember where she lived? Was she serious?

"Good joke, Mom. Let's take you home."

She followed me back to my car looking a little worried, but she got in anyway. I had to tell her to buckle up, like she'd never been in a car before. What was with her? When we got out of the car, Mom looked around curiously, inspecting the area.

"This is my house?" She looked at me for reassurance.

"Yes, Mom, you've lived here for 10 years. Don't you remember it?" I know it was a stupid question. Obviously, she didn't remember otherwise she wouldn't be so confused, but I was having a hard time



understanding. We walked up to the door and stood there for a few seconds before I put together the fact that she probably didn't know where her keys were either. I grabbed mine out of my pocket and opened the door. I walked in first and held the door for her. She stood in front of the step looking into the dim house. "C'mon Mom—It's okay."

"Alright," she stepped inside. "But it doesn't look right." Standing in the entryway, she looked around while I walked farther into the house. That's when I noticed the state the house was in. My mom, usually the cleanest person I've ever known, had not cleaned the house in weeks. There were dirty dishes stacked up in the kitchen and even left out on the table. Clothes strewn on the furniture, trash on the floor, and the TV had been left on. Mom was living like a messy college student. I picked some clothes off the couch and settled her down in front of the TV. I knew she'd been forgetting little things, but I didn't think it was this bad.

"I'll be right back. Just watch TV for a second." I felt like I was baby-sitting.

I walked over to the neighbor's house and knocked on the door. I'd known Mrs. Peterson for most of my life; she and my mother have been good friends. She opened the door, and asked if my mother was alright. She then led me into her living room.

"I got her inside watching TV. Do you know what's going on with her? She couldn't remember where she lived, and she didn't seem to recognize me." I explained what had happened, and the look on Mrs. Peterson's face got progressively more worried.

"I was afraid that's what had happened. She's been forgetting things more and more nowadays. Gracie never used to be forgetful, but now I'll invite her over for tea and such, and she'll never come. I call over

there and she says she forgot; she'll laugh, and say something about a senile moment, but I just don't know." Mrs. Peterson sat down on her couch and looked down like she was thinking, or maybe even praying, I couldn't tell.

I looked around the house noting how clean it was, especially compared to Mom's. Everything was in its place, no dishes in the living room, clothes all out of sight, and the trinkets and knickknacks were dust free. I was lost in thought when Mrs. Peterson started speaking again, making me jump a little.

"The other day Gracie came over wearing the oddest assortment of clothes—sweatpants and a nice blouse. You know your mama. She doesn't wear sweatpants in public, especially not over to someone's house. She is far too proper for that. I asked her what she was wearing and she looked at me like I'd asked her the price of fish in Egypt or something. Things like that have been happening more and more lately. I'm worried about her, Nicky."

I cringed internally at the use of the name "Nicky". I hate that name, but I never felt like I could correct her. She had always been so fond of it, ever since I was little. Mom calls me that damn name too, and Mrs. Peterson had just thought it was so cute she'd never stopped using it.

Blaming myself for not coming around more to check up on Mom, I asked to use the bathroom, mostly for a chance to think.

The bathroom was clean and smelled like flowers. I sat down on the edge of the tub and put my face in my hands. I don't think I've ever sighed so much in my life. I didn't want it to be what I thought it was, Alzheimer's. It's a terrible word.

It's been almost a year since that dreadful phone call. A parade of doctors has seen her since then and they all tell us that she



has a very intense kind of Alzheimer's. It is one that moves rapidly and drastically through the mind. As time went on, it became harder and harder for her to recall memories, and she became depressed. Finally, she withdrew into herself and hasn't spoken since.

"She hasn't moved all day—didn't even grumble when we gave her a bath." Susie says. "Nick, it's been months since the last time she spoke. I'm so sorry."

I know it's probably hopeless, but I can't bring myself to give up on her. Susie leaves me to my own thoughts and leaves the room. A book sits open on the table on the other side of the bed. Why didn't I notice that before? It looks like someone must be reading to Mom. Who could be doing that? Not many people know she's in here or that she has this condition.

"Hello Darla." I hear Susie say from the nurse's station. I don't give it much thought. Someone walks into the room and my curiosity gets the better of me.

"Susie, who's been reading this book?" I turn around to face her, but it isn't Susie. It's a little girl. Well I suppose "little" doesn't really fit her. She's, oh, probably about nine or so. When did I start to feel so old? I'm only forty-four, but I feel like I'm eighty.

"I'm not Susie, but I'm the one reading the book." The girl says, with her head raised proudly. "It's a book that's supposed to be for someone older, but I can read it no problem."

"Oh...uh, who are you?"

"I'm Darla!" she says, as if I should already know that. Wearing a big smile, she walks over to the table, picks up the book, and scans the page.

"Well, it's nice to meet you, Darla. I'm Nick."

"I know who you are, silly." Darla rolls her eyes and laughs, but I'm confused.

"Really? How do you know that?"

"Cause, she told me." She says, pointing at my mother.

I am shocked. My sensible side tells me this was a ridiculous child fantasy and could not possibly be true, but my hopeful side yearns to know more, to make it real. "How did she do that?" I have to know.

"She smiles. The guy's name in this book is Nick, just like you. And when I read the name, she smiles." Darla looks very impressed with herself for figuring this out.

I know I must look skeptical. I feel skeptical. Could this really be true? Could my mom still show emotion after all this time of no emotion at all? "You read to my mom?"

"Yep. My grandma had the forgetful sickness too. She couldn't remember anything anymore and had to live in a place like this. She liked to read but forgot how to, so I read to her. Then she went to heaven. I like to come here and read to other people who forgot how to, like your mom." Darla says.

Susie walks into the room. "It's a lovely thought," she says. "But I think Miss Grace's good days are gone, Darla. Perhaps you should move on to someone else's room. Maybe go read to someone who will still enjoy your company." Susie smiles sadly at Darla and fluffs her hair.

"Miss Susie, I know she can hear me. I just know it!" Darla says firmly, crossing her little arms. "And I'm not moving! I like reading to Miss Grace."

Susie nods her head with a grim smile on her face, seeming to understand that she won't change Darla's feelings, and leaves the room.

Susie must have missed the first part of my conversation with Darla. Otherwise, I think she'd have something medical to say about why Mom reacting couldn't be true. I want to believe Mom's still there, somewhere inside. I want to see it.



"Darla, will you start to read, please?" I say, in the crazy hope of seeing this miracle smile. Darla settles herself on the end of the bed and begins. It's some obscure book I've never heard of, but she reads happily like it's the best fairy tale she's ever heard. She reads on, and I stare at my mother, waiting.

Darla comes to a point where she says "Nick" and glances at my mom, too, while continuing to read. Mom makes no movement, no expression, and my teetering hopes come crashing down. I can feel myself breaking apart, and I look at Darla. She is disappointed. We were so excited, but nothing happened. I stand up and walk around the bed to the table with the dead flowers next to the new ones. I pick up the old ones and start to walk out.

"Lilies," a weak, raspy voice says. A voice that sounds so familiar. I must be going crazy, but I stop anyway. I turn around hoping against hope and damning my stupidity for even thinking it might be possible. I look at my mom, inspecting her, trying to tell if she really had spoken, but her face remains impassive.

"Keep reading," I tell Darla. Maybe this reading thing makes her brain remember things, or maybe I really have just lost my mind.

Darla reads on glancing desperately at my mother from time to time. Maybe she heard it too. That would mean I'm not crazy, or both of us are. I'm not sure which one I'm hoping for more.

"Nick arrived at the house and walked in the door," Darla reads and then looks furtively at Mom.

"Take your shoes off, Nicky," My mother says.

"Oh my God! She spoke! Mom! Mom, I'm right here. Look at me. Can you hear me? Please, Mom, please talk to me. It's Nicky!" I am practically screaming at her. I know that this probably isn't the best way

LOCKED DOOR  
by Kate Kes  
photograph, film



to communicate, but I can't control myself. My mother spoke. Even with me screaming at her, her face is impassive. It's as if she never spoke at all. Susie comes running in asking what's wrong. She must think that I've finally lost it.

"She talked! Mom talked!"

"She hasn't spoken in months, Nick." Susie looks at me like she's telling me that my puppy died. "She's not going to start now."

"But she did! She told me to take my shoes off!" Oh great, that sounds even more insane. Way to go Nick.

"Miss Susie, she did! I was reading the book and said that he walked inside the



house and she told him that! She did!" Darla is nearly bouncing with excitement, and I have a nine-year-old backing up my story, not exactly a prime witness.

Susie looks at us patronizingly. "Well, show me."

Susie and I practically grew up together. She's Mrs. Peterson's daughter and only about two years older than me, but right now I feel like a child again, with the adults just allowing me my dreams, nodding their heads and smiling. Darla

but eventually I fall silent. My mother falls asleep and I sit there watching her. It's getting late and I know I should be going but I can't drag myself away right now. I find myself bowing my head to pray. Praying is not something I do.

"God, please help my mom. I'm not expecting a cure or anything. I just want a chance to tell her I love her and for her to really say it back. Not in my mind, but in reality. I just don't know how much longer I can take this. She can't hold on much longer, I know. Please God, help her somehow." I whisper amen and lean my head back in the chair. I feel so tired.

Birds are singing. It's morning! I look at my watch—half past ten. I'm late for work. I pick up the old flowers I'd set on the floor next to me last night and stand up. Mom's still asleep, so I don't disturb her. I walk out quietly and shut the door behind me. The morning nurses greet me as I pass them, and I smile. Now with dead flowers, I walk down the bleached hallway into the elevator.

The same song is still playing. I feel like I'm Bill Murray in a perpetual *Groundhog's Day* cycle, repeating the same day all the time. Only there's nothing to be learned.

I get home, call into work, and tell them I'm sick. I deserve a break. I start to go through some of Mom's things that I've moved from the house into my apartment. I come to a box that's marked "Nick's Movies." I used to love running around with a camcorder and recording any old thing. I had no idea that Mom had kept those. I open the box. "Christmas '87," "Spring Fest '89," and "Mother's Day '91," are just a few of the videos. I make a movie marathon for myself, starting with Christmas. I laugh at my terrible camera skills and the random things I recorded. By Spring Fest, I'd gotten a bit better at walking around without too much dizzy-



**FRAGILE**  
by Anne Torkelson  
Sculpture

begins to read another section out of the book, but nothing happens. We try again several more times, but still no response. After some time, Susie walks away. Darla goes home shortly after that too. I am left alone in the room with my mother. I keep talking to her in hopes that she'll respond,



ing movement. Mother's Day is the one I'm afraid of. I slide it into the player and watch my mother on the screen happy and healthy, completely aware of who she is and the world around her.

I remember the day well. I'd made her pancakes and burned them terribly, but she forced them down with motherly love. She laughed at the present I'd brought her from an old craft store. It was a cheap lily flower pin. I hadn't known what flower was her favorite, so I guessed.

"How did you know this was my favorite flower?" she said.

"I just guessed. Was I right, Mom?"

"Yes," she said with a laugh. "You were very right, indeed."

She wore that pin every day up until the time when her memory faded. I wonder now where it is.

There is a knock at the door, and I pause the movie. Mrs. Peterson is calling my name and saying "hallo, hallo."

"I'm coming, Mrs. Peterson. I'm coming." What in the world is she doing this far from home? I open the door, and I cannot for the life of me remember her first name. Could I really have grown up around her without knowing that?

"Hello, Mrs. Peterson. What are you doing way out here?"

"Hello, Nicky. I just came to see how you were doing." She comes into the living room. "How's your mama, dear?"

"I'm doing just fine. Mom's the same as always." I say, not mentioning the happenings of yesterday. I don't want to give the poor old woman the same crazy hope I had. That hope is gone from me now anyway.

"Susie called me yesterday saying you were having a fit. Said your mama had talked to you and such." She is frowning and her eyes are full of concern.

Do I look sick or something? Damn

it. I should have known that Susie would call her mother on me.

"Oh, it's nothing to worry about. I just let it get the better of me is all." I hope she doesn't sense the lie. If she does, she is polite enough to let it pass.

"She loves you, Nicky." Mrs. Peterson's wrinkled face softens, and she looks at me with tender eyes. "She always will. Whether she remembers your face or not she will always be your mom."

I feel tears begin to burn my eyes, so I look away from her. The TV still glows with the frozen image of my mom. She's sitting on the couch laughing and holding the pin up to her shirt. I turn back to look at Mrs. Peterson, but she is staring at the TV, her own tears welling.

"Susie tells me you bring her lilies. That they're your mama's favorite flowers." She says it so quietly I can barely hear her.

I nod my head, but I'm confused. What does that have to do with anything? Realizing that she can't hear my nod, I clear my throat. "That's right."

A devilish look crosses Mrs. Peterson's face like a teenager about to tell the latest gossip.

"You want to know a secret?" she says, crinkling her eyes with a smile and looking back at me.

"Sure," I say wondering where she could be going with this. Has she lost her mind too?

"Years ago when you made her burnt pancakes for Mother's Day and gave her a pin with a lily on it, she told you that you did wonderfully because that was her favorite flower, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, my dear, she lied to you. You were so proud of your gift and the fact that you'd thought it up, bought it, and surprised her all by yourself she didn't have the heart to tell you that she hated the

damn flower." She let out a deep throaty laugh. "And it really backfired against her. Every time you bought her a present, for years after that, it would have a lily on it."

"She lied?" I say, confused. "She could have just told me."

"Oh ha ha, good joke Nicky, but you would have been one broken-hearted little boy if that had been the wrong flower. Your mama knew that. So she told you lilies were her favorite, and she kept that lie up for all these years." She says, with a sweet smile.

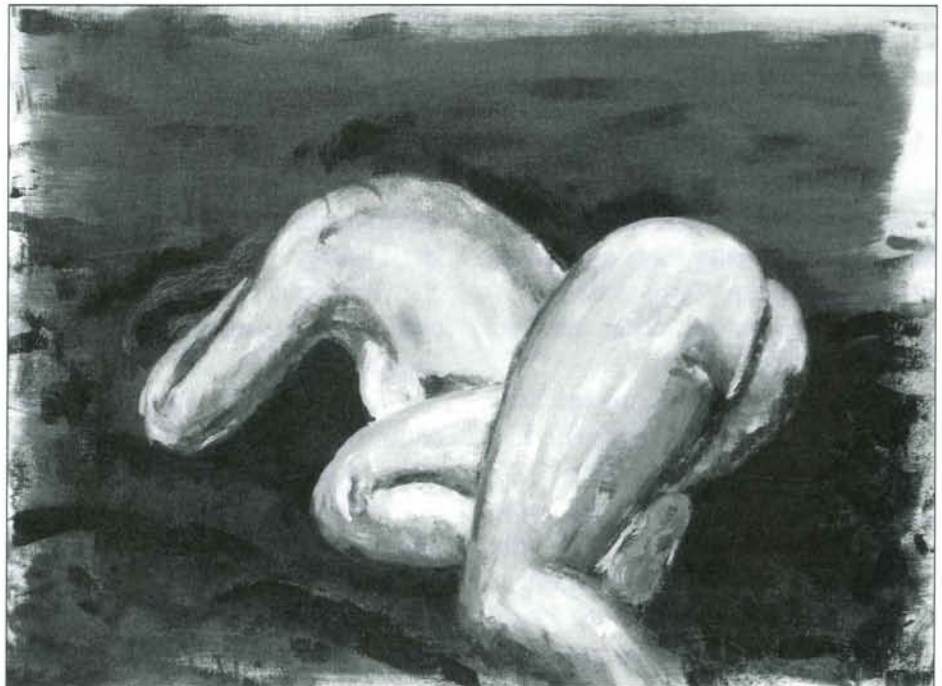
"But—"

"She loves you, my dear." She turns back to stare at the image on the screen. "She loves you." The room settles into silence. I turn my attention back to the

TV as well. Shifting in her seat, Mrs. Peterson sighs.

I sit in my chair, thinking about my mom's lifelong lie. She'd lied to me every birthday, Mother's Day, and Christmas. I'd always given her flowers on her birthday, and they'd always been lilies. I walk back into my room where the frozen picture of my mother putting the lily pin on is still lingering on the TV. In that image, she has a wide smile on her face, one full of love. I promise myself that I will always remember her just like that: young, beautiful, and full of life.

With tears running down my cheeks, I stare at the picture on the TV and say, "I love you too, Mom. I love you too."



**TWISTING RECLINE**  
by Josh Beckwith  
Acrylic



When you're sixty eight and  
still kickin' it,  
we'll take a trip  
down the Appalachian trail  
and make trail mix,  
with things we gather.  
That same coffee mug  
you'll carry for all 2,000 miles,  
through New Jersey and Vermont,  
That same shirt you'll wash  
in rivers, scrubbing red plaid  
alongside wide-eyed trout—  
their scales are small rainbows  
on mirrors—  
stopping into town to rinse  
your feet in spewing gutters,  
the rusted gutters of cafes.  
Cafes are cheating, you'll say.  
Not roughing it.  
Ha! I'll say. These awful chili fries  
are rough enough.  
I'll add them to the trail mix,  
along with the razor blade,  
the fork, and the space blanket.  
Along with the Polaroid  
of Geoff, the one legged hiker,  
and the wild boar he befriended.

When Geoff stops to rest,  
leaning on his crutch,  
wiping away the sweat  
of the afternoon sun,  
the boar lingers,  
and sniffs  
the space  
where Geoff's foot had been,  
and snorts heavily,  
expecting  
food.

AUDREY HANTLA

## WHEN IRISH EYES ARE SMILING

---

Why do you damned Americans  
find me so interesting?  
I'm nothing more than  
a regular full-blooded Irishman, yet  
you all find it so intriguing that  
I came to Iowa of all places,

I have an Irish accent—  
I hold my liquor better than you—  
I speak twice as fast—  
I have been to more countries than  
you can find on a map.

Americans are the most ignorant  
race on the face of the planet.  
I tell you tosspots I don't have a job,  
I live off pots of gold  
at the end of rainbows  
and capture the leprechauns  
to become my servants.  
I have over thirty of them,  
I keep at least two under my bed

You hear my accent,  
and instantly stereotype

Drunk  
Potato Scavenger  
Four leaf clover collector  
Blarney stone kisser  
Shamrock enthusiast  
Shillelagh swinging  
Brawler.

KYLE THAYER

## AVOIDING PREGNANCY

---

Kiri, the healer, told  
the couple to move  
their arms and yell  
"We're not ready for you!"  
She said,  
"You don't need condoms  
to maintain your freedom  
and certainly no  
oral contraceptives."

The way it works,  
you see,  
is that the spirit of the child  
enters at the point of climax.  
If you tell it not to come,  
it won't, but you must be careful.  
Because if the spirit does come inside,  
you will have a child. It is very important  
for both of you to flail your arms in a  
pushing motion and yell as  
loud as you can when you  
reach that point.  
It will work and  
the spirit will not  
join your union and  
you will not have a  
pregnancy.  
After a year of practicing this method,  
Susanna got pregnant.  
John, the music-therapist, had to play faster songs  
so he could treat more patients and  
save up money for their coming baby.

"It's a boy." Suzie said.  
"Oh, did you get an ultrasound?" I asked.  
"No, Kiri told us.  
Kiri said,  
'He's a very strong spirit.  
We should be honored  
Because he chose John and I.'  
We weren't ready before,  
but Kiri says that  
we are now."

On a hot morning  
On a little beach  
On a pond in Iowa

I was told  
to pick up trash  
Latex gloves,  
a five-gallon bucket.

I went forth  
across the mini-desert

There were cigarette butts  
There were beer cans  
There were diapers  
There were pop bottles  
There were swimsuits  
There were fast food sacks

And other odd bits.

I would cuss  
at the hooligans  
who defiled this place  
by carving gang signs  
in all of our signs.

Los Lobos, 16th Street Locos, Beaners were here and such.  
I painted over it at least ten times this summer.

I knew they left all the cigarette butts  
beer cans, diapers, pop bottles, fast food sacks, swimsuits  
and other odd bits.

Near the water's edge  
some plastic stuck out  
of the sand. Odd bit

I leaned over,  
picked it  
up and hoisted  
a large-mouth bass  
from the sand.

A great trophy  
now in hand  
on a Necromancer  
outdoor show.

Maggots roiled about  
like boiling rice pudding.

Horried by my thumb in  
the cellophane jaws, I cringed.

My reaction to toss it  
provided much fish-food

and I fought my gag reflex  
as the smell lingered.

KIEL PLOEN



# THE VILLAIN

BY JONATHAN GREEN

With a bottle of Ancient Age in his left hand and a case of Coors in his right, Jeremy Tout tried to fumble the door to his apartment open. It was a Friday night, and he was desperately trying to figure out what to do for supper.

Walking into the living room, he placed the beer in his dorm fridge that he now used for booze. He put the bottle of whiskey on top of the fridge, and grabbed a clean, if somewhat dusty lowball and poured himself a healthy dose. He had neglected to buy soda, so straight whiskey and beer were the choices tonight.

Tout sipped his dram while he meandered into the kitchen. Clicking on the cheap fluorescent light over the sink, he read for the hundredth time the bumper sticker he had hung there:

*May god be with you  
on your quest for a clue*

That's about how he felt tonight; indeed, it was how he felt most nights.

He grabbed a banana and walked back into the living room, turned on some music, and turned out the lights, firing a few tea light candles as he walked from fixture to fixture.

And then he stood up again. He quickly ate the banana, and walked to the garbage, throwing away the peel.

Tout walked back to the couch and resumed his seat.

And then he quit his seat, again. This time, he had forgotten his cigarettes. Tout grabbed them from the desk across the room, thinking himself very clever to remember the matches and ashtray.

A third time he settled into his preferred corner of the couch, letting his legs dangle over the edge, he slouched. He sloshed the whiskey around in the glass, and finished it before lighting a cigarette. The Diamond sparkled as he scrapped it

along the sole of his boot, and then he placed the glowing orb to the tip of the Marlboro, inhaling that first drag, a mixture of sulfur and smoke. It burned, but no more than the whiskey.

...and thinking of whiskey, he poured himself another, between puffs of the cigarette, and he drew a beer from the refrigerator. Tout hastily drank the whiskey this time, now that he had acclimated to it. He did not yet open the beer; it was some matter of personal pride to him to drink straight spirit without considering a chaser.

He put the glass down on the fridge, and then put out the Marlboro in the ashtray, also on the fridge. Looking through the glass of the dispensary for spent smokes, he noticed, again for the hundredth time, the bumper sticker he had affixed to the top of the fridge:

*The least you can do to a man is kill him*

That particular sticker was a good one to contemplate when he was drinking, Tout thought, and grabbed the beer, cracking it open to the satisfying sound of a little more relaxation just sips away.

He had thought about that particular bumper sticker so long now it wasn't even thinking. Like a path trodden through golden grass in his head, he had trampled a circular path around the thing. The grass would not grow anew; he just walked the same path over and over again, thinking and thinking.

On the one hand, he could completely understand the sentiment: once you're dead, there isn't much left to complain about. It'd be like a big nap and the alarm clock would never go off.

Sounded kind of nice.

But on the other hand, death was bullshit. Tout was young, but he had seen enough death to know that it wasn't some-



thing to be celebrated. A character on a TV show had once said that there was no dignity in death, or something like that.

Something like that. His head swirled around the conflicting ideas of death as a permanent holiday and death as being the end of everything. Could you enjoy a holiday if you couldn't think anymore? No, but you couldn't be pained, either.

The music skipped, a loud, electronic, obnoxious sound, and jarred his mind out of the rut. Without willing it, without meaning it, without even realizing it, his head settled back down to a slightly different spot than it had found itself in before the jolt. Just outside of the rut.

Tout had always thought that the bumper sticker implied something painful. But now the words reformed in his skull, rearranging themselves in a new way.

*Death is of the greatest insignificance*

His mind had gone off of the rails, like it sometimes did. More rarely now did he enjoy these superfluous moments of insight, but when they did come there were manna. He was racing around in the badlands in his brain, feeling out the dynamics of this new idea, this reassessment. It was almost to a destination of sorts, the excitement rising in him. Trout sipped beer as coolly as if he were matching socks after laundry.

But inside there was a symphony tuning before the show, and the tension was mounting.

The candles seemed to burn brighter for a moment; the music was louder. Something whacked him in the temple, and he thought he might pass out for a moment. He was seeing stars.

Nearly dropping his beer, Tout steadied himself with his free hand, feeling ill. With some sense of balance regained, he put that left hand to his temple, trying to discover what had struck him.

The candles returned to their dull flicker, and the music was again a familiar tune he knew much like the palm of his hand: intimate, close, loyal, boring, familiar, familiar.

There was another knock on the door.

The blow to his head had been a knock. He had been so engaged in his thinking that it had hurt when his concentration had been broken. The knock was harder now, but it did not hurt at all. Tout, beer in hand, walked slowly to the door. The floor creaked below his feet, but there was yet a third knock when he had put his hand on the handle, already turning.

The knob had turned as far as it could travel, and his palm slipped across it as he continued to twist. His palm was sweaty. He pulled the door open. Trout nearly thrust the door closed again.

The vestibule light was off, and there were but three tea lights burning in the apartment. The door obscured two of them, and the third was directly behind him. The only light bounced around him, hitting her face indirectly. But he would have known the face in darkness; even with the music playing he knew the sound of her breath. If he hadn't been so deep in thought when she had knocked, he would have known that, too, he thought.

He stood there, feeling his hair turning grey, the vitality draining out of him.

*The least you can do to a man is kill him*

*Death is of the greatest insignificance*

Jeremy Tout felt nothing happening, he felt himself suffering the greatest insignificance. His breathing had stopped; the beer was slipping from his fingers. All of the weight of his body was suddenly below his knees, the rest of him a shell and ready to float away.

He had fouled his one chance to slam the door closed before this happened. But hope



had trumped experience, instinct was bested by longing. He had failed to do the hard thing, and now he was suffering a long death.

She stood there, looking back at him, inspecting him, critiquing him. He felt her breath, and he shuddered. Her gaze moved upon him and felt lighter than a feather across his skin. The hair on his neck, in a last act of desperation, stood straight. He could feel his heart dying.



RAINY DAY  
by Anne Torkelson  
Mixed Media



He exhaled.

Time returned to normal. His palm had been sweating, but now everything was. It seemed as if he had sweat through his shirts in a matter of seconds. Chemicals were coursing through his body in a way that he could only begin to understand, in a way he could not control.

He inhaled.

Control seemed to return. He released the doorknob, and transferred the beer to that hand, to try and stem the sweat. He swallowed. "Come in."

He slowly backed away from the door, pivoting to his right, as if he were but an extension of the wooden thing. She crossed the threshold, a step at first, examining the lay of the furniture, and then advanced ahead a second step. She was clear of the door.

Tout closed the door behind her, and turned to her. She was facing away from him. He looked at the back of her head, trying to focus his mind. His glance drifted down...

But he marshaled his control and placed his gaze directly on the back of her head again. He forced himself to take a quick swig of beer, trying to regain some sense of normalcy.

This, of course, would have been normal five years ago.

He walked ahead of her a step, to the coffee table, and set his beer down. Again, he turned, this time to her. "Can I take your coat?"

She nodded, and they came together for a moment. He put his left hand on her left shoulder, gently grasping her coat, while she lowered that side of her body, allowing the wool that had draped her figure to gently slide down her arm. Her arm was not stiff, but fell to her side straight. He moved behind her, taking up the coat, as she arched her shoulders as if to stretch, only to let the slack in her body move to the right side. The rest of the coat fell away from her, limp, into his hands.

He hung her coat from the tree next to the door. She had already seated herself.

"Something to drink?"

She gently shook her head.

Tout nodded and walked to the end



of the couch: his spot, next to the dorm fridge. He bent over, put that clammy left hand on the bottle of whiskey, but then thought better. Tout left his hand there for a moment, though, and tried to herd the tomcats running around inside his gut and head.

He stooped further and grabbed another beer from the fridge, carefully set it down on the table and collected the first can, finishing the last drink. Tout walked to the garbage and dropped the empty can in.

He returned to his seat, his spot. He sat, and leaned forward, opening the second beer. The sound was the same; the sound was somehow different. The furnace was running, but he was cold. The flicker of the tea lights looked more like that from the cheap fluorescent in the kitchen than warm candle fire.

He again forced himself to drink.

"How are you?" he asked. There was a bit of beer in his mustache, and a stream dribbled down his chin, wetting his beard as well.

She cocked her head and squinted, almost imperceptibly. Wrong question.

"How's Frank?" Tout asked.

"He's dead." Again the weight inside shifted. He was sitting. His feet were iron bricks, his ass, lead. He thought he might sink through the couch and fall through the floor beneath. Gravity would pull him to the center of the earth.

*The least you can do to a man is kill him*

He closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them again. The light from the tea lights was still cold. Any warmth had left now; he was cold, almost shivering. He was sweating again, more.

"How?"

She scoffed. "You killed him."

He grimaced and set his jawbone like

a stone, pushing his tongue out against his teeth, probing them, making sure they hadn't rotted and fallen away. He forced another drink of beer and, trembling, poured more whiskey. The beer in his left hand, the bottle in his right.

"I really wish you would quit drinking."

He took a long drink of the whiskey. It, too, dribbled down his chin, and a few drops dripped onto his chest. He took another long drink, emptying the glass. He set it down on the fridge, and he lighted another Marlboro.

"Drinking won't bring him back. It won't make you feel better, either."

He could feel that insignificance boiling up in him again, like a fire leaving only ashes behind. He took a drag.

"When is the service?" He drank beer.

"Yesterday."

They both sat there in silence for a few moments. He finished his cigarette, and punched it out in the ashtray. She reached her hand out, now stiff, like there were competing forces at work. She wiggled her hand in a circle, twice. Tout handed her the ashtray, and she removed a small pipe from a purse Tout had not noticed. She produced a lighter, and put spark to bowl.

"That won't help either, Rachel."

He drank beer.

*The least you can do to a man is kill him*

Tout hadn't done much for Frank.

"It helps me deal with you." Her voice was flat. She inhaled and coughed a moment later. "I'll have a drink of water."

Tout walked to the kitchen, fumbling for a glass in the near darkness. He opened the freezer, grabbed a handful of ice cubes, and then poured water. He took the glass to the couch and offered it to her.

His arm was half extended, with the glass at its terminus. She finished

inhaling, and set the pipe down, taking the water. She snorted a wisp of smoke out of her nose and exhaled a moment later. She coughed again and drank water.

Tout drank beer.

Again she stuck her arm out. "You want some?"

Tout shook his head. "I've got enough vices as it is."

"If man is the sum of his vices, you're the biggest man around." She sipped water. "Didn't you have a bumper sticker that said that once?"

"No, I just said it a lot."

She tapped the bowl against the ashtray and then smoked what she had missed.

"Well, you were half right anyway."

Tout lighted another cigarette.

"If man were the sum of his vices, you would be the biggest man around. But man isn't the sum of his vices. You are a real piece of shit." She said the last sentence with a diction that could cut smoke.

"What happened to Frank?"

She snorted, this time because something was funny.

"I told you; you killed him. He drank himself into old age, and old age killed him, and you drove him to drink."

"Why are you here?"

"I just wanted to let you know what I think of you." With that, she stood and grabbed her coat. She did not turn around, and she did not even put the coat on. She transferred the purse into her right hand, under the coat draped over her right arm, and she opened the door. She did not bother to close it.

Tout drank beer.

He could hear her footsteps walking down the vestibule. The outer door opened. He heard the screen door creak on dry hinges. The screen door slammed shut. The phone rang.

Tout drank beer.

*The least you can do to a man is kill him*

The phone rang.

Tout drank beer.

The phone rang.

"Hello." Tout said into the receiver, as a pronouncement, not a greeting.

"You're supposed to follow me you asshole." Cell phones don't click when they hang up. But she was gone.

Tout stood.

*May god be with you  
on your quest for a clue*

Tout walked to the vestibule, and then turned the corner, breaking into a trot. He managed to get to and through the screen door without killing himself or destroying the door. Tout could see Rachel walking down the block. He sped up to catch her. She was crossing the street now, to a car parked in a gap between the street lights.

Tout didn't run to the end of the block, but crossed diagonally. She slammed the door. He was running toward the rear of the sedan. He couldn't see inside.

The car started. It began to pull away. Tout was nearly there now. At the stop sign, the car did stop. The right turn signal flashed. The car went around the corner as Tout jumped the curb. The car hit him and stopped. Tout collected himself and feebly stood. He approached the passenger door and fumbled for the handle. As he pulled, and noted that it was locked, the window slid down.

As the tinted window disappeared, things behind it became visible. First Tout saw his sister, who was staring straight ahead. The window continued upon its descent. Then Tout saw his father.

The warmth was back. The streetlights were a pleasant golden, and their radiation reflected off dew down on the dirt, the grass, and the road. This was the wrong



car. He felt dizzy, like he had bumped his head or drunk too much. Where had the other car gone?

"Hello, Jeremy," his father whispered. "How are you son?"

Tout collapsed onto the sidewalk. He felt the wet of the pavement soak through his jeans and then his undergarment. His back was against the door, and he was drained.

He felt his father's hand in his hair, tousling it like when he was a child.

"I had a nightmare," Tout said, also a whisper.

*Death is the ultimate insignificance*

"It's alright. I'm here. You're with me now."

Tout was getting wet. Was it raining? His pants were soaked, and the dew had crept up to his gut now.

"Where's sis?" he bumbled.

"I'm here," she said, but coldly.

"I'm here," Tout said.

"I'm here," his father whispered.

He stood there, feeling his hair turning grey, the vitality draining out of him.

*The least you can do to a man is kill him  
Death is of the greatest insignificance*

Jeremy Tout felt nothing happening; he felt himself suffering the greatest insignificance. His breathing had stopped; the beer was slipping from his fingers. All of the weight of his body was suddenly below his knees; the rest of him was a shell and ready to float away.

He had fouled his one chance to slam the door closed before this happened. But hope had trumped experience, instinct was bested by longing. He had failed to do the hard thing, and now he was suffering a long death.

The dew was heavy and coming faster now. His gut and his pants were wet. His was standing in a puddle, his vitality flowing out of him as if she had turned on a spigot.

She was looking into his eyes, and he gazed back at her. She was crying. She crouched down on her knees, and put the gun on the floor. She stood again, looking into his eyes, and he gazed back at her.

"The least you can do to a man is kill him," she said, crying freely now. Tout could feel the insignificance building, the moisture descending.

She stood there, looking back at him, inspecting him, critiquing him. He felt her breath, and he shuddered. Her gaze moved upon him and felt lighter than a feather across his skin. The hair on the neck, in a last act of desperation, stood straight. He could feel his heart dying.

He exhaled.

He collapsed.

She joined him.

## WHERE'S THE INSPIRATION

---

the whiskey goosebumps  
and the whiskey shits  
and the whiskey freefall  
and my whiskey hips  
that have only the weight  
of my skirts  
that sway rarely  
—they lack flirt  
and I reach for a bottle of bourbon  
or cheap whiskey to work on  
there's nothing to work on  
in the morning but the growing frustration  
and loathing  
of self and therefore everyone  
and pity  
and should we  
extrapolate some meaning  
from the way we organize our soup cans  
can we find a way of seeing  
through the chicken noodle into  
the profound ~ or are we bound  
to repeat Pete and use his  
method—alphabetical  
order of invention—how often  
we cook in the kitchen  
or should we stop  
and mention  
mean  
is the average connotation  
and alleviate it at that  
I drag on  
I swagger  
some  
I blame the whiskey  
(it blames me)

JESSI BERGIN



# THE ISLAND

BY AUDREY HANTLA

You see Ana, there was a time when I was not very honest, no, no, not very honest at all. I was a bad man, but your mother straightened me out.

I'm getting ahead of myself.

Would you like two scoops of chocolate or vanilla? Both? You are smart girl.

See when I was little, about your age, I wanted to be a magician. But my father, he shook his head and laughed at me, told me to go into carpentering like him. "Il n'est pas pratique, Henri. Non pratique." He wanted me in an honest, hardworking career. "Manual labor will make you a good man," he said "An honest man." Still, I did not listen to him, no, no, and your Uncle Claude and I would make the cat disappear. Well, first we learned how to make small coins and rocks disappear. My Maman did not like that at all. I could hide it behind my hand and up into my sleeve and many other things, but I will not give away my special secrets.

I went to Universite, to study theatre and business, and it was a lot more working than I expected, but do not think your father is a lazy man. Well, perhaps at the time I was. In my spare time, I would do my shows of magic, making money. Your Uncle Claude was very good at convincing, and he convinced me to not study as much as I should. "Henri!" he'd say, "There are places we could be right now. Ladies we could be entertaining. Put away your books and let's go." I did some bad things, Ana, and Universite was not happy.

I got a little job handing out fliers by a small theatre, but that job was no fun. I began to entertain myself by borrowing the watches of passersby, and selling them back for a small price. "Did you drop this?" I'd say. It was the look on their faces that amused me. First, confusion, and then flusterment. Yes, yes, I know it was wrong, but it was a nice way to pay for my lunches.

That's how it started, and then Claude taught me the better tricks. The mustard trick, and selling roses to tourists while unzipping waist bags. We went to fine restaurants, and at the end of the meal—after the soup and the wine and the salad and coffee, we would place a cockroach on the plate. Free!

I lived this way for a long time. I would have a small job that was very easy, and would in the meantime work on my magic and get a little extra money with my special tricks. They are not nice tricks, Ana. And I am ashamed now, but at the time I was very stupid, and thought they were fun. Now my Papa never found out about this, but my Maman probably knew. She would glare at me as I came to visit sometimes, peeling her potatoes with a brutality I had never seen, and say, "Up to your old tricks, Henri?" and I would say, "Working in a bakery? Yes, I am very tricky at baking." I think one of my friends, maybe Matteo or Patrick may have released the beans to her. "One day you will tell me the truth, Henri," said Maman. "And my son will be a good boy."

My favorite place to work was Nice, especially in Spring time. Americans and Germans and Poles would come for Carnival; the crowds would be big, distracted by the giant puppets and dancers, and I could slip here and there in the crowds and pick up wallets. One morning, during Carnival, I went into a bakery for breakfast, paid for my scone, and saw a pretty American woman. She was not very smart; she was carrying a big bag that was wide open and was buttering a croissant with smiling on her face. I knew from her smiling she must be a tourist, having her first real croissant in her first French bakery. I saw an opportunity.

I bumped past her, spilling butter on her shirt.



"Pardon, Mademoiselle. So sorry," I said, and took a few napkins from the counter.

"It's alright," she said.

"No, no, no. I am such a clumsy." I knew I could distract her with my charming accent, like I had to so many ladies so many times before. "Let me help." Her face

She smiled, and there was more creases on her face. She was laughing at me.

"What? You think we have no basketball here, mademoiselle?" I said, and began to make my exit, walking backward out the door. "Then you are stupid, stupid American." She waved.

It was very wrong for me to steal your mother's wallet, Ana. That is one thing I would like you to remember. Would you like another cherry on your sundae? Ok, dear, have three. Anyway, it was the last thing I ever stole, and it got me your mother, so maybe just that one thing was okay after all?

As I walked to my hotel that night, I got a chance to see her wallet more closely. She was Cynthia Gordon, was 26, 5 feet 5 inches. She was an organ donator. She was also very pretty. I also had her passport, visa, and euros. I turned the corner, said hello to Emmilio the doorman and stopped by the lounge for a quick drink before I'd go to sleep. There she was! Sitting with the same United States flag shirt and big bag, talking to Damon, the barman. They were laughing very loudly, even Damon was laughing, and I have never even seen him smile.

I tried to turn around before she saw me, but it was too late. She saw me and waved.

"Henri, here for your cognac?" said Damon. He had already poured it, so I had no choice.

"Yes."

Cynthia pulled out the chair beside her, and I sat. Her wallet was burning a hole in my pocket.

"Hey stranger," said Cynthia.

"Hey who?" I said.

"Never mind."

"What do you think of Nice?" I said.

"It's nice." She turned to Damon, a laugh leaking out. "Nice is nice!" The two laughed as if they had known each other

## MARINA

by John Page  
digital photograph



was turning red, and while she was watching me wipe the shirt, I slipped her wallet out of her bag and put it in my pocket.

"This is for the best," she said. "The shirt's a little too obvious." There was a United States flag on her shirt. "Tourist," she said. She had little creases around her mouth like she laughed all the time.

"No, no, no, you are just local, just like me," I said. Then I squeezed the napkin into a ball and threw it into the trash can. "Two points for me!"



all their lives. Damon's thick mustache was dancing, and he was spilling the orange juice as he poured it.

Cynthia finally stopped laughing and turned to me in her chair. "Say, guess what happened to me today?"

I knew exactly what had happened, but I am a very good actor, and so when she told me her wallet was missing, I acted surprised.

"It was my fault for putting everything in that wallet—my passport, ID, most of my spending money, flight numbers" She traced the top of her glass with her finger as she spoke. She had very small fingers. "They told me not to do that, but I have a problem with authority, and I couldn't resist."

"You poor, poor dear," I said.

"Damon, could I have another?" said Cynthia.

"I'll make you a nice one," he said, and they laughed again. Who was this girl that could make the statue-like barman, whom I had known for years, and never saw once even smile, laugh like a little boy?

He placed two glasses, one large one filled with milk and a small one filled with syrupy chocolate, in front of her. "Merci," she said, and took little sips of each, puffing her cheeks before swallowing. She must have seen my confused look. "This way they don't mix until I want them to."

Americans are so strange.

She smiled. "I'll be here for at least two weeks waiting for the paperwork to clear."

"You poor, poor dear," I said.

No you see, she had said, really it was all for the best. She was here for a leadership conference, for her graduate universite, and hadn't had much time to really enjoy herself. Everyone had left, as she struggled to straighten out her paperwork. Her university would help cover the theft.

The weight of her wallet became smaller in my pocket. "And so you are here for two weeks with no plans?" I said.

She tipped back the little glass of chocolate, and the cocoa made a grainy river down to the edge. She set it down, and seemed to see me for the first time. "What will I do to pass the time? Hang around with you?"

"You poor, poor dear," I said.

Not doing it right? Is there really a bad way to build a sundae? What is so wrong with the chocolate and vanilla ice cream being in the same bowl? You are obsessed with this "mooshing" idea, Ana. It is so silly. All the ice cream will end up in the same place, your tummy. You're just like your mother. Did you know, she would drink one drink of milk and then have one spoonful of chocolate, one after another? She also had a separate spot on her plate for sauce and for pasta. What are you doing now? I tell you it is a shame to use three bowls to eat one delicious sundae—you're really missing out. I think you may be wrong about this "mooshing" idea, I think it might be a nice thing. Why are you upset? Haven't I the right to eat my sundae any way I want to? Now there, what's the matter? Fine, fine, you win. Here, now don't be sad, they're all separate again. Sometimes I wonder if I shall ever understand you. And if you don't stop worrying about cherries and chocolate how will I ever finish telling my story?

One of the lessons I learned is that you can't hide something forever. Your mother had charmed me instead of me charming her. In a week we claimed the city as ours, and I showed her the hidden streets and unknown places of Nice. We owned le Pub d'Alfonso, and Pierre's Crêpes et Steaks. Lucrece would cackle at us, behind her big wart—I tell you Ana, her wart was as big as this cherry right here- and



FORT WARDEN  
by Grant Wittstruck  
digital photograph



by the end of the week, she knew Cynthia by name, and her usual order.

I was happy with her not knowing I had her wallet, with her stuck in Nice with me, running down halls of the hotel, from her room to my room, borrowing films from the lobby like, "Attaque des Cow-Boys de Mutant," happy with her head on my shoulder, telling me, "I'm glad I'm

stranded here." We were on an island, she said. An island called Henri's hotel room 331, and she was content to stay, eat coconuts, and order eggs from downstairs. We would just lie on our island, watching the planes fly overhead, doing nothing to call them to our rescue. We would stay and catch fish with our bare hands, she said, and I would introduce her to island natives: my papa and maman, and Matteo, and Claude, whom I had told her much about.

She could not meet Claude, not now. I would have to telephone him first, tell him to not say all the truth to her. She could not know about my habits. Even if she met Maman, she might say something suspicious, out of spite. Cynnie hadn't asked me how could I pay for living such rich hotel, how could working in a small bakery pay

for our outrageous dates, and she would start asking soon.

"What is it?" Cynthia must have seen the worrying on my face.

"It is nothing. I am just tired from a whole day running around the Promenade with you. You stole my bicycle too many times."

Stole. Why did she have to use that word? I kept glancing at my bureau, the top drawer, where I had stashed her wallet.

"No, something's wrong. What's wrong?"

"Just a little sleepy. But we can sleep all morning tomorrow." I had to get to the drawer somehow, find a better place to put it. I tried not to look at it—tried to think of something to do to distract her. "We'll sleep till noon, then I will sneak into the kitchen past those cooks, and make you eggs myself. Maybe I'll find you a coconut, too."

Cynthia's face sank, and looked at me the worst way in the world. Her lip was pouting out. "I know when you're lying." She said it whispering.

"What do you mean? I would never lie to you." I could not convince myself of that; I must not have convinced her either.

"Is it something in the drawer? You're acting strange."

"Cyn, no—"

I couldn't stop her. She got to the top drawer before I could.

That second that she stared at the pink wallet—her wallet, was the worst moment in the world. I thought of our week together, how she kept stealing my bicycle, and riding it in circles around me, how I chased her but never could catch her. I thought of the long nights on the Promenade, walking from the pubs into the cool night air but feeling so warm—how surely it was all over now.

"It was you?" She wouldn't look at me.

I stumbled on words, but in the end,



couldn't deny it. "Yes."

She was left, crossed the hall, and went to her room. I followed. She was stuffing clothes into her suitcase.

"Cynnie, please."

"Don't call me that." She was frantic now, grabbing everything in handfuls and dropping them into the suitcase.

"I didn't know you—I was going to tell you."

"But you didn't. You didn't tell me. Is this what you do? Steal from trusting, naive people like me—stupid Americans—so you don't have to work as hard?"

How could I say no?

I tried to touch her shoulder, tried to calm her, but she shook me off. "I can't believe I fell for this," she said, moving past me to the bathroom. She grabbed a bar of soap, some hotel towels, and put them in her bag.

"I was going to stop—as soon as I got to know you, I was going to stop."

"Our dates—the ferry ride—how did you pay for those?"

"Don't ask me that."

"How did you pay for them?" She finally was still, looking at me for the first in all of this, holding a toothbrush and floss. It was as if my answer would decide whether or not I could be forgiven, but I couldn't lie, not to her face, not the way she was looking at me.

"We can start over," I said.

"Oh Jesus." She tried to leave the bathroom, but I stood in the doorway, and she bumped against me.

"We can try again." I put my arms around her. "We'll start all over."

She shoved my hands off and got past me, gathering her things. "I don't even know who you are."

"I want to tell you."

"I'm finding a new hotel, Henri."

There was one thing I could say, one

thing I could do to fix this, but it would be hard. There would be risks.

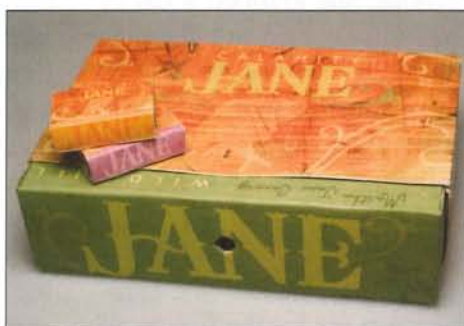
"I'll prove it."

She hesitated.

I took her to see Maman and Papa, took her to the little apartment they shared, where Maman was making a casserole of noodles and chicken, and the room was full of the smell, and Papa was stretching his hands at the end of a long day. They were surprised to see me, I rarely visited anymore. And Maman insisted we sit down, and eat, eat, that we were not fat enough, and at the end, as Maman brought us coffee, I told them the truth. Everything. Told them how I had really made my living—of my years of pocket picking, scams, and forged checks—and why I was removed from Universite. Their faces were hard at first, and sad, but I told them about Cynthia, that she was my good girl. And I would pay back my debts, as much as I could, slowly. I still had many of the IDs of American tourists, with their addresses. I would wire them some money as I earned it, (it would be impossible to send back all the money I had stolen). I waited, looking at the hard face of my father. I remember all the things he had muttered after working in the shop, mutterings of what was right and what was wrong. He only charged fair prices, and was proud of it.

Maman got up from her chair, slowly, went to the cabinet, and pulled out a cake. She sliced it, and the icing clumped up around the knife. "It's that Claude of ours that's the real bastard. He was the one that started you with magic tricks." Then she served us cake.

**RAILROAD**  
by Sarah Chambers  
digital photograph



**CALAMITY JANE  
BOOT PACKAGING**  
by Kate Kes  
graphic design



**BRIDGE PAN**  
by John Page  
digital photograph







**CLIFFS OF MOHR**  
by Andrea Thompson  
digital photograph



**UNTITLED**  
by Jessica Niemeyer  
digital photograph

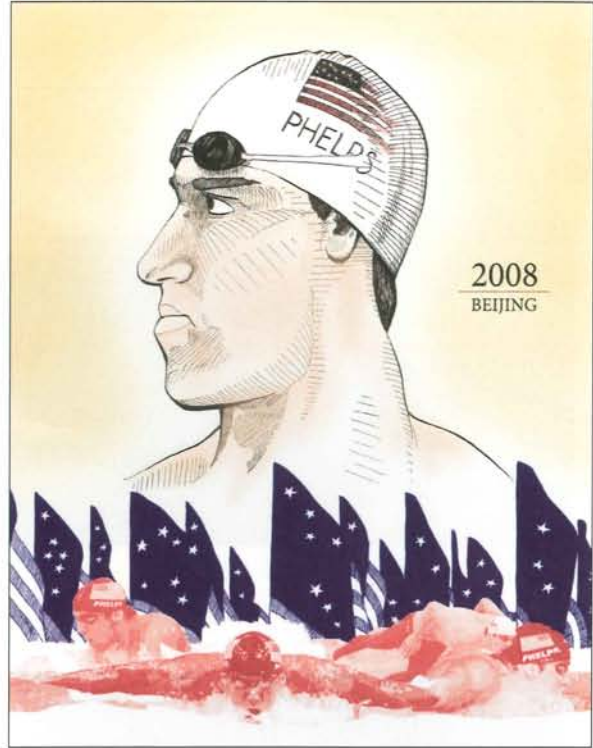


**MAN OR MACHINE**  
by Billy Mallett  
pen and ink, digital



**BOATS IN THE LAKE DISTRICT, ENGLAND**

by Renee Morgan  
digital photograph



**MICHAEL PHELPS**  
by Mack Maschmeier  
pen and ink, digital



**GRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHY**  
by Phil Andrews  
digital photograph



When the sky has finished crying and the sun reaches its rays across the rounded blueness that remains, I can be found trying not to be found in the backyard by the oak tree. Traces of blue sky's tears moisten the cat-tongue bark making it peelable, pliable, and play-with able. Hunks of bark make great canoes for termite captains and their sturdy crew to sail softly down the street's stream that gathers below the curb. Unlike other insects, termites don't use twigs to steer bark vessels because they tend to get hungry along the way. Instead they let the current take over while the boss shouts orders that won't be filled. Watching these floaters drift down the clear stream makes me imagine that I'm the bark canoe, sturdy and rough around the edges. Their legs tickle my stomach as they crawl over me to reach my ears to crawl inside and nibble on my brain. Some remain in my head, enjoying their meal while others bring bits out, gnashing the ray mush between their jaws, eyes shining with gratitude for the meal I offer them. Termites always smile like they mean it.

TAVIA KNUDSEN

## DRY SPELL

BY RANDY UHL

Sunday morning and already Fern had bees in her head. Her arm-length to-do list buzzed an infinity pattern in her thoughts so chaotic that if she didn't stop to prioritize, she was convinced she would break into hives. She knew she had to water the hydrangeas and stonecrop out back. With temps in the lower nineties today they would certainly need attention. However, she also knew that it was best to water in either early morning or early evening, and since it was neither, she decided her flower garden would take low priority. That was easy, she thought. Let's try another.

Fern had laundry to do, but that, too, could wait until later. She could wash, dry, and fold while catching up on her Tivo. The thought of sitting Indian-legged like Pocahontas while drowning in warm socks, dryer sheets, and taped reruns seemed more like a reward than a chore. Mid-priority, she decided.

"Carrot cake!" shouted Fern, clapping her hands together, "I made carrot cake." Fern had almost forgotten that the night before she had made dessert to take to Sunday brunch after church. Fern did not attend services herself, but she did enjoy visiting with those who were "on God's good side" as she called them. Often she would bake sticky rolls, apple crisp, or some other sickeningly sweet confection. Out of earshot from the reverend, they would call her the "baking sinner," and with a teasing smile, she would tell them all to go to hell. The parishioners always reminded her she had an open invitation to attend prayer and she thanked them, but as of late, throwing wishes to the wind fell to almost the bottom of her list.

Fern looked at the kitchen clock to check her time. She saw that it was noon and God was about to "close shop." The thought of God turning over the "open" sign

and locking the door made her giggle. She grabbed the car keys that hung on a large wooden key by the door just below the letter holder and placed them on the counter. Pulling the cake from the icebox, she was careful not to disturb the icing. Last night she carefully placed toothpicks in the top of the cake and draped cellophane over it, but didn't have quite enough to cover it all. She was careful not to puncture the exquisitely made carrot in the center of the cake. Orange icing came to a point with deep forest green tendrils tangling and winding to spell out "Fern's Garden." It was her extra touch that her "saved" friends always complimented. Staring at the orange vegetable reminded her of something...or to do something, she wasn't quite sure. Then it hit her like a pie in the face.

How could I have forgotten to feed him? The poor thing must be starving. The carrot jarring Fern's memory couldn't have been more obvious. Her caged pet rabbit on an old folding table in the laundry room had not been fed this morning. Leaving the keys and the cake in the kitchen, she darted down the hall. When she reached the cage, her mouth went arid and thoughts of Tivo, laundry, and hungry Christians evaporated.

She opened the cage door and put her hand through until her fingers sank deep into the white shag fur. The rabbit's side was warm, still, motionless. Had I been here minutes earlier, she thought, but couldn't finish the strand. She reached her other hand into the cage as she had done so many times and with practiced action she scooped the animal in her grasp and gently lifted him out. Fern raised him up and buried her face into him. She breathed deeply, and her head swam in sawdust and clover.

Her poor lost la Lluvia, named after the Spanish village where her husband took



her on their honeymoon. He had given the rabbit as an Easter gift to Fern and insisted she name him la Lluvia. But Walter never could pronounce "la Lluvia" could he? "la Boobia," she whispered. This was the last gift he gave her and Fern couldn't help but feel she was losing Walter all over again.

As if trying not to wake him, she tiptoed the broken cargo in her arms out of the laundry room, down the hall, and to her bedroom. Fern delicately rested the pet on the pillow that once belonged to her husband and kneeled next to the bed. With long strokes from top to tail, she caressed him softly, realizing only minutes after that this was the first time she had used her husband's pillow since he had died. Each night for the past three years, Fern would remove it at bedtime and set it in

the sitting chair. By using it she was afraid it would lose his smell, but three years past and still she could not bring herself to sniff the case. Her sweetest la Lluvia now dented deeply the pillow her husband laid his head on for so many nights, but she gave it little mind. Her heart was crashing, but with dry eyes and without lips moving she said, "I cannot bury another thing I love."

Three years it had been since Walter had died, and her life was so much less without him. Looking out the bedroom window at the cornflower sky and butter sun, she was reminded of the day she buried him. There were co-workers from his office at the gravesite, along with neighbors and relatives, but Fern could hardly distinguish their faces through her tears.

**MULTIPLE CHOICE**  
by Amy Foltz

reduction relief with intaglio



8/23

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

IN THE NAME OF A. CAPITOUSM

AMY FOLTZ



She heard howls coming from someone, wrenching sobs that would drive the devil away, but didn't realize at first that the horrible sounds were coming from her. After recognizing her own voice behind the wails, she looked up from the rain of tears to what she thought were crowds staring. I'm crying too much, she told herself. No one normal cries this much and with a silent prayer to a god she really didn't think was there said, "Please Lord...help me stop."

Her nose stopped running. The pinch in her throat loosened, and as if by magic, her weeping ceased almost instantly. Her tears dried and the breeze cracked her face. She felt her eyelashes drying and sticking together from the stiffening mascara, but not another tear formed. Her hand shook terribly as she dropped dirt onto the immaculate white casket, but not a sniffle or sob attended. That was the last time she wept. Her prayer worked like a charm, but for days after when she was knee-deep in grief, Fern couldn't help but feel damaged.

Even this previous January when her mother Lily passed, Fern could not cry. She did all that she could, pulled the tiny hairs on her arm, bit the inside of her cheek; she even dug her nails into the side of her leg with her hand in her pocket, but nothing. Every ounce of tissue and muscle under her skin was weeping for a woman she loved more than herself, but her eyes remained dry. Her mother was her last "people" and then all that was left were household chores, cooking for strangers, and a rabbit she loved that could never say it back. Again, people are staring, she thought, while sitting in a corner at her mother's wake. How cold they must think I am. She tried to fake sniffles but it made her look as if she just smelled something bad.

Her mother never had trouble showing emotion, but Fern knew Lily was cut

from a different cloth. Fern always rationed her tears so when she needed them, she wasn't left high and dry. Lily would cry at everything that didn't matter, and this playfully annoyed young Fern growing up ... Kodak commercials, Captain and Tennille's "Muskrat Love," porcelain figurines of boys in rain boots sitting beneath umbrellas.

"Wait." Fern's head lifted. She began to search every room in her memory and traveled far back to find rooms she had forgotten existed. She remembered her annoyance about just how radiant her mother looked after she cried. It was as if her mother only bloomed when she wept.

She picked up la Lluvia and held him to her breast as if she were feeding a child. Defiantly, she said aloud, as if it were an incantation, "I will not bury another thing I love."

The warm meat tasted dark and its texture was that of a brown paper bag through which something oily had leaked. Fern added no salt but kept it natural, never once thinking how unnatural this may seem. She knew others never placed here may find her reaction hard to swallow, but Fern wanted this dear creature, her sweet la Lluvia to pass through her, nourish her, stay with her. Using only fingers, she tore tenderly the meat from the bone. It let go so simply as if it knew its purpose. Gradually, in the early evening hours, Fern let go too. Salty showers rained once again from her eyes and seasoned her plate below, reconstituting memories of clumsy-speak husbands, wilted mothers, and gifted snowball rabbits.



## A MAN TALKING (LIFTED)

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I took him to Manchester.  
They have Iowa's largest fish hatchery.  
We fed the fishes and did the whole fish thing.  
We took a pretty good hike.  
I took him to a cave.  
I think there were some coyotes living in it.  
It was a good drive.  
We saw some deer and some wild turkeys.  
—Someone asks a question—  
Three and a half, but he's built like a five-year-old,  
And has hair down to here.  
We were driving north of Cedar Rapids.  
He lives in a pretty small town...  
And there were military helicopters  
Doing these exercises,  
And he's a pretty smart, vibrant kid.  
He started going bang, bang...  
Yeah you get em.  
Then one started doing a tailspin,  
And he started shouting  
"I got em! I got em!"  
Yeah you got em.  
Nah, it was a good day

DORAN ABERNATHY

the things we visit  
in nightfall August as summer loses her breath.  
Like the memory of my father  
building snares back when my hair  
fell straight across my brow.  
Coon-catching  
he called it.  
His hands burrowing dirt  
and piling inside  
too-old potato rinds, peels of bananas, coffee grounds  
and at the crest of the mound  
placing a polished soup-can lid  
or slice of abalone.  
A metal grate staked over it and covered in earth  
He'd turn and teach,  
"The raccoon'll reach through this little hole  
you see  
and dig through all this garbage,  
but it's that shiny thing he'll latch to  
with his hand or paw or  
whateveryougoddamncallit.  
Fist full...  
he can't pull it back through  
and all he can think to do  
is hold tight to that piece of moon  
and not let go  
... so he's trapt."  
And lately you've been on my mind  
and how your iridescent eyes enticed mine  
even the night you burned Troy  
to the ground  
and now I've found, hard as I try,  
I can't let go of it.

RANDY UHL



# A LESSON IN THE SNOW

BY BRIAN JOHNSON

Every day the thought of going to school terrified me.

Sounds weird, yes. But it was so true. A huge part of this is explained by a condition called Asperger's Syndrome, which I have. Asperger's is basically a mild form of autism, a mental condition that affects the way our brains operate. People with autism aren't necessarily "weird," they just see things differently and struggle in different areas. Some people might see us as dumb, but this isn't true. I was a straight-A student throughout high school and into college.

I'll jump at the chance to be on stage or speak in front of a crowd—something my mom or dad would outright dread. But I have trouble with those things that most people would call "simple." Things most people don't even think about. Making friends and socializing have always been, and still are, challenges. To use a concrete example, it would actually be much easier for me to stand up and read this story in front of two hundred people than to casually read it for two friends.

I am a person of absolutes, and was even more so when I was young. A painfully strict, down-to-the-letter, "black and white" person. When the teacher said "no talking" it meant you never talk, ever. Unless called on to answer a question in class, I never spoke in grade school, even when another kid said something to me. This is why school was so rarely a happy place. It created endless stress for me, but I couldn't help it. My biggest fear was doing something wrong, disobeying the teacher's rules in any way. The rules in class were the rules. Period. No deviation was ever allowed.

To have my name written on the board (which meant you had to stay in

for 5 minutes from recess because you did something wrong) was unthinkable. I didn't know what would happen if I ever got into trouble. Actually, I do know. It did happen—just once.

I was at the small wood desk in my kindergarten classroom. We were all cutting out snowflakes from blue construction paper. Our teacher was going on and on, reading the directions for our next step. With the scissors in my

FROSTED FOUR  
by Brenda Lussier  
digital photograph



hand, I slipped. I started to cut the blue circle. The next thing I heard was the teacher's voice.

"Brian, that's a warning."

My face turned red and instantly my whole body was hot. I didn't say anything the rest of the day. The only thing I can remember was a feeling of despair, it was still with me when I got home.

Lunchtime was another area of stress and worry for me many days. The lunchroom was a lot like the playground, noisy and crowded. For years in lower elementary school, I went home to eat at lunchtime. A hot meal was always



ready, and I could relax—if even just for a half hour—in a way that I never could at school.

Most days just getting home at 11:30 in the morning for lunch was an internal struggle. As soon as the clock hit the 11:30 mark, I knew it was time. Continuously, for five to ten minutes beforehand, I watched both hands of the clock to monitor this. Often, the teacher or the teacher's aide didn't catch it. It's obvious now that this was nothing but a small oversight on their part. But when it happened, I was distraught.

I would sit in my seat as the clock ticked. The big hand went past the six, and I knew that it was time. If the teacher never said so, though, I didn't move. I wouldn't have thought of it. That was the number one rule—the law—in my mind. Don't disobey. Unless the teacher says to do something, you do not do it.

The first few moments I turned red in the face, right away. I sat so impatiently. My legs tightened together and I could feel heat rush up my body. My face probably tightened, too. I knew I needed to go, but I couldn't. After a couple of minutes, my emotions intensified. If nearly 5 minutes had passed, I would almost definitely be crying. I cried soft, but very audible tears at my desk. Finally, the teacher would say, "You can go." I was released.

Even at recess, I stood around and basically did not do anything. This was by choice. The whole commotion of the playground greatly unnerved me. The strict, peaceful schedule that I was used to inside was gone. Now everyone was going in a hundred different directions. Some played on the long red slide in the corner. Other kids stood and hollered as they rode on the rusty, multi-colored merry-go-round.

Most of them crowded, flailing their arms in different directions and yelling at random, on the huge bridge in the center of the playground.

So I stayed back, pacing from one side of the giant, orange-colored brick wall to the other. I walked past kids who were "against the wall" (the outside equivalent of having your name on the board, which meant they couldn't play anymore because they'd gotten in trouble). I also passed teachers and other kids. Mainly, I just walked back and forth and thought about whatever came into my head. I did this until the bell rang.

Yes, these times were hard when I was young. Despite all this, in third grade, life in school was a little more fun for me. All thanks to a teacher, whom I still have fond memories of today, Mr. Alfredson. He was a tall man with short brown hair and several dimples. Mr. Alfredson was not your typical teacher, and I mean that in the best sense possible. He made me laugh, not just worry, while I was there.

We did daily exercises in grammar where he'd write a sentence or two, and we would, as a class, find the spots where the grammar or punctuation or capitalization needed changed. Once, the sentence was something like "Bob and me went..." It obviously should have been "I" instead of "me." A girl raised her hand and said, "Change 'me' to 'I.'" So Mr. Alfredson erased the word "me" in the sentence. And then, instead of writing the word "I," he drew a picture of an actual eye.

"No! The other 'I,'" she said.

"Oh...wrong kind of 'I'?" he said, turning his head around. The whole class laughed.

Mr. Alfredson shared moments with me, too. I was out at recess one day, and



he was "on duty." All the teachers in elementary school took turns supervising the playground at recess. It was a cold day in the middle of winter. So everyone who wanted to play in the snow had to put on snow pants and boots. I didn't wear either because I never played.

I was walking around, like I did every day, and I happened to pass by him. "Hey, why don't you come play?" he asked energetically. We were standing right next to a giant mound of powdery snow.

"Come on in!" he coaxed me. Then he pushed me—literally—into the drift. Every part of my blue jeans and heavy red-and-blue coat were wet. I was almost in shock, lying in the snow, with my deep-blue snow

pants still on their grey hanger in the classroom.

Several kids near us protested. "But he's not wearing any snow pants!" They chimed in at once.

"That's okay!" Mr. Alfredson said in front of me and the other kids. "Sometimes you got to break the rules."

"We don't need no snow pants!" he said, looking at me. He continued on, as I continued to roll around in the tall white mountain of snow beside him.

At that moment, he wasn't just asking that I loosen up and have fun. It wasn't just a suggestion. He—the teacher—was telling me to break the rules.



AMANDA

by Jessica Niemeyer  
digital photograph

# CLIMBING Mt. Fuji

BY RACHEL BELLAIRS

I thought I was a pretty open-minded person. I got along with everybody, well, almost everybody. I never gossiped or talked behind somebody's back. Of course, there are always those people who give me a headache. People who make me want to duck into the painkiller aisle at Wal-Mart, just to get away from them. My roommate in Kyoto was one of those people.

You'd think that since both of us came to study in Kyoto, Japan, we would have had something in common. She was into freaky anime and manga, the kind that just edges into porn and has no plot whatsoever. I don't know how she could stand the stuff. She was studying Shinto and Buddhism, the major Japanese religions, because they have all sorts of funky myths. She was also taking brush painting because she thought her scribbles were works of art. I came to Japan to study the language and history. The Japanese have such a weight of tradition that America just doesn't have. Plus, the architecture is gorgeous. The way they can turn a bunch of rocks into an austere, pure garden is amazing.

My roommate just didn't get me. And I tried to get along with her, I really did. Just the other day she invited me along to an izukaiya, a Japanese bar. Normally I avoided bars since I was still underage, but Darin was going. He's was the guy I kind of liked, so I thought I'd give it a shot. That was a mistake. The night started off pretty well. It was twilight when we finally got everyone together. We walked. The evening was blessedly cooler than the muggy September day. In Kyoto, summer hung around in dripping heat waves well into October.

Ronni's bright orange hair was still visible in the fading light. She was wearing her favorite shirt, a white zip-up with green bands around the upper arms and "Ireland" plastered on the front. I wondered why she was in Japan if she liked Ireland so much. Her earrings didn't match, which made sense when considering she had two

piercings in her left earlobe, three in her right, and a silver stud peeking out the top of one ear. I shook my head, another sign that she wasn't exactly normal.

The izukaiya was a dinky place full of Japanese businessmen perched on bar stools and huddled at tables. Apparently, most of the people in my group were regulars because as soon as the hostess saw us she broke into a big grin and waved at us to follow her. We all squeezed into a little back room, barely big enough for ten boisterous Americans. I ended up in a corner, knees tucked to my chest, watching as the drinks flowed and inhibitions diminished. The jokes turned raunchy, the language coarsened, and my roommate was flirtier than normal. After one particularly dirty round of pointless cussing, in which almost everyone's mother got slammed, I'd finally had enough.

"Why do you do that?" I asked my roommate.

"Do what?"

"Cuss. Can't you think of something better to say?"

"Cussing is very versatile. You can use it for anything. When you're mad, when you're happy, make a point, anything—a great way to express yourself."

"But can't you be more creative? There's got to be more things you can say besides bringing up a cuss word. They're just plain nasty!"

"Well, miss high and mighty, maybe we'll have to corrupt you," she said. "Oh, hey! Look what's on the bottom of this sake glass!" She proceeded to shove the glass under my nose so I couldn't escape the picture of two people involved in an act I'd rather not have seen. It sure wasn't doggy style. I pushed the glass away rapidly and snapped at her.

"Stop it!"

"Ach, lass, ye know ye like it."

I'm not sure why, but my roommate had lapsed into a Scottish accent and



cuddled next to me like a cat to sunshine. I was more than a little creeped out to say the least.

"What are you doing?"

"Have ye never done a little honest flirtn'? Twill do ye good, mark me words." She gave me a saucy wink and linked arms with me.

"Hey! Let go!" I was mortified. What would Darin think? I glanced over at him just in time to catch him try to hide a smirk in his glass of beer.

"Now ye just sit tight lass. Ye can pretend ye're a Scottish maid and I'm yere betrothed."

"No! That's just weird!"

"I've always wanted to be a Scottish man."

"Let go!"

"It's the accent, ye know."

"I said, let go!"

"Nothin' hotter than a fockin' accent."

"You're crazy!" I wrenched out of her grip, stalked out of the room, and almost slammed the door before remembering that it was Japanese quiet hours. Plus, it was a sliding door.

I was fuming as I walked back to the dorm. This was why I hated alcohol. It made people behave in the strangest, most embarrassing ways. It wasn't logical. You couldn't predict it. At that moment, I wanted to be anywhere but there, but most of all, I wanted to be home. When I got to my room, I picked up the phone and called my mom.

My roommate walked in just as I hung up the phone very gently, I didn't want a broken phone on my tab. I was angry after a two-hour conversation that left me just as stuck as before. I wondered if her sense of timing was horrible or if she'd been eavesdropping. She swayed as she walked, which told me she hadn't stopped drinking when I'd left the bar. I glared at her, willing her to leave me alone. No such luck.

"Hey! Wondered where ya went!" She grinned at me. "Ya should'a stayed and gotten slightly hapsy with us." She blinked slowly. "I meant happy. But I was thinking I'm slightly tipsy." She giggled crazily at her own mistake. She obviously didn't remember why I'd left.

"Uh huh." I tried to ignore her but she was having none of it.

"Who were ya callin'?"

"My mom."

"What for?"

"Why is it your business?"

"Oh ho!" she said. "And here I was tryin' ta be friendly. Ya got somethin' ta hide?"

"No." I crossed my arms.

"I think ya do!" she crowed. "What is it? Ya failin'?"

"No."

"In trouble with the law?"

"No!"

"Breakin' up with yer boyfriend?"

"No!" I exploded. "I just want to go home! But that's not happening, so I'd appreciate it if you left me alone!" I got into my futon, pulling the covers up to my ears.

"Well, fine." She sniffed. "I'm going to hang out in room 23. Girl's got some new anime she invited people to watch." She staggered back out the door, leaving me to contemplate the conversation with my mother.

It wasn't the first time I'd called her. The first had been after that horrendous thirteen hour flight from Dallas to Kyoto. I hadn't been able to sleep a wink between a baby bawling directly behind me and the extremely uncomfortable seats. Exhaustion made me nearly hysterical to be in such an alien place, and it took the better part of an hour for my mom to calm me down. The reasoning she'd used then had been the same as she'd just used now. I'd paid money and made a commitment so I'd just have to stick it out. This time, she suggested I ignore my roommate as much as



possible, advice I intended to follow. I had a sinking feeling my roommate would not be very cooperative.

As I figured, my roommate was extremely hard to ignore. Even at school it was nearly impossible to get away from her, but I worked at it and eventually she stopped bothering me so much. Darin helped. I saw him struggling with his homework one day and decided to offer my assistance. Turns out, he was in the

and how to talk to people. I think that's very efficient."

"Really."

"Uh, huh. The Japanese are very economical that way. They're good at it. Take the trains, for instance. They're never late—and you can get anywhere on them. I love the fact that you don't need a car. You can just sit back, relax, and let someone else drive."

"Uh huh."



same level of Spoken Japanese as me, but a different section. We hit it off really well and so every day we studied together.

One day, our assignment was to figure out what our names meant. Japanese names combine kanji to make a special meaning, like sun-child. I didn't know if my name had a meaning, so I quickly looked it up.

"Guess what? My name means noble." I was hoping to impress him.

Darin grinned. "Well, it's very noble to help me with homework every day, Trisha."

I batted my eyelashes at him. "You're welcome. I just love Japanese. It's so cool how they have a whole different system for polite speech. Everyone knows their place

"The Japanese have such good ideas, too. Do you know how many things you can get from vending machines?"

"Beer and cigarettes. That's cool."

"I don't really like that but I'm just in love with all their different drink flavors. My favorite is melon crème soda fanta. Food here is just fun. They have such crazy combinations. I had a raw egg on my spaghetti the other day. And I've seen green pizza. I'm not sure what to make of that."

"Yeah, when I was telling my sister..."

"Oh! You have a sister? That's so cool! I have a brother. He's younger than me. My parents always joke that if he'd been first they would've only had one kid. I was the good kid." I laughed. "My brother's a little troublesome."



"That's too bad."

"Yeah, but I've learned to live with it. So, how about this sentence? I think you may have translated 'sleeping' wrong."

We had many pleasant conversations like this. He was interested in Japanese festivals and architecture, so I planned field trips to see famous buildings around Kyoto. There are so many temples in the area it would take a lifetime to see them all. We went to a bunch of festivals. Only the very traditional ones: the ones that had lines of women dressed up in yukata dancing to the shamisen. I was able to escape my roommate by going out and exploring the city with Darin.

Darin was very sympathetic about my troubles. He would patiently listen while I told him my roommate's latest escapade. He never interrupted and always nodded his head understandingly. I would always buy him dinner after the outings and then we would study together until dorm curfew at ten. It was a very nice routine.

I was really excited when I learned that Darin was going on a trip to Tokyo at the end of the semester. When I asked him why he hadn't told me sooner, he blinked at me and told me he wanted it to be a surprise. I started planning in a frenzy because it was almost too late to get tickets and hotel rooms.

I was so happy I broke my long habit of ignoring my roommate to tell her the news. "Guess what I get to do! Darin and I are taking a trip to Tokyo at the end of the semester! I'm looking up hotels and things right now."

"Oh, he invited you along? How nice. So that makes four of us. That's cool you're doing the planning. You're just anal enough to get it done."

I couldn't believe my ears. "Wait, you're coming?"

"Yeah, didn't you know? It was Kai's idea really. She's always wanted to see Tokyo but she didn't want to go alone so

she asked me and Darin to come along." She grinned evilly at me.

I was speechless. How dare my roommate come along and spoil the fun? I didn't know much about Kai except that she was glaringly noticeable. She wore her hair in rainbow dreadlocks and her clothing usually clashed horribly. Her favorite things to wear were black and white striped knee socks, purple capris, and a fuzzy bucket hat that was leopard-spotted in red and black. I shuddered just thinking about it. I had to plan for them?

I cornered Darin in the hallway. "Why didn't you tell me that my roommate and this Kai person were coming too?"

He looked sheepish. "You never asked."

I tried to be reasonable. "But I needed to know about them in order to get tickets and a room!"

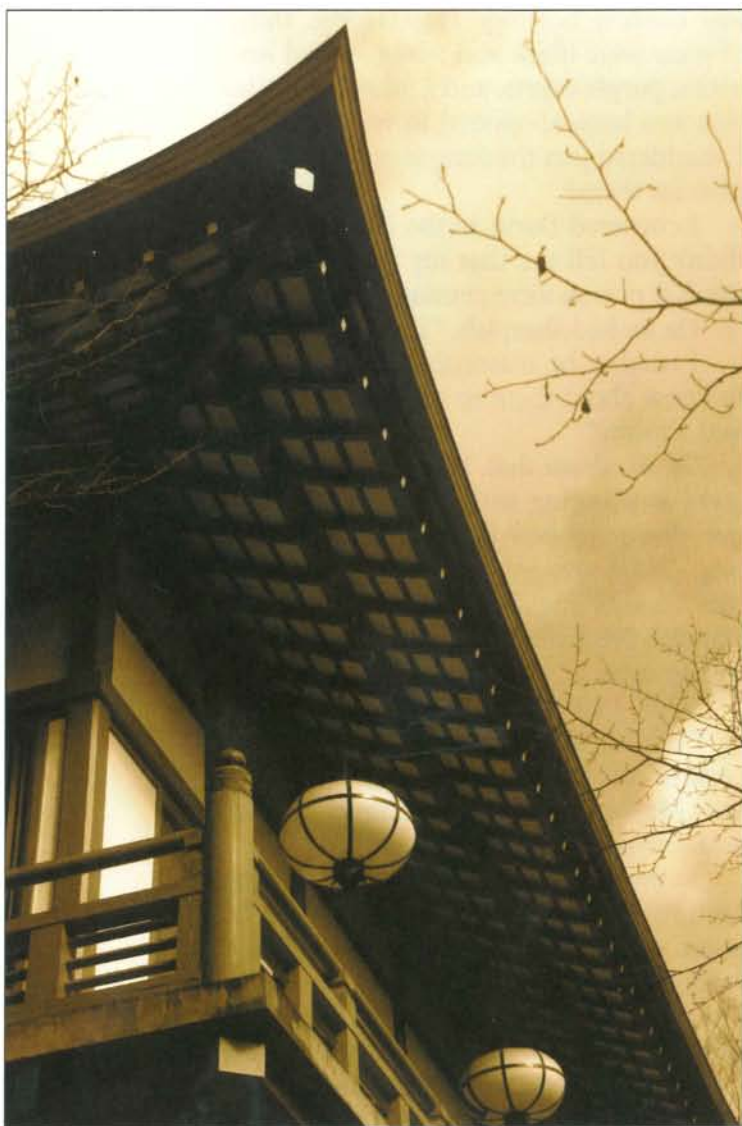
"Yeah, about that. None of us are really good at planning stuff. But you've already got places looked at and prices figured out. Could you get their tickets and stuff, too? Please? They'll never get it done otherwise." He looked at me with those sad puppy eyes.

Well, I couldn't very well tell him no, so I added them into my plans. I complained bitterly to Darin every chance I got. Maybe he would see things my way and reconsider.

I was almost convinced he'd come around when he got the news that his sister was having surgery. It was a family emergency he said. Nothing he could do. He had to fly home at the end of the semester instead of staying an extra week to go to Tokyo. I was absolutely shattered. I'd already bought the tickets for us girls so we had to go. Darin had told me he was waiting for money to come from his parents before he bought his, so he didn't have any tickets. I didn't even have that excuse to try to make him come. I was stuck going on a trip with one person I absolutely despised and another I didn't really know or like.



I was even less happy when we got to our hostel in Tokyo and found out we would have to share our room. With a guy! What were they thinking, putting three girls in a room with a guy? He and my roommate hit it off fabulously, of course.



TEMPLE  
by Wyeth Lynch  
digital photograph

I knew they would. His Australian “G’day mates!” greeting fed her love of accents.

I went to bed at a decent, early time because I was worn out from walking around Tokyo and trying to find where we were staying. The other two weren’t any help;

they’d just complained. I was in that stage of sleep where you’re too sleepy to wake up, but still awake enough to be able to hear things.

Then my roommate and Kai started talking to the Australian. I was appalled. First of all, my roommate decided it would be great fun to share a bed with the Australian just to freak me out. Secondly, I learned way more than I ever needed to know about Kai’s personal life. About how she’d lived in a commune for many years, how many people she’d had sex with, the drugs she’d tried, her favorite things to do when she got drunk, her plans to start her own commune. Who’d have guessed someone with such a cute baby face like hers could do all that! And my roommate encouraged her by comparing sex notes with her!

I never really slept that night and was very grumpy the next morning as we discussed our plans to climb Mt. Fuji. Once we got to the mountain and started up the trail, Kai and my roommate ignored me, which made me even grumpier. I was in charge of the map for the routes, but they didn’t pay any attention to me. So I just shut up and let them take a wrong turn on the path. I’d show them.

An hour later, they still hadn’t noticed they’d taken a wrong turn and I wasn’t too sure where we were. The mountain was covered in pine trees that all looked the same to me, and it was a cloudy day, making it difficult to navigate by the sun. When we came to a three-pronged fork in the trail, they both looked at me. I peered intently at the map, trying to hide my blush of dismay when I realized I had absolutely no idea where we were. Impatiently, my roommate yanked the map, knocking my camera out of my hand. I quickly picked it up, but when I tried to turn it on it made a funny buzzing noise, like a dying fly.

“You broke it!” I exclaimed. “Do you know how much this camera cost me? And now it’s useless!”



"Aw, keep your pants on. Let me see. Maybe I can fix it."

"You think I'm going to just let you see it after you just broke it? Are you crazy?"

"No need to get so upset. It's just a camera!"

"Upset? Upset! I have every right to be upset! I'm lost out in the middle of nowhere with you, you," I struggled to come up with an appropriate epithet. "Freaks!" I finally spat.

"Shit! Trisha, there's no need for that!" My roommate clenched her fists, eyes dangerously narrowed.

Kai just looked hurt.

"There you go with that stupid cussing again!" My voice squeaked on the last word.

"Shit. Fock. God damn. Whore. Son of a bitch," she said calmly.

"You're so stupid you can't come up with real words!" I screamed at her.

"Fock Fock Fock Fock!" she yelled back.

I tried to cover my ears to block out the words, but the litany rang in my mind. Desperate to get her to stop, I shouted the worst thing I could think of.

"You're probably gay!"

"And what would a tight-ass like you know? You think you're so perfect! You want to know why Darin really left? Because he couldn't stand you being so self-righteous and controlling!"

My heart thundered in my ears. I felt numb. No. It couldn't be true. He had a family emergency. It wasn't me. It wasn't. "I hate you!" I sobbed. I turned and ran up the left fork of the trail, away from those awful words. My breath came in ragged gasps. I didn't know if I was running from her or myself. I tripped over a root and fell hard. I didn't get back up. My knee and side hurt. I could feel rocks digging into tender parts of my body. I relished the pain. It distracted me from my anguished thoughts. How long I lay there, I don't know.

When I finally sat up I was cried out and thirsty. My stomach rumbled. I stood up and brushed myself off. We'd bought lunch at a little convenience store at the foot of the mountain, and I looked around to see where the bag of food had gone. I'd just picked it up when I saw blurry shapes materializing out of a now foggy forest. My eyes widened in astonishment. Monkeys.

They were a pale gray with pink faces and white patches of fur near their rear ends. Although there were about ten of them, they were eerily quiet. They were large, too, about as tall as my knee when they were on all fours. I watched as one made its way up to me. I was frozen in place, unsure whether fight or flight was the better option. Suddenly, the monkey looked me full in the face and grabbed my lunch. The jerk of the bag leaving my hands broke my paralysis.

"Hey!" I yelped. "Bad monkey!" I ran after the thief, trying to recapture my meal. Abruptly, the monkey turned around and growled at me, showing its teeth. "Oooooo-kaaaaaay." I held up my hands and slowly backed away. Looking for an escape route, I realized I was now surrounded by about thirty monkeys, all of whom were staring at me. I had a bad feeling about this.

I heard rustling to my left and whipped my head around. Kai and my roommate appeared on the trail and stopped dead. Kai's mouth fell open. I couldn't tell by her expression what my roommate was thinking but now was not the time for me to hold a grudge. My eyes sent her a silent plea for help.

Her lips compressed into a thin line and my heart sank. She looked at the monkeys and back at me.

"Don't look them in the eye," she said firmly, but quietly.

Kai nodded. "Yeah—that's a challenge to them."

"Just start walking slowly away. We'll follow."



I did as she said, quashing a sudden desire to bolt into the woods. I nearly stopped breathing once I got to the outer circle of monkeys, but after a moment's hesitation, they scampered aside to let us through. It was all I could do not to start sprinting. My roommate picked up the pace once we were all a few feet away from monkeys. We rounded a corner in the trail and took off, determined to put distance between us and the animals.

When we couldn't run anymore, we all flopped down in ragged heaps, panting like we'd just run a marathon. As we eyed each other, I started giggling. It must have been the shock and nerves because I couldn't stop. Amazingly, my roommate and Kai joined in. We were all laughing so hard we were crying. I finally wiped my eyes and glanced over at my roommate.

She raised an eyebrow inquiringly.

I opened my mouth. Nothing came out. I licked dry lips and tried again.

"Ronni," I began.

"Yes?"

I swallowed. Looked down. "Thank you," I mumbled. Silence. That was worse than if she'd yelled at me. Timidly, I looked up.

Her arms were crossed. She was staring at me. Finally, she sighed. "You're welcome."

Kai looked at both of us, rolled her eyes, and said, "Well, that was an adventure. Shall we tread on?"

Ronni and I smiled wryly and nodded.

Eventually, we figured out where we were. We ran into some very nice Japanese hikers who had us laughing at their attempts at English and our attempts at Japanese. When they asked us why we were on this side of the mountain, we told them about the monkey attack. They were in stitches. I had to admit it was pretty funny. They kindly pointed us on our way and we made it down the mountain without further mishap.

Neither Ronni or Kai ever mentioned the fight or my apology, which was perfectly fine with me. We were civil to each other as we left Tokyo, but silences were awkward. The silences were not quiet. The things we were not saying were too loud. But, at least we weren't yelling at each other. To celebrate our victory over the monkeys, we went back to the little izukaiya upon returning to Kyoto. When we told the hostess our story, she gave each of us a free drink. I had no clue what to get, so Ronni ordered me a tequila shot. And I tried, I really did, but I'd never had a shot before, so how was I supposed to know you needed to swallow the stuff before biting the lemon? It was awful; it burned my throat and the taste hung in my mouth like an unwanted relative. Ronni told me that you either love tequila or hate it, I fell in the latter. It sure does give you a buzz, though. I was almost game to try again some other night, but before I knew it, it was time to go home.

I had very mixed feelings as I waved goodbye to Ronni. I didn't hate her anymore, but I still wasn't sure if I liked her. It made me a little uncomfortable that she'd come to the airport to see me off. She really didn't need to do that. As I settled back into the tiny airplane seat, I heard a baby start squalling somewhere behind me. A corner of my mouth quirked up in an ironic smile. Life goes on, but for me it wasn't so simple anymore.

I shifted around in my seat, trying to find a somewhat comfortable position, and thought about all the things that happened to me in the past semester. I didn't remember much fondly. I sighed, looking out the window. Somehow, we'd taken off and I hadn't even noticed. I could see the panorama of Kyoto spread below me, the ocean stretching forever and the sun rising in the East. I shook my head, closed the shade, and settled down and tried to sleep.



Anika called from a red taxicab, coked out, scared  
of razor torn vinyl and the smell of burnt hair in the backseat.  
The cabbie was wearing a turban, eating a bear claw,  
saying unspeakable things in Hindi and Americanese.  
Chicago was in mourning, but she was still in stilettos.  
I was back home in her pink polka dot panties,  
the pair I wore when she wasn't around to scratch the itch.

I walked into the bathroom, tiles the various shades of puke  
splattered on the wall like a scrabble board, under a double word score.  
Listened to her talk about John Wayne Gacy, Martin Scorsese, homicidal taxi drivers.  
Her voice was scratchy and erratic, strangely bravado like an old Lou Reed record.  
Old Lou and I must have had similar experiences cause my mother  
said she saw her in Chinatown, but you know, as Lou says,  
you can't always trust your mother.

Anika said she wanted to take me to Africa, walk around barefoot  
eat breadfruit, mash casaba root with our bare feet, have a donkey cart  
adopt slave children from Ghana, make love every Wednesday in a mosquito net.  
That's what she said. It all sounded well and good to me.

She'd gone to Chicago to find us a place to live, but instead all she found  
was a gram of cocaine in an Ed Debevic's bathroom. Bought it from an amateur  
pornstar in a wheelchair. Apparently amputee porn is big in Chicago.  
Apparently everything is big in Chicago. Danced till six in the morning to Talking Heads,  
"This ain't no disco, this ain't no foolin' around," she said, but she was always foolin' around.  
She loved me; she'd see me soon, but part of me knew  
I'd never see that blonde red-headed coke baby again.

My mother said she saw her in Chinatown kissin' a chinaman.  
And you know, sometimes, you got to trust your mother.

DORAN ABERNATHY

## LIVING HISTORY FARMS DINNER

---

They made my lie down  
in the parlor  
with low ceilings and stuffy drapes.  
Real dust from the 1800s.  
People pretending  
serving potatoes  
gravy made with lard,  
cream.  
I was 10 years old  
and I was sick

"You see back in the colonial times  
they used to have funerals at home  
display the bodies in the parlor  
lay them on couches  
in the middle of the room  
friends would come  
have some cornbread  
stare at the body  
play the organ  
have an old timey funeral  
it was very nice."

I lay in the parlor  
laughter  
from the dining room,  
the snakes in my stomach  
hissing and squeezing  
thought about those bodies in the parlor  
maybe ten feet away  
a hundred years ago.

Didn't feel much different.

AUDREY HANTLA



## THE BARTH CHURCH

From my home in 'Kriesgafong'  
I can look out over the land  
And far away in the distance  
The Barth Church steeple stands  
Der fuhrer's legion silenced it  
Its message choked within...

But, no, its message still rings clear  
for men like you and me  
Of home and love and soon  
of liberty. Thank God.

JAMES WILLIAM MCKENZIE HUTCHINSON  
*Stalage Luft One*  
*Barth, Germany*  
*April 1944 – May 1945*

*Editor's Note: This piece was written by a Morningside alumnus during his time in a German P.O.W. camp during World War II. His grandson, Morningside assistant professor Tug Buse, provided it for the Kiosk.*

# CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

## WRITING

**Doran Abernathy** is a former Morningside student. He currently lives in Sioux City and is moving to the Black Hills this summer.

**Rachel Bellairs** is a senior English Education major from Clarinda, IA. This is her first year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Jessi Bergin** received a B.A. in English Writing in 2005. She currently lives in Burlington, IA and is a Head Start Teacher.

**Trey K. Blackburn** is a junior Theater and English Literature double major from Knoxville, IA. This is his first year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Stephen Coyne** is a Professor of English at Morningside College. He's served as faculty advisor to the Kiosk since 1989. His short stories and poems have been published in numerous literary journals.

**Jonathan Green** graduated from Morningside College in 2007 with a major in Journalism and now makes his home in Thermopolis, WY.

**Laura Homan** is an English major from Lebanon, IL. This is her first year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Audrey Hantla** is a junior majoring in English. This is her second year contributing to the Kiosk. Last year, her poem "Confession" was awarded second place. She is currently studying in Northern Ireland.

**Brian Johnson** is a senior from Bronson, IA. He will be graduating in May with a major in Mass Communication and a minor in Theater. This is his first year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Tavia Knudsen** returns to the Kiosk this year. She was first published in 2006.

**Phil Lieder** is a junior from Stewartville, MN. This is his second year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Colin O'Sullivan** is a junior at Morningside College. He is working toward his B.S. in Chemistry. This is his second year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Kiel Ploen** is a first time contributor with his poem, "An Odd Bit."

**Kyle Thayer** is an English major from Clarion, IA. This is his first year contributing to the Kiosk.

**Randy Uhl** received his B.A. in English Education from Morningside in 1990. In 2006, he received 1st place for his story "Under Her Skin." In 2005, his poem "Rare Birds" was awarded \$10,000 by Poetry.com. He continues to contribute to the Kiosk after eighteen years.

## ART

**Philip Andrews** is a junior majoring in Graphic Design and Advertising from Storm Lake, IA. He contributed his art last year.

**Josh Beckwith** is a junior majoring in Studio Art and comes from Sioux City, IA.

**Sarah Chambers** is a freshman majoring in Art Education and comes from Sheldon, IA.

**Amy Foltz** is an art instructor at Morningside College teaching courses in drawing, design and print making.

**Kimberly Jessen** is from Everly, IA and has contributed her art to the Kiosk the past two years. She graduated in December of 2007. She had majored in Photography and minored in Studio Art.

**Kate Kes** is a senior from Northfield, MN majoring in Graphic Design and Photography. She is the Visual Editor for this year's Kiosk and Web Editor for the Collegian Reporter, Morningside's college newspaper. After graduation she plans on attending graduate school with plans to teach graphic design in the future.

**Brenda Lussier** is a senior from Hubbard, NE. She is majoring in Studio Art and Music Education. She still has one more year to go at Morningside college and is finishing up her Music Education major. She contributed to the Kiosk last year.

**Wyeth Lynch** is a junior in Photography and International Affairs. He comes from a farm in Madison County. His postal code is Prole, IA but he went to school in Martensdale, Iowa (both not in Madison county). So you could say he grew up on a farm in South Central Iowa. He contributed the Kiosk last year.

**Billy Mallett**, from Salix, IA, is a senior Graphic Design major. He contributed to the Kiosk last year.

**Mack Maschmeier**, a junior majoring in Graphic Design and Studio Art, comes from Fremont, NE. He is the Editorial Cartoonist for the Collegian Reporter, Morningside's college news paper. He had also contributed to the Kiosk last year.

**Renne Morgan** is a junior majoring in Biology.

**Jessica Niemeyer**, a senior majoring in Photography and Business Administration/ Marketing comes from Sioux Falls, SD. After graduation she plans on opening up a photography studio with John Page.

**John Page**, a senior majoring in Graphic Design comes from Brookings, SD. After graduation he plans on opening a photography studio with Jessica Niemeyer.

**Shannon Sargent and John Bowitz** are both from Sioux City, IA. Shannon is an alumnus with a studio art degree. John is a Morningside faculty member. Their collaborative works can be found in *The Briar Cliff Review*.

**Andrea Thompson**, a senior majoring in Graphic Design and Photography comes from Grand Island, NE. After graduation she plans on going to graduate school.

**Anne Torkelson** is a junior Art Education major from Norfolk, NE. She contributed to the Kiosk last year.

**Grant Wittstruck** is a senior majoring in Photography and comes from Jefferson City, MO. Last year he received 3rd place and editor's choice. He has been published in several magazines and newspapers.

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