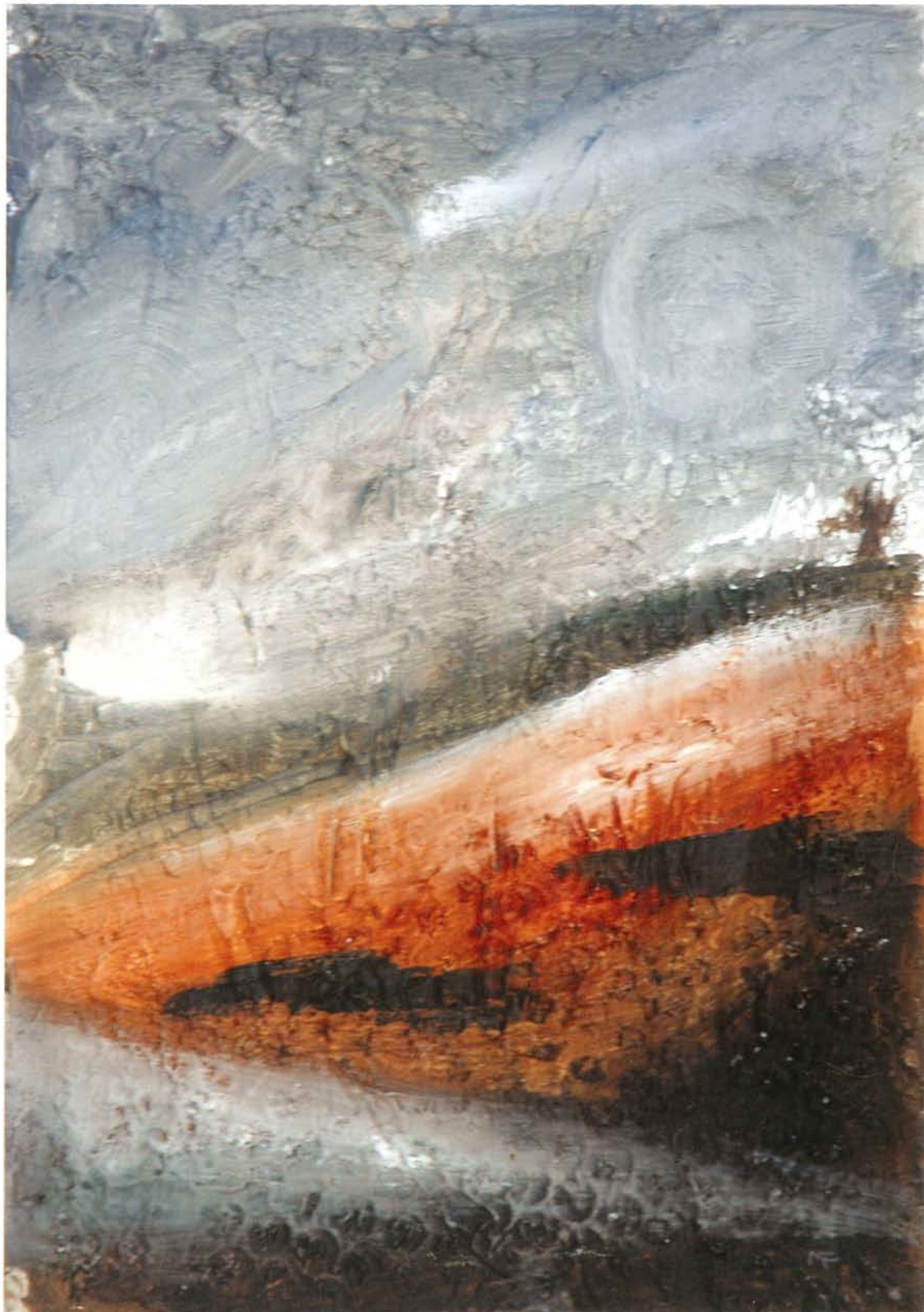


kiosk

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

2006



kiosk

VOLUME 68

2006

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE
OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

CLIFF THOMPSON



The new millenium has been kind to the Kiosk and its readers. While not taking away from the quality of writing or editing in the long tradition of the magazine, I think Volume 68 has taken a bold and wonderful step which will begin new traditions to carry

the magazine into the next millenium. I'd settle for a century or two.

This year's edition demonstrates a great collaboration of people from all across Morningside's campus. The familiar writers and editors of the magazine's literary past coupled with new faculty members, artists, photographers, and graphic designers to bring this book together, and the result is more than satisfying. Whether contributing works or helping lay out the magazine, these people have been a sincere joy to work with.

Of course I would be remiss if I did not recognize the people who made it possible to have the success we've enjoyed. President John Reynders is the largest thank you on the list, without his foresight (money) and blessing (more money), this magazine could never have become exactly what it is:

EDITOR'S CHOICE

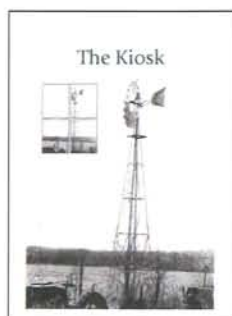
This year's Kiosk cover, "Lakota November" by Meredith French was chosen to grace the front of the magazine. The artist received \$50 for the contribution.

The writing Editor's Choice winner was "Going Picasso" by Randy Uhl.

a true compilation of Morningside's artistic and literary ability put together in a visual package that does the artists justice.

The second large thank you goes out to Dr. Stephen Coyne, my professor, advisor, and friend. In four years at Morningside I've learned about creative writing from him, but also a lot about life sitting in his office having conversations both light-hearted and serious. His importance to this magazine every year is as the lookout on a ship, calling back guidance from the bow to an editor sailing in unsure waters.

The third large thank you goes out to



John Kolbo and Terri McGaffin. We went from first actual meeting to working associates in a few short months. It was certainly my pleasure. They put in hours above and beyond their already busy lives to indulge my whims. Without John, there would be no volume 68. I am grateful.

A final thank you to all the people up and down the line who made this possible, from Marcie Ponder the English Department secretary to the design team to the artists themselves.

Now go and enjoy Kiosk reader. Whether you want to learn to do a flying elbow drop or just enjoy the finest art and writing Morningside can produce, you are only a few pages away. Thanks for reading.

THE KIOSK EVOLUTION
from left to right
2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

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ABOUT OUR JUDGES:

Ann Struthers is a visiting professor and writer-in-residence at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA. She has had numerous works published in literary journals and anthologies. She is the author of four collections of poetry and was recognized in 2005 as Morningside's Alumni Educator of the Year. She received her Bachelor's in English at Morningside in 1958.

Kevin Kjeldseth is the owner/proprietor of Kjeldseth Design in Sioux City. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of South Dakota, with a focus in photography and design. He has volunteered his talent and time to the arts community, designing posters for Saturday in the Park and Artsplash for many years.

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

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GATE

by Stacy K. Baldus

black and white photograph

Momma? Dead. Siblings? Dead. No one to love her during those early weeks—Cat was weaned in the bath and learned to love spigot and tub and whatever porcelain she could snuggle up to—shower, sink, stool, especially stool, which became the ark of kitty mysteries, center of Cat's cosmos. When I flush, kitty bounds to the rim and then steps down into the bowl, down to the water's edge to wonder at what has just left. I say "No, kitty, Pssst! Get out of the toilet!" But Cat barely glances my way as if to say, "sorry (though not very), my business here is more important than yours." Where must the swirling water, with its little growl there at the end, go? You can tell, Cat wants to know. Certainly that water will come back again. This is the physics of hope. So with a brutal sort of mercy I take the lid off the tank and show Cat the mechanism, flush it several times. She is

amazed and instructed. But once the lid's back on, Cat's wonder is as great as it ever was. So I take Cat into the basement and have one of the kids flush. I let Cat hear the pipes, the water leaving. But nothing diminishes Cat's amazement, her aching forward at the toilet swirl. Every flush brings her banging through the door to peer again into the unknown—The swirl, like a prayer, deepens with each repetition her reverence, her rapt attention to the experiment repeated from every single angle of pure mystery and hope, the exact shape and sound and meaning of one long gone, but still going, Momma.

STEPHEN COYNE

THE QUARTER PAST FIVE

When Katie Wept
she wailed like a woman scorned.
She shattered trees with her fists
While her tempest tantrums were all the rage.
Sun and song went on holiday
and the world,
punch-drunk and dizzy-headed,
shuffled her feet.
Skeptics placed bets after she stormed out
doubting that the raw would heal.

So tell me,
if jazz can return to the quarter
and honey-drip again on Beale...
why can't I get you to come home to me?

RANDY UHL

BY THE LIGHT

BY STACY K. BALDUS

The lights of the combine went out and dark quickly covered the field. The impression of the light remained on Fred's retinas, like the ghost image of fireworks. This used to be his favorite part of the night. When the machines were quiet, the lights went off, the field harvested. He would sit on the dirt, his back leaning against the mammoth tires of the combine, and look up. The stars stretched on forever above him, laid out like a shimmering dust sprinkled on black cloth. Sometimes, he would sit there for over ten minutes, letting his eyes adjust to the night, the echoes of the combine's roar fading away in his ears. The lights of the combine went out. He didn't look up.

Checking to make sure his pocket knife was still clipped to his belt, he made his way towards the pickup. Carol had given the knife to him not long after they were married. The dry corn stalks crunched under his boots as he walked. Shorn stalks rose crookedly from the soil, skeletal fingers which broke beneath his Red Wings. He didn't look up tonight. He was sore. His back ached, his eyes were dry, and his ears were ringing. Maybe he was getting too old for this. Carol and he were not as young as they once were. He'd been farming for close to forty years. Carol - she'd been working as a teaching assistant at the local school for 22 years.

Fred blinked, trying to rewet his eyes. He climbed into the dusty pickup, throwing his cooler to the passenger side and slamming the door shut behind him. The latch on the old door wouldn't hold unless the door was slammed. Dust floated up at the motion, clogging the air before settling down only to be shaken up again when the diesel engine sputtered to life. Carol had always refused to ride in his pickup. It was

too dirty.

He pulled out onto the gravel road, the headlights bouncing with the potholes. From his peripherals he could see how the light just brushed the passing corn fields. Most of them were harvested now, empty graveyards awaiting winter. The green light of the digital clock caught his eye. 1:37. Carol would be in bed. They hadn't talked today. They hadn't talked since driving back from the house tour in town. That was Monday. It was Thursday.

Their oldest daughter had set up the meeting with the real estate agent. She'd even come to tour the house with them. She had seemed excited. He and Carol hadn't said anything. The town house was small, but nice, not far from the grocery store. It was just him and Carol now. It would mean less house work for Carol. The lawn wouldn't take seven hours to mow. It was practical. Fred didn't think Carol's garden would fit in the backyard. His daughter thought it was an exciting option. It wasn't like they'd need the grain bins or machine sheds anymore.

He parked the pickup in front of the grain dryer and walked towards the house. No lights were on, just the yard light tinting the tan siding of the house orange. His own shadow preceded him to the door, seeming somehow diminished. The outline seemed frail and slumped. It was like the shadow of an old man. He opened the door and went down the cement steps to the basement to take off his boots and shower.

He didn't hear Carol come down the



PEACOCK FEATHERS
by Kimberly Jessen
relief linoleum cut

stairs. His hearing had been damaged long ago by the constant noise of machinery. He didn't look up to greet her. Instead, he slowly sat down on the rickety bench, mindful of his achy back. The bench had been in the house as long as he had. The duck fabric of his coveralls was the only thing preventing him from getting slivers. He reached down, his cracked and callused hands fumbling with the boot laces.

"You're back." The statement startled him. His hands stilled. From his hunched position, he craned his neck to look up at Carol. He couldn't see her face. The single light bulb was behind her, stretching her shadow towards him across the cement floor. Not that he needed to see her face. Lately, it seemed to be fixed in the same expression. Pinched, lines broken in between her thinning eyebrows and echoing the down-turned lips. Tonight, all he saw was a black hole, cold and empty.

"Yeah. Combine broke down. Took awhile to get it back up." The combine was beginning to show its age as well. For the past five years he'd struggled with it. He'd taken it apart and rebuilt it again with new parts so many times the company retailer would have never recognized it.

"Fred, it's almost two." Carol still hadn't moved. He gave up on the laces, straightening to look at her. Twenty hours alone in the combine, trying to get the fields done while the weather stayed dry. Twenty hours without talking to anyone. He didn't say anything. There was no hired help this year. Help was much more expensive now but no more experienced. Physical labor in a dirty field for just a season wasn't what most people looked for in a job. It wouldn't matter for much longer. It was just this fall.

"It wasn't just tonight. It hasn't even

been this last week." The solitary bulb dimmed a notch behind her. He'd have to replace it soon. "It's been over a month. Every spring and fall, you're non-existent. I only see you if I wake up in the middle of the night."

Fred looked at his hands. There was a scab on his thumb. He didn't know what it was from. He was always accumulating burns and scratches. He began to pick at the rough, dry skin surrounding it.

"Are you going to say anything? Or just sit there?" He was bleeding. He'd gotten too close to the scab.

"What do you want me to do? The work's got to get done." He wrapped his hands around the edge of the bench to keep from picking at anything else. He just sat and watched the backlit form shift a bit.

"Yeah, the work." Carol turned around, walking back onto the carpet. The light slowly crept over the top of her graying hair then onto her back as she moved into the dark hallway beyond. She stopped just before the dark completely hid all trace of her form.

"Goodnight, Fred."

He didn't watch as she disappeared. He gazed down at the still knotted bootlaces. To his ears, it sounded more like 'good-bye'.

After showering he walked upstairs, his dirty clothes tucked under one arm, his pocket knife and watch in his other hand. Carol got after him if he left his dirty clothes lying around. It hadn't taken him long after he'd married to understand it was best just to do as she said. From then on he'd always kept a change of clothes in the basement so he could take the dirty clothes right to the laundry room upstairs.

The upper part of the house was Carol's domain, with soft white carpet, large windows, and her potted plants. During the day, the spacious layout glowed with light. Everything from orchids, African violets, ivies, and even a pineapple grew in various pots lining the windows. Fred wasn't in the house much during the day. At night, he rarely turned the lights on, letting the shadowy orange which crept in the windows from the yard light guide his step. The brilliant orchid blooms and the various greens of the plants all faded to blacks and grays occasionally highlighted by a sliver of orange.

He dropped the dirty clothes off at the laundry room and headed straight for the kitchen to get a glass of water. The kitchen was different. There the florescent lights flickered on and the kitchen was a glowing wash of white. White linoleum, white walls, white countertops.

And dishes. Fred stiffened. There were dishes – dirty dishes – piled in the sink. And on the counter. In their 40 years of marriage, Fred could count on one hand the number of times Carol had left the dirty dishes laying out. The pans reflected the light glaringly into his eyes. He looked away. A glossy red paper on the counter caught his eye. Edina Realty. It was the pamphlet from the open house they toured on Monday. The top right hand corner of the paper was crumpled, like a fist had squeezed it too tightly. Fred reached out, touching the paper lightly, as if it would burn him.

They hadn't said much to each other after the tour. But it had started before that, with the letters. The letters printed neatly on nice stationary politely informing him the land he had worked for over 35 years was no longer his to farm. They'd become

more frequent over the last five years. Anderson's, where he'd put in all new tile lines. The Old's, where he put in a new waterway. Hanson's, the work in progress acreage where he'd cleaned out the bushes, small trees, and large boulders. One by one, they went to a higher bidder, a corporate farmer. At first, it just meant tightening things up. Letting his full time hired-hand go, not buying the new tractor he needed. Last winter, he received four letters. 1600 acres gone in a flash, and that was it. The landowners in the city had done what was right for them. Someone else could offer them more. After this year, he just wouldn't have enough land to make farming work. He and Carol would leave the home place and move into town. Carol would work a few more years at the school before retiring. And he...he didn't know what he'd do.

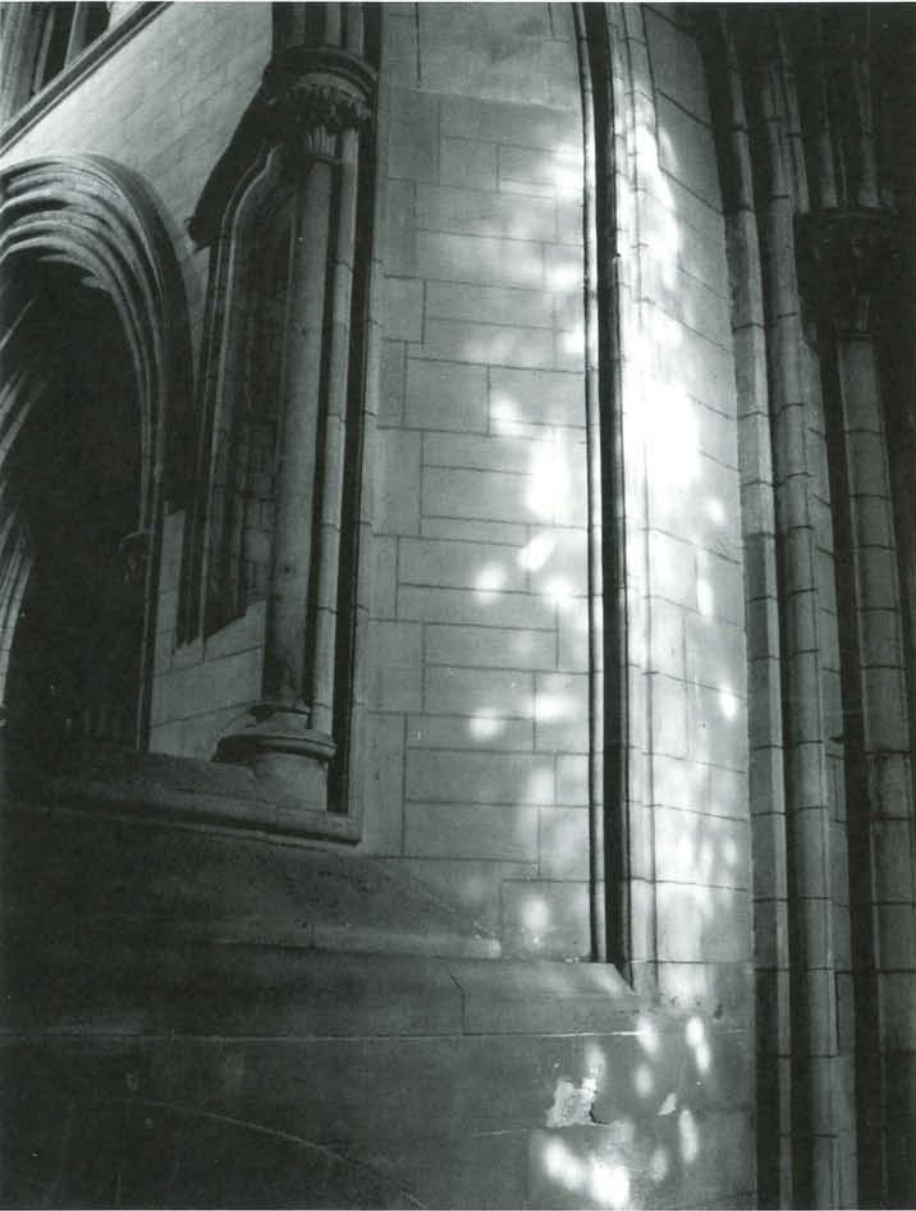
Fred pressed his hand down, flattening the paper and stopping his hands from shaking. He smoothed the paper out, pressing firmly to keep it from curling. Crease lines still marred the glossy advertisement. Hastily, he picked it up and put it in the color coordinated folder, slicing his finger on the edge of the paper. It didn't bleed. He pushed the red folder to the edge of the counter.

The dishes. It had to have been nearly a week's worth of dishes sitting out. He hadn't noticed before tonight. He'd never looked. The dishes clanged together as he gathered them up. He rinsed them, scrubbing furiously at the congealed food. The ones that didn't fit into the dishwasher, he hand washed. Scalding water and soap stung his various cuts and softened the calloused hands. He wiped down the countertops, then scrubbed them with bleach. Carol had said it was the only thing which got the stains out, made the counter tops



FLOYD MONUMENT
by Cathleen Ann
35 millimeter film

white. He put everything away. Except the red folder. It had no place. The folder, his watch and his pocket knife all still sat on the corner of the white counter top.



DAPPLED

by Stacy K. Baldus
black and white photograph

He walked over and picked up the case which held his knife. The worn and cracked leather was soft and familiar. One snapped button and the knife slid out. The wooden handle was smooth, worn to a dull, soft

texture by years of use with his own hands. He carefully pried the knife open, revealing the blade. It was nothing fancy, just a well made, functional knife. He'd taken care of it, keeping the blade sharp and free of rust. The metal no longer gleamed like it had when new. He often used the knife out in the fields, everything from opening seed bags to envelopes.

The dishes were washed, the counter-tops clean, and the red folder sat there. The watch said it was now after 3:00. There was nothing more he could do.

Frost coated the landscape the next morning. The shorn stalks in the field and Carol's dead flowers in her outdoor pots rested in their own casings of frozen dew. Fred woke to find her side of the bed already empty. He'd slept too late. The bed springs groaned as he slowly got up, his joints stiff and uncooperative. While dressing, he'd stopped and looked at the frost. November. It would be snow soon. He finished dressing, clipped his knife to his belt, and headed to the kitchen for some cold cereal.

The smell alerted him first. Rich coffee and bacon fried up in a pan, not zapped in a microwave. Fred turned the corner and stopped. On the table was a small crockery vase with a few clippings of dusky red mums. The delicate green leaves curled over the rim of the vase, resting lightly on the grey ceramic. The sturdy stems were still green and held up a full head of petals, still slightly damp from the melted frost. Carol was over at the stove, flipping over the bacon, her wispy hair loosely pulled back into a bun. Two glasses of orange juice sat side by side at the table. The red folder was no longer on the counter.

"Sit down. I'll bring you a plate." Carol

motioned with her hands, one waving a spatula. Smile lines crinkled on her face.

"Don't you have to work today?"

"Teacher's workshop. They didn't need me today." Fred nodded and sat down, one hand picking at his mustache. Turned away from Carol, he could still hear the fat in the bacon pop. She briefly flitted into view, setting a cup of coffee down next to his juice.

"The bacon will be just a minute."

Fred just nodded again, continuing to pick at his mustache. This was new. They never had breakfast together. It didn't work with their schedules, especially in the fall. Normally, he'd stumble around the kitchen, not quite awake yet and methodically pour himself a bowl of cereal.

"Here. Careful, the coffee's hot." She set a plate of eggs, bacon, and burnt toast down in front of him, then made a place for herself next to him. Carol sat down, newspaper and pencil in hand. The paper rustled as she carefully and neatly folded it back, revealing the crossword puzzle. Fred watched as she picked up her fork, spearing the slightly watery scrambled eggs, all while focusing on No. 1 Across.

He turned back to his own plate. The toast was slightly burnt, but the sunny-side up eggs looked good. The bacon was hot and crisped to perfection. Carol put her hand on his knee and he turned to look over at her suddenly serious face.

"Thanks for taking care of the dishes." He nodded, placing his own, rough hand over hers and squeezing it for a moment. She smiled briefly, and turned back to the crossword, filling in 3 Across.

Fred reached for the apple butter to spread over his toast.

"I see your mums made it through another frost."

"Yeah, but no doubt the next one will get them."

He nodded, chewing on the toast. The apple butter did a decent job of covering the burnt taste.

"What's under a steering wheel and all over Greece?" She was chewing the end of her pencil.

"Columns," Fred said. The pencil made a scratching noise as she filled in 7 Down. He took another bite of his toast. He didn't mind his toast a little burnt. Fred looked out the window at the sky. It was still the pale blue of morning and Carol's mums had survived the frost.



MOMMA'S BOY
by Michael Cody Drury
oil painting on canvas



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT
by Valerie Flanagan
acrylic and oil painting

IN THIS ROOM

BY LUKE DREIER

Standing in the doorway of this stinking spit gives me the chance to think about a lot of things. Literally I am here to push the weight of all this metal. I look at the rust on my hands I've collected from the bar on the bench press. No air flows here in the summer. It's hot, and it's humid. Just the way I like it. I have it firmly placed in my mind that this heat, this weight, is all here to try and break me, to conquer me.

It stinks in here, like sweat, like rust, like my two week old puke in the blue trash can by the door. Nothing but the metal I have blasting out of the piece of crap stereo can be heard. I have no place to wipe the sweat off my face, my shirt is soaked in it. I am half way through breaking myself to build myself up. This place truly is a dark dungeon, perfect.

Each morning I wake up at exactly 9 AM to come here. I am angry right away. I choke down 3 egg whites and some toast, fill my dirty water jug up and make the drive up to this place. I stretch, put on the perfect music to get even more pissed off. I am pissed because I have lost so much time in the past and I need to fix it. I load the bar up with 2 forty five pound plates on each side, swing my arms just before I sit down on the edge of the bench slab. The same thing every time. I am waiting for the perfect part of the song to make my adrenalin spike up and my anger to hit its peak. I crack my back and lay down underneath the weight, I think about how my girlfriend of two years cheated on me with three of my friends, think about my friend that died last year, the little niece that I will never get to see until I am buried someday, I think about my friend that took his life after Christmas.

I am pissed at the world, and the last thing now that is trying to stop me is that

weight on the bar. I wrap my fingers around it and lift it up. I lower it down towards my chest, I know everyone is better than me, I alone have the power to change this. I repeat the movement of the bar towards my chest which burns now, along with my triceps in the back part of my upper arms. I scream out, hoping someone hears the beast inside of me needing to get out. The burning feels like fire to match that inside my soul. The rest of this workout is a blur.

Nothing is gained if I don't make myself sick. I am punishing my triceps and my chest, punishing myself because of my weaknesses. It is hot as hell. This pain is good, I love this pain. I am standing in the doorway now, this place gives me plenty of time to think about myself, and my life. I alone have the ability to beat all the weakness out of me, the ability to overcome a life that has seen better days.

This room is where it starts.

BATTLEFIELD MATHEMATICIAN



Add U.N. inspectors,
U.S. government support.
Subtract truth, add {pseudo} public
support and {a parody of} patriotism.

Add a deadline.
Minus a deadline.

Add war.

Add the media and me, a U.S. Marine, subtracting
months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds left
"in country."

Add stress, U.S. casualties.
Divide rounds fired by enemy KIA; subtract
life, youth, innocence.

Add a lonely spouse at home, mail.
Subtract birthdays, Christmas, a first child's birth.
Multiply by 140,000 troops.

Divide Iraq, add more troops and accidental
Iraqi civilian dead. Add a bit of truth and subtract
Iraqi support. Add a little more, subtract
U.S. public support.

Minus Saddam, add more conservative media and
imitation patriotism.

Add more troops, body-armor, longer
deployments, more U.S. casualties. Multiply
grief, pain, tears.

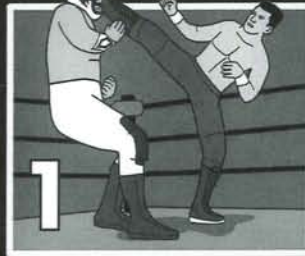
Add dead sons, brothers, husbands, fathers,
daughters, sisters, wives, mothers. Multiply
grief, pain, tears again.

JESS HORSLEY

A plump, rose tinted dream of
sweet succulence hangs
in front of his face.
He rolls his fingers over
the slippery skin and
squeezes
ever so gently. A bit of
juice seeps out and runs down his
hand. He closes his eyes and
licks the tart liquid
from his fingers.

CRYSTAL QUIBELL

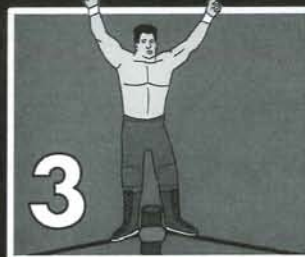
HOW TO DO A FLYING ELBOW DROP



1
KNOCK OPPONENT DOWN



2
CLIMB UP TOP



3
PLAY TO CROWD



4
JUMP OFF AND SMASH HIM



5
PIN HIM. LIGHTS OUT.

How to do a
flying elbow drop
by Dan Widrowicz
digital illustration

WARNING: Please do not try this at home. These stunts were performed by professional illustrations.



THE ALLEY
by Kimberly Jessen
black and white photograph



SNOW FENCE
by Kimberly Jessen
black and white photograph

CONFESSION

By TAVIA KNUDSEN

I guess I've just always liked blood. I was never into girly things like dolls, dresses, or playing house, so when I was about five my dad taught me how to ride his Sting-Ray. At the time I didn't appreciate how old it was, I just liked that it was bright red and I didn't have to use training wheels anymore. I remember pedaling fast down the sidewalk by our neighbor's house. She

was a nice lady, but her house always creeped me out. Her front porch was enclosed and shadowy and it always made me feel like something was watching. Passing her house, I pedaled as fast and as hard as I could, trying to escape the watchers from her house. One afternoon I got too close to the three feet high concrete wall that separated her yard from the sidewalk. My right side scraped against the wall and I fell down. My dad rushed over, scared, hoping I was okay. I was in a bit of a daze. Once I was on my feet I noticed my pinky was throbbing. I put it up to my face for inspection and saw that it was bleeding and the scraped skin was peeled back. My

knee, too, hadn't gone unscathed. I remember thinking how odd it was that the blood on my finger was bright red while the blood on my knee was darker, almost maroon. Fascinating.

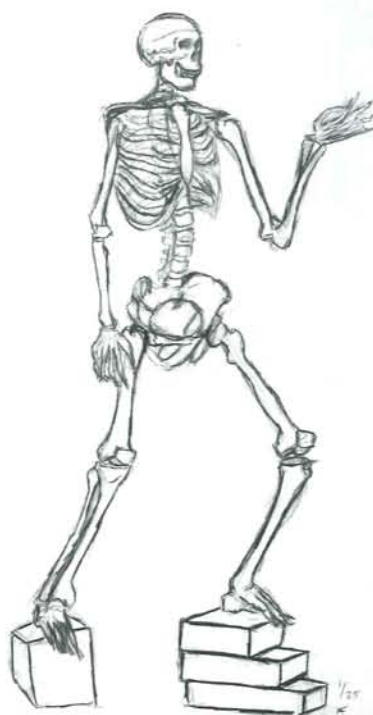
Over the next few days I had decided that the scab on my knee was the coolest thing I'd ever seen. If I picked it off, it grew back. I guess this cause and effect was really interesting to me because I constantly picked at it. When it bled, I licked the

blood off of my finger. Maybe that's when I realized that I liked the taste of blood.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not like a vampire or anything. Those things aren't real. I suppose if they were, though, I wouldn't mind being one. I couldn't drink a vat of blood or anything, maybe just a sip or a lick of it. I just love how blood smells and tastes metallic. It's like the smell of your hands after you get done crossing the monkey bars on a playground. Very much like iron.

As I got older I needed bigger and better things to amuse me. Skinned knees and scabs didn't trip my trigger anymore. I always liked the way squirrels died with their eyes open after they'd been hit by a car. Their round, black, marble eyes just staring off into space. But I was only ten when I'd realized this so I couldn't drive. I think that killing a squirrel by car is a little too impersonal anyway.

It took me a while to get the hang of it. You have to be very patient when killing a squirrel. They're too alert to not notice a person near them. Quick, too, little bastards. On the day of my first successful squirrel hunt I brought a bag of sunflower seeds with me. I scattered them around the base of a tall elm that I knew was heavily populated with the little critters. Then I sat and waited with a large stone in my hand. About twenty minutes later my efforts were rewarded. A lard-ass of a squirrel crept over to the seeds and started breaking them open, searching for the tasty treat inside. All the while his tail twitched in a Morse code-like fashion and his eyes stayed fixed on some object in front of him. I slowly raised my right arm and threw the rock with a quick, hard jerk. Stupid animal, never knew what hit him. I threw a few more, aiming for his head. I wanted to



BARE ESSENTIALS
by Meredith French
pastels on paper

make sure he was dead before I examined him. One reason was because my mom had always told me squirrels were filthy little creatures and I was afraid I'd be bitten. The other reason is because I can't stand suffering. It's just not right.

When I was positive he was dead I unzipped my backpack and took out a pair of yellow cleaning gloves (my mom always kept those around the house) and a small utility knife I'd taken from the garage. I armed myself with these tools and knelt down by the pudgy ball of fur. I don't remember being nervous or queasy, just curious. I parted the red-brown fur of the deceased and made an incision in its skin. Then I pulled open the hole I had created and put my gloved hands inside, squishing the blood between my fingers. It felt like I was scooping the guts out of a pumpkin. I couldn't believe how warm an animal's body was even after it wasn't alive. This made me want to experiment.

I thought of how in the winter you can see your breath. Warm air hits cold air and it looks like smoke. I wanted to know if the warmth inside a body could do this when it wasn't being protected by skin. I waited patiently until it was cold enough. I bided my time with birds and more squirrels.

It's not that I hate animals, I have a cat that I love very much. The world's overpopulated enough as it is so it doesn't matter if one or two creatures have to go. Their time is limited anyway.

Winter came with its snow and subzero temperatures. The dog across the street was always yapping all night long. We couldn't get him to stop. My mom hated that dumb thing. He was getting old. I wouldn't have hurt a puppy, they don't know any better. The dog's name was Bunny. His owners didn't give a crap about him. He stayed out

all night but they probably didn't realize it because they were always gone. My mom said they liked the bars. Thanks to them, Bunny was an easy target.

I did it after school one day. Bunny was rummaging through our trash. Of course he never had a collar on. I brought him some cold turkey left over from Thanksgiving. I needed a lure and he needed a decent last meal. I made him follow me to the wooded area behind my house. He probably didn't think twice about the bat in my right hand, why would he? Idiot. It only took about four slugs to the head to kill the useless beast. By that time I had upgraded from my backpack to a medium-sized gym bag. I liked that it had two handles. I felt like a doctor carrying around surgical tools.

Poor old Bunny, he looked even mangier dead than alive. You couldn't see his eyes anymore because they had been smashed further back into his skull. His dirty blonde coat was matted around the neck from the blood. Some of it had splattered onto his back. This made me realize that I needed to start wearing something disposable over my clothes so they didn't get ruined during my escapades. Garbage bags or cheap plastic ponchos were my chosen garb after this kill. My allowance money helped pay for them.

The knife I used on Bunny had a longer and stronger blade than the knife I had used in my previous experiments. It used to belong in the kitchen but then became a device my dad used to pry the lids from stubborn paint cans. I put on my gloves and held the knife firmly in my hand. I think I stabbed a bit harder than I was supposed to because I wasn't used to cutting into something that large. I thought I had needed to use more force. Oops. Don't worry, though, I figured it out when I hit

the frozen ground underneath him.

I sliced him wide open and forced my hands inside to separate the skin. My cheeks hurt from the big stupid grin I had when the steam formed from the cold air hitting his insides. Unfortunately it didn't last long. I hadn't quite figured out that a good thing can't last. After the steaming stopped I mashed my hands around inside of him. Although he wasn't steaming he was still a



BACKYARD AT DAWN
by Cathleen Ann
35 millimeter film

bit warm. I was having a lot of fun, but I was kind of nervous that someone would catch me. This made me throw up on the dog's mutilated head. Bunny went out with our trash that night. No one needed to see that. His owners just figured he ran away and my parents thought running away was the best thing that could have ever happened to him. Stupid old Bunny.

When I was 14, I had moved on a bit from killing birds, squirrels, and the usual stray cat or dog. Now I had friends and something way cooler—my period. Like I said, blood's fascinating. I wasn't one of

those ninnies that thought I was dying when I got it. Middle school Sex Ed. classes prepared me for the big day. I still can't believe how much blood is lost in the course of a week. My gynecologist told me that I lose more blood than an average woman because fibroid tumors run in the family. Sometimes they detach themselves from the walls of my uterus during my period and it looks like I've just had a miscarriage.

It's pretty funny. Oh, but don't worry. The tumors are benign so I'm in no danger of dying anytime soon.

In high school I was dating some guy. You know, you go out with them just because they asked you to the formal. Well, maybe you don't know. Whatever. Anyway, we'd been dating for about six or seven months and he kept bugging me. He thought he'd waited long enough to get some "real" action. What a moron. I told him he'd have to wait until my period was over for that month, and he totally bought it. He knew I had lied though when we finally did have sex because he hadn't met a single virgin who bled like I did. He deserved it. Always pawing at me and acting like a lovesick donkey. What a riot it was to see all the blood on him down there. I still laugh every time I think about that. We broke up shortly after that.

When I got to be a senior in high school, I decided to do some charity work. I knew it would look good on my college applications. I wasn't hanging out with my friends much anymore because all they wanted to do was drink and have sex while all I wanted to do was get into a decent school.

I started out serving meals at a soup

kitchen. I felt horrible for those poor people. Like I said, I hate suffering. They were all grimy and wore hand-me-downs that smelled of moth-balls and filth. Working there I met a woman who worked for a homeless shelter, and I decided to do some work with her. Just a few hours a week. I really liked it. I sat in on interviews that she held with domestic violence victims and their children. She held these quite often because there were so many cases. The interviews helped determine whether the victims needed housing assistance and decided what other aid was available to them. It was depressing.

I also helped the lady with the annual headcount of the homeless. That's not what it's really called, I just think it sounds better. It wasn't a huge shock that most of the people living on the streets were men since the majority of the shelters are geared for women with children. Through this I was able to learn where most of the homeless in the area camped out during the winter. It's where you'd usually think they stayed—under bridges and in abandoned buildings.

Because it was February and freezing, I thought it was the perfect time for me to go above and beyond my work at the shelter. I knew it would take time, though. As the saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day." I knew that I was capable of ending at least a few of the lost souls' suffering. Besides, I had neglected my hobby far too long.

It was only natural that I'd need to get better equipment for my task. I figured that the more I could look as though I fit in with these people the better. I bought myself a large, brown, nylon duffel bag and placed it on a dirt road where I rolled over it with my car several times. Occasionally I got out and repositioned it so that it would be battered from every angle. You

may think this sounds a little drastic but I put a lot of thought into it. You can't do a half-assed job with a hobby like this. I also picked up a musty, holey old trench coat from a second-hand shop and wore some old clothes and shoes I'd used for painting underneath.

Tools. That was the hard thing. I wasn't exactly sure what I was going to need or whether or not I planned on properly disposing of the body. Would there be a huge investigation into the killing of a homeless man? I didn't really intend to find out, so I bought a hacksaw and a short-handled ax, just in case. Several knives of different lengths, too, were packed into my bag along with plastic drop clothes, garbage bags, and cold turkey and ham sandwiches—as with Bunny, everyone's gotta have a decent last meal.

By the time I was ready to set out I was so nervous with excitement that I threw up in the toilet before I left. Butterflies were having a party in my stomach and blood was rushing through my veins, making my temples throb—it sounded like there was a waterfall crashing through my head. I also made sure to pee before I took off because I always have to pee when I'm excited. I love that feeling. I think I'm gonna miss it.

That first time back in the game didn't go off as smoothly as I had hoped. This was to be expected though. Absence tends to do this. I decided to start under one of the bridges because I thought an abandoned building might have too many homeless people living in it. I would've hated to have someone interrupt my project. I parked my car about a mile down the road from the site. This part was easy because I chose an old bridge by the railroad tracks that didn't see much action by way of traffic. You're probably wondering how I didn't freeze to

death on the walk there but if you know anything about adrenaline you'd know I was plenty warm and ready to go. I'll admit I was a bit disappointed when I came upon the scene. Movies always show bunches of homeless people around a fire with bottles of booze in hand. No fire, no booze. Only



OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS
by Kimberly Jessen
black and white photograph

one guy, too, so that cheered me up.

I approached him, trying to look as vagrant-like as possible. Maybe he didn't notice that my fingernails were clean and that my hair was a bit shinier than it should have been. Oh well. We learn from these things and it only makes us better at what

we do. I approached him and said, 'Hey, you lookin' for a bite to eat?' I think that community colleges ought to offer a Hobo Lingo course because, let me tell you, it was awkward. Eventually I convinced him that I was cool and we sat down to eat. He smelled really bad and his teeth were brown so when I took a bite and started chewing I had to turn my head 'cuz I was gagging. We didn't talk much but I did manage to learn his name. I figured that with a project like this I needed to get personal. It wasn't like I was sending a nickel a day to help some poor starving kid in Africa that I would never meet, I was doing something good for someone with a face and a name.

I ended up waiting until he was asleep to actually do my work. I rolled him gently onto his back and waited to ensure that he was truly out. Then I reached into my back and pulled out a large knife with a newly sharpened blade and eyed his neck. I wanted to make it quick and clean. As with Bunny I wasn't sure how much force to use so I estimated high. That part was okay, but what I hadn't really counted on was the eruption of the jugular. What a mess. You'd think I would have learned from all the movies I'd watched. What a dummy! I made a mental note to poison the food to kill them before I started cutting so that I could roll them onto a drop cloth first.

Next I pulled out the plastic drop cloth and spread it across the ground. I tugged an arm and a leg to slide him onto it. He wasn't heavy at all due to malnourishment. That reinforced my good feelings about the project. I stifled a few giggles when his head kept bouncing back and the neck wound gushed and sputtered. It reminded me of how sock puppets' mouths are so wide, this one was puking crimson though.

Once he was settled on the plastic I grabbed my saw. I thought working on detaching the rest of the head would be my best move to start with. I knelt down and braced one hand on his chest. With my right hand I positioned my saw and started cutting back and forth. The saw was a bad choice. All it served to do was chew up the soft flesh and then the pieces of skin that got caught between the teeth needed to be cleared away too often. Thank goodness I'd brought that ax along. It made nice even cuts. For the rest of the body all I had to do was use short, quick, hacking motions and I had soon removed the arms and legs from his torso. The separate parts of his body were then all bagged individually and I deposited them all in different areas, tossing them far out into the river. I was so happy when I returned to my car.

I became better at this throughout the

rest of February and into mid-March. I figured that when the weather got warmer there was no need for me to help the homeless as much. After the first one it was so easy. I learned to bring alcohol along with me because if they drank enough it made them pass out sooner than the poison in the food killed them. Disposal became less of a hassle, too. I still used the same techniques but I just got faster at it. There were only seven people who received my aid that year. No one's ever noticed the missing transients, but our area's homeless population has decreased in the past five years that I've volunteered at the shelter.

I'm done with school now and I've been offered a position a few hundred miles from here. My boyfriend, too, we've been dating for three years now. He's asked me to marry him! I'm so excited. I can't wait to start a family. I think we'll be wonderful parents.



PRAYER
by Stacy K. Baldus
black and white
photograph

6 easy steps to transform a **dictator** into a Peacemaker



1. Shave his head.



2. Give him a pair of glasses
to see human beings .

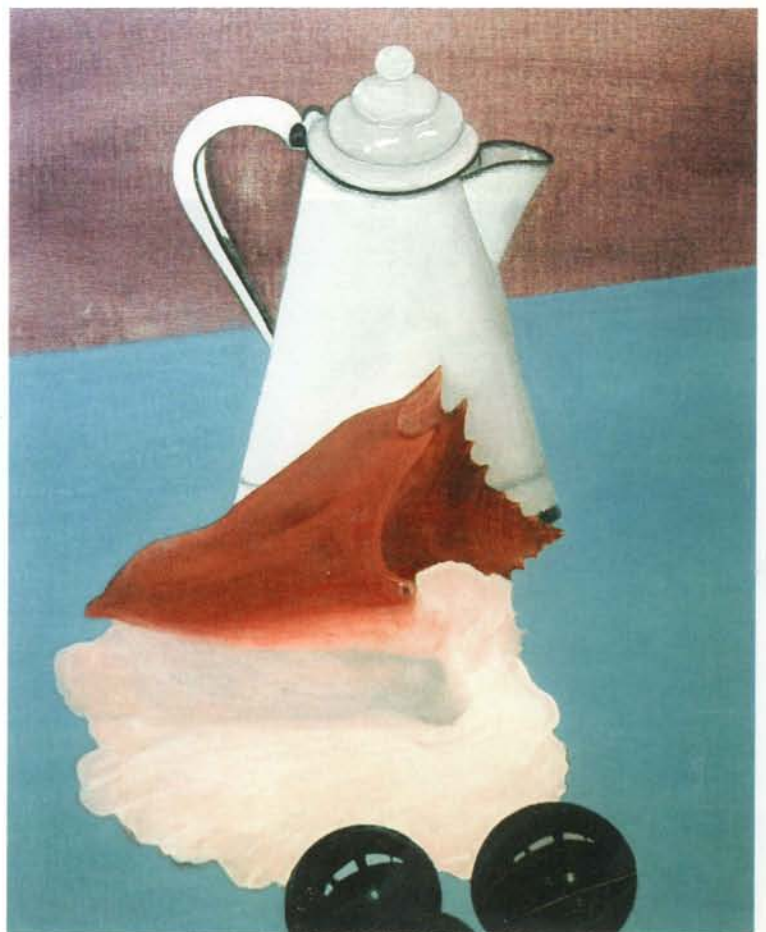


3. Exchange his gun with a stick.
(Well, give him something to hang
on to.)



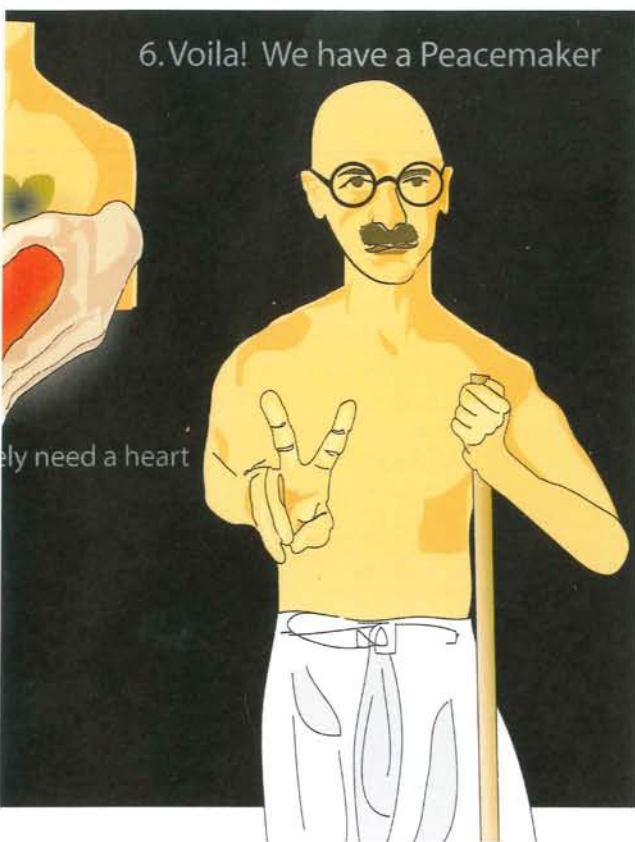
4. It is really important to
strip his ego off.

5. He will defi
implant



STILL ONES
by Valerie Flanagan
acrylic painting

6. Voila! We have a Peacemaker



SIX EASY STEPS
by Hemlata Gupta
digital illustration



HEAVEN AND HELL
by Dan Thorn
acrylic painting on canvas

MY SCENE

This is my scene.
newspaper mulch
chicken wire fence
octagonals twisted
with no Latin name.
No person company
only dirt and seeds.
Written word worthless,
merely hands kneading
soil moist and seeping
through my plain blue jean
poems. Just my wandering mind
while I spade soil, lay rows
and grow my vegetables.
There is no canon here
nearest voice echo miles away.
Linger here small purpose
in shade of grain bin
smell of soybeans,
and pretend that this
is my only scene.

STACY BALDUS



Cooling
you said "I can't see you anymore"

But still I sparked
So I changed
rearranged my nda my very marrow
to keep us lit
Devouring Kafka
I chased monarchs
on the backs of ticking crocs
Anything to nickel and dime the lost boy
whom you left, frozen
Puzzled
I tore myself apart and blindly
back together
 hand to eyes
 heart to sleeve
 blood to knees
I went Picasso
all for you.

Squinting
you said "I can't see you anymore"

RANDY UHL

ALYDAR GOES ROUND AGAIN

BY EMILY KESTEN



The woman was in tears. Danny had seen it before. She had the same look they all had, the same pleading, scrunched-up, wretched face of all those on stand-by. Her hair was properly flying about like a descendent of Einstein, and her purse slipped off her shoulder down to her elbow like a toddler struggling to break free.

Danny saw her and all this before she even reached E18.

He slouched in his hard plastic chair and thumbed his boarding pass. A cloudy spot hovered just above his flight number. He wiped his lenses with the hem of his tatty, green sweater, slipped the glasses up his nose again, and nodded satisfactorily at the clarity of his ticket.

"Please, sir—"

She had the staggered, stumbling shuffle down pat.

Danny opened his dog-eared paper-

back, the stand-by woman's Midwest accent echoing all the stand-by speeches before. He glimpsed the middle-aged couple across from him rolling their eyes in annoyance and then leaning into one another, muttering as their eyes pointed: Look, look! There's a wretch of the world, look!

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but we are full—"

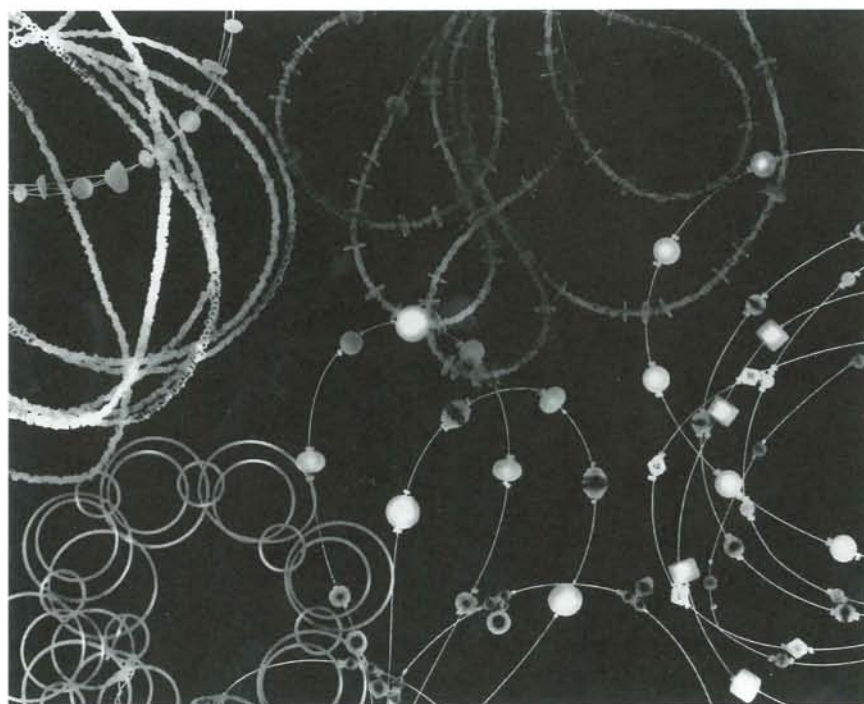
"No, no, you don't understand—"

"Something may open up, but it's unlikely . . ."

Why did the airlines always say such things? Give hope and then snatch it away?

"We will begin boarding shortly. Maybe someone checked-in but didn't make it. I can't guarantee anything. This is an international flight, ma'am."

In other words: You have no hope, ma'am.



THE OUTFIT
by Kimberly Jessen
black and white photograph

Danny rubbed the worn top corner of his book. A cheap, insignificant airport novel. Four dollars at a concourse C shop in Denver. He doubted the name printed on the spine in sky blue lettering actually belonged on the author's birth certificate. He doubted the author would claim it. Still, he'd read it and marked it, and now opened it again in Atlanta. The inside flap read Property of Alydar in blue ink.

Alydar. Not the name on his ticket. He supposed he was a bit like the cheap novel's author. But wasn't he supposed to be like its hero?

"Ma'am, if you could just wait over there . . ."

Hannah would've thought so.

"Don't go over there! Hannah!"

Danny ignored the breathless shout and hunkered down a little further against the mossy stonewall as he turned page 115 in his book. Everyone was screaming and giggling. The other kids liked being out-of-doors.

"Hannaaaah!"

Squinting, he read: Hornblower swallowed the realisation that it was possible for a man not to be able to conti—

"Haaannaaaah!"

"Oh, shut it!"

—to continue from that point—

"HA—"

"I'm just havin' a look!"

He couldn't ignore the girl's bellow. The words on the page were a bit blurry, anyway. Peeking over his library book, Danny saw a girl turn away from her shouting brother and head toward him. Bugger, he

thought, trying to hunch further into his navy school blazer. Try to be as invisible as possible. Maybe she wouldn't see him. Maybe no one would notice. The last thing he needed was for the Miss on break duty to catch him reading.

Ignore her, she'll go away. Danny stared at the page, squinting until the words cleared. —to be able to continue—

"Wot choo doin'?"

Danny said nothing. Maybe she'd go away. Sometimes the others bothered him for a few minutes, but they all tired of it eventually.

"I said—"

"Reading." He didn't look up.

"Well, ooobviously!" Then she giggled.

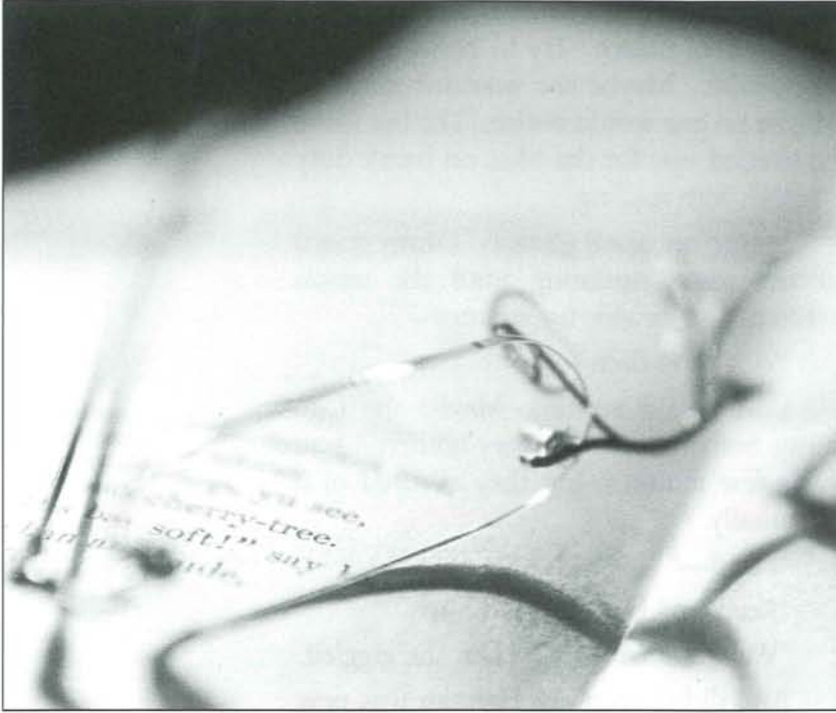
And didn't go away. Hannah was new. She hadn't learnt like the others. Danny rested the book against his knees and looked up. Slouched, muddy stockings and dirty knees—she'd get four demerits from the headmistress for those. Her plaid skirt was just as rumpled, but Danny doubted she cared. Hannah Allen stood in front of him, hands on her hips, leaning forward a bit as if studying some little rodent in a hole.

"Why you readin'?"

"I like to." Danny peeked around her. The Miss was too busy yelling at Mike Barleyton for kicking the ball onto the caretaker's shed roof. Good.

"Me as well," said Hannah. She gave a little twirl and then slid down the wall beside him. "But I like ball. Don't you like ball?"

Danny shook his head and tried to scoot a little away without her noticing. She leaned over, peering at the book. He leaned away. Hannah looked at him and



TREE
by Stacy K. Baldus
black and white photograph

grinned, her blue eyes disappearing under a gingery fringe.

"Why don't you read on the steps?"

"The Miss will see me."

Hannah tossed her head, boy-cut hair flopping out of her eyes. "So?"

"Ten-year-old boys are supposed to play ball," he said, quoting the Miss. Almost everyone had stopped playing and were watching Mr. Wikers, the caretaker, climb onto his shed for the ball. He was redfaced and probably swearing to Jesus' entire family.

"That's silly." Hannah gave her head another toss and dug her heels into the grass. Two black, soggy furrows, like trenches on a green plain. "She lets the girls read, if they want. She tells me I shouldn't play ball. I have to. Who else will kick to Tony?"

Danny stopped leaning away from her. Everyone said that new girl, Hannah Allen,

is odd. Even odder than her brother, they went on, and he isn't even from here. The Allen twins weren't twins. They weren't even related. Tony was from India. "I doubt Tony's his real name!" Charlotte had declared.

"Wot's your name?"

He watched her muddy heels disappear deeper and deeper into the trenches. "Danny."

"No!" Hannah giggled, then whispered, "No. Your real name."

"What are you on about?" She was leaning into him again, a sharp elbow in his arm. Pinning him. Cheers went up across the yard. Mr. Wikers had chucked the ball at Mike Barleyton and the Miss was giving him an earful.

"Mine's Felipe," said Hannah, unmindful of the ruckus. She pronounced it Fuh-leap. Like the final breath before leaping off a cliff.

"Felipe?" God, everyone was right. She really was barking mad. "But that's a boy's name."

Hannah crossed her eyes and dug deeper with her feet. "Like I don't know that." Two mounds of black mud sat at the end of her trenches. The toes of her black shoes barely came to the top. "But that's my name." She stopped her digging and whipped her head around, looking very grave. "Don't tell anyone, all right?"

"That your name is Felipe?"

"Yes." Hannah ran a finger over her lips. He could see dirt under her nail and purple marker smudges. "It's a secret."

"Why?"

"You need a name." Hannah tapped her bottom lip and scrunched her nose up. "A real name. One no one else knows."

"Why?" That seemed rather pointless, didn't it? Wasn't the point of names was so everyone knew what to call you? Danny wished he could get back to his book before Miss blew the whistle.

Hannah sighed and slid her heels until her skinny, scraped-up legs stuck straight out. "Such a question."

For a long moment, she didn't say anything, and Danny lifted the book again. Hornblower swallowed the realisation that it was possible for a man not be able to continue from that point with—

"Such a question," muttered Hannah.

The Miss's whistle pierced through the screams and shouts. It bounced off the school's stone walls, the ivy doing little to muffle it. Why didn't ivy work like hedges? Danny wondered. He sighed and started to get up. Hannah snatched his arm.

"Get a name! A real name." She looked a little ill, Danny noticed. Feverish, how bright her eyes were, her cheeks too red to be normal.

"Hurry along!" the Miss shouted. "The slow coach gets a demerit!"

Danny walked forward, but Hannah kept on him like a pup.

"A real name is the best thing," she said, fast and low. "You can do anything with it! Be anyone. Just like the books."

"You're mad," he said. His thumb kept him in his closed book as he walked toward the Miss. She was frowning at him, whistle in hand, even though Mike Barleyton and his friends were still kicking the ball around instead of queuing up.

"That's right," Hannah grinned. She gave her head another toss. "I am mad. Felipe is off her nut!"

The Miss blew her whistle again. Han-

nah twirled away, then sprinted to her form's queue. Danny watched her go, then shuffled up behind his classmates, and opened the book. —to continue from that point with a single leap of his imagination.

"We will now begin boarding for flight number 547 at gate E16, non-stop to Frankfurt . . ."

Two waves of grumbling excitement washed through the terminal. The Frankfurt-bound rose as if in a stadium, bending and twisting for coats and carry-ons, muttered excuse mes and frantic where's my passes blurring over the row announcements. Only the business suits cut a swath through the confusion, needless of common affairs such as row announcements. They were too sharp for the back world of crying children, haggard parents, and confused tourists.

At E18, the second wave rumbled and shifted enviously as wrists twisted to check the time and an anxious few double-checked their tickets and passports. The stand-by woman watched it all with lips tucked between her teeth, her large, brown purse bobbing over the floor as she fidgeted. A bottom button had popped open on her faded blue blouse, revealing a white undershirt stretched over her rolled belly. She watched the Frankfurt flight board, as



LITTLE COWGIRL
by Matthew Ellis
black and white photograph

if spotting empty seats to Germany.

Danny glanced around, slipping his boarding pass into the book.

Don't you do it, he could hear his mother chiding. She puffed up like a dragon, the roar of a jumbo jet giving the tarmac one last kiss filling her lungs. Don't you do it again, Daniel Evans!

He stared down at the blue ink. Property of Alydar.

The boarding pass said Daniel Evans.

The woman began making little whimpering noises as the gate attendant reached for his microphone. Boarding would begin. Would anyone care to give-up their seat to this wretched woman and wait another day to cross the ocean? Would anyone like to put life on hold because the airline double-booked? Anyone? Anyone at all?

The payphone settled with a plastic-to-metal click-thunk just as another burst of thunder rolled over the Texaco. His mum's tirade echoing from overseas. Danny stared at the orgy of smudged thumbprints covering the black, cracked phone. He felt sweat gathering around the thin plastic between his thumb and forefinger. To his left a toilet flushed and a stolid, bearded man in a stained cowboy hat came out of the loo, zipping his jeans.

Danny quickly looked away and pushed his glasses up. He must look daft, standing here, staring at the phone. Slipping the now useless calling card into his pocket, he went to the large, tinted windows overlooking the vast truck-stop lot. The next set of heavy blue and green clouds were marching in from the west. They flattened the already stretched Iowa landscape. Weary straggler clouds still dawdled behind the

first thunderstorm continuing east.

Danny hitched up the backpack on his shoulder. It was August. He'd been traveling for four months. That's what the calendar claimed, anyway.

"A-lee-dar . . ."

He startled and turned at the girl's voice. Callie Woods grinned up at him, her blonde, messy ponytail and worn overalls still wet from the rain.

"That sounds familiar," she said. "What's it from? Get your mom called? We're done walking the horses. You need anything to drink or eat? I've got lots of snacks." She held sunburned arms up like a cradle. A young mother of Cherry Coke, Pepsi, and assorted candy bars and Cheetos.

Danny blinked, feeling like a distant news correspondent with delayed feedback. "Er . . . yes, I've called Mum. No, I'm fine, ta."

"I love how you talk so funny," said Callie. "Always wondered if the English really talked like that. So, they really do? Oh—we better hurry up or Tommy's gonna come in after us. Sure you don't want anything?"

He shook his head no and opened the door for her. Instantly hot, damp air hit his skin, filled his lungs. Thunder drummed from the west. An enormous, rumbling truck pulled out, its own roar closer than the incoming storm.

"That sure was a whopper," said Callie, shaking her head. "Tommy wants to get ahead of this one. The radio said tornadoes. Do they have tornadoes in England?"

"Not really." Danny dodged a puddle as he followed Callie toward the trailers and oversized trucks on the other side of the filling station. Mrs. Carson, the motel manager in Jordan Creek, had found him a ride with Tommy and Callie to southern

Illinois. They'd barely been on the road fifteen minutes before a furious wall of August storm literally slammed into their pick-up and trailer.

"Did you tell your mom about tornadoes?"

"No."

"Do the English really drink tea?"

"Yes." There wasn't enough tea in the world to soothe Mum if she heard about tornadoes being the norm here.

"That's so funny," said Callie, and then she jogged a few steps around a great red Kenworth. "Hey, Tommy!"

Danny came around to see Tommy leading the chestnut into the trailer. The other two horses, merely silhouettes inside, snorted and stamped. Callie clucked her tongue and a pink, spotted muzzle poked out through the top gap. She stood on tip-toe to kiss it. Tommy shut the trailer with a loud, echoing clang.

"Come on, Cal!" He rolled his eyes at Danny. "Little sisters."

"You're just mad I won more than you," said Callie.

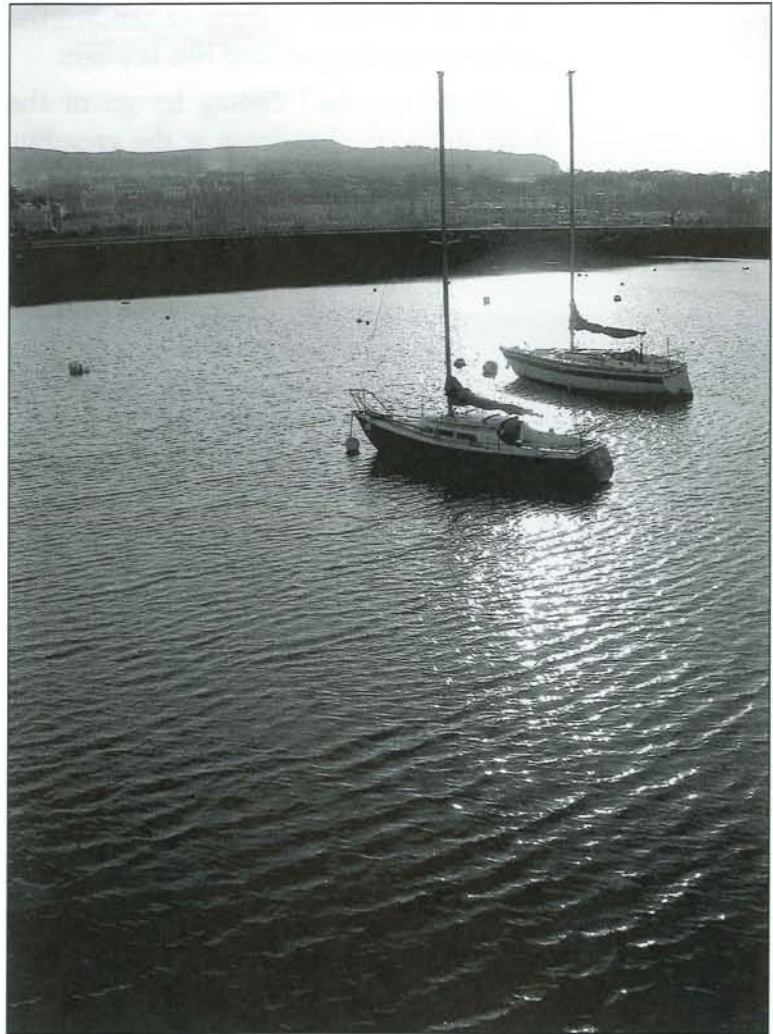
Danny opened the passenger door for her and she hopped into the cab, nearly spilling all her snacks.

"Tommy, what does Alydar mean?"

Up until now, Danny hadn't minded Callie all that much. She talked enough, to be sure, but that meant he didn't worry about talking back. He slowly shut the door, wondering if he should splurge on a taxi to Illinois.

"Alydar . . ." Tommy wiped his sweaty brow, then started the truck. "Alydar . . . isn't he a racehorse?"

"Oh yeah!" Callie dropped the candy bars on the dashboard. "Why you got a



racehorse's name on your bag? Is he your favorite?"

"Er—no. I just like the name." The cab felt stuffy. Danny fidgeted with the backpack on his lap. In capital letters on the right strap, he'd written the name in black marker. It was a little smeared now, bleeding into the dark green fabric. He ran his thumb over the letters, seeing strange Hannah Allen leaving her mark in the grass. She'd moved again a month later, but not before declaring she would see all the world.

"How long you've been here?" Tommy

IDLE
by Stacy K. Baldus
black and white photograph

CLASSICAL MUSIC
by Kimberly Jessen
black and white photograph

asked. He turned onto the road, sending the candy bars sliding around like toy cars.

"Four months." Danny let go of the strap and looked in front at the grey, tar-veined road.

"You just decide one day to go all over the place?"

"Not one day." Ten years of deciding.

"Was it your someday dream?" Callie asked. He could feel her staring avidly at him.

"Yes, something like that." Danny looked at her and Tommy, the cab seeming a little less stuffy. She was thirteen, Tommy nineteen. Brother and sister finishing up rodeos together. They both smelled like sweat, dirt, and leather.

"That's crazy," said Tommy and flashed him a grin so white in a sun-beaten face. "But I like it. When are ya going back?"

"In two weeks." Two weeks. He had a ticket out of Atlanta. Mum wanted him back, to register for classes and go back to college. Why should he spend more time wandering aimlessly around some wild country, wasting away his father's inheritance? Why did it feel as if he'd missed the adventure somewhere? Danny gazed out the window at cornfields parched despite their recent drenching. He could see his bag reflected in the window, angling upward, with Callie's legs arching over it like a jean rainbow. Alydar stared back, transparent as green-turning-gold fields blurred through him.

"Why do you need to do this?" Mum had asked. "You were never a foolish boy."

"I'm going see the world!" said Hannah, splashing in a puddle. "A bit of it every day."

"You don't say much, do you?" Callie sighed and put her feet up on the dashboard.

Don't you do it again, Daniel!

Danny closed the book, slipped his ticket out, tapped it against the cover, and



then stood. The woman spotted him instantly, pointing like a pudgy hunting dog.

"All right?" he said, offering a smile he knew she'd return out of desperation.

"No, no, I'm not all right—" She inflated as if to release a gale upon him, but the gate attendant spoke up.

"This lady is on stand-by, sir," he said. Not from Atlanta, this one. His stiff cut matched his humorless, pale face. Danny had to wonder if this contradiction of a Southerner had been stranded here and just never boarded another plane.

"She can have my seat," said Danny.

Carl, as his tag read, gave him an obligatory look of surprise. "Fine, sir. You do realize this is the only flight to Manchester tonight? The next flight is not until tomorrow evening."

"Yes."

"Oh, thank you, son! Thank you, thank you!" The woman moved to tackle him with gushing, burdened arms. Danny stepped a little to the side and nodded to Carl as he passed his ticket and passport over the counter.

"You're such a sweetie, um—"

"Danny." Alydar.

"Oh, I have a nephew named Danny!"

Danny nodded and watched Carl, who seemed bent on ignoring both of them as he switched the tickets. The suits were slicing through the crowded seating area, dark and smooth like eels. His row—well, not his row anymore—had at least ten minutes before being called.

"Do you have any checked baggage?" Carl asked.

"No." Danny shifted the backpack on his shoulders. Alydar traveled light.

"This is really sweet of you, Danny. I

was just telling this man about my terrible luck these days. You see, my husband and kids are—"

"Here you are," said Carl. "Mrs. Henderson—you're seat 23G. Mr. Evans? You are booked for the same flight tomorrow. Window okay?" Danny nodded. "Good."

So that was that. Danny tucked his passport away. Mum would be upset, but what did it matter? Just one more night in an airport. It would make little difference. Not like he was going anywhere, anyway. Just home after tramping around the States. He would not miss anything for one night.

Mrs. Henderson clutched his arm briefly before dashing for the motley queue of coach passengers. Danny turned to leave E18 and wander down the long terminal, when he saw Mrs. Henderson tap the shoulder of the tall young woman in front of her.

"What's your seat, honey?" she said.

The dark blonde turned, looking slightly baffled though her face was just short of goddess. "Oh. Um, 23F. You?"

"23G! Right beside me!"

Danny sighed inwardly as the young woman smiled in a polite, tolerant sort of way at Mrs. Henderson.

"You know something, honey?" she said. "That young man right there—just leaving, see?" Danny knew he should ignore and move on, but he hesitated. "That nice young man gave up his seat for me!"

The blonde looked at him—right at him—and flashed him one of those shampoo advertisement smiles. Miss 23F. He was Mr. 23G. Almost nine hours over the Atlantic Ocean. Maybe her headset would be broken, forcing her to talk to him. Nine hours. He could say something in nine hours.

The queue moved up and she turned around.

Danny blinked. He was not Mr. 23G.

Nor would he ever be. He glanced down at the strap around his right shoulder. Another flight announcement, garbled somewhere down the terminal. A roar felt more than heard as a plane made the impossible leap from ground to sky. Other people on other adventures. Alydar did not envy them. His flight tonight would've been the end. An end without a single great leap of imagination.

Smiling to himself, Danny straightened his shoulders and returned to E18.

"Sir?" Carl raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry," said Alydar, "but can I change my ticket to a voucher?" Indefinite standby, was that an official term?

Carl opened his mouth, perhaps to deny him, then shrugged and clicked around on his computer. Danny watched the last few passengers of Flight 745 board. He would not pass through that gate with them. Not today. Or even tomorrow.

"Here you are, sir."

"Cheers, mate," Danny smiled.

Then he turned and shuffled up terminal E to find something to eat.



Foot
by Cathleen Ann
35 millimeter film



BUBBLE GUM
by Michael Cody Drury
oil painting on canvas



TAKIN' IT EASY
by Meredith French
pastels on paper

Random,
thoughts go in,
thoughts go out.

Pay Attention.
Stop Thinking.

All day, these
thoughts came to me.
When I sat down,

they fled.
Left town.

Some were really
profound. Some were
magic. Magik

Like black magic.
Like voodoo.

Magic is manipulation.
Flippity flam.
Abracadabra

Alakzam
Alakazula

Evaporation happens with
energy same as magic
since they are

the same thing.
watch-listen-learn-

I told the witchdoctor I was in love with you.
She said I think I'll mix it up right here in the sink.

If this was an actual emergency you would have been instructed where to buy cheap cigarettes

Stolen lines.

Stolen guitars

Masters of Johnsons

I came I saw

I think I thought I saw you try.

and all the ships at sea

orange blue striated sunset

clouded bitten moon

full so soon

can't get it out of my head, wont leave

"watusi" is a word I like

it rolls off the tongue like jagged glass, fresh chewed

How's my stride?

Have I hit

it yet?

it's way to late for a safety net

the time of epic poems has passed

like so much gas

that dissipated years ago, the only trace is a
chemical trace, stuck in the cracks on the floor

mixed up with the dust bunnies and

cookie crumbs, bread crumbs,

love crumbs

cosmic cockroaches

skittering for cover when I stomp

my foot

the foot that is in the other world(dadadum

I live in because I've lived my life-

Now this is the good part,

this is the real part now—the truth
about it.

I've lived my life with a foot in

two worlds, with one in

each. Sometimes, I stand on one

and sometimes the other.

When i paint

When i write

When i drum

I don't stand in either

my feet forget the ground

stolen minutes

Masters of Bates

Thank you Michael

UNDER HER SKIN

BY RANDY UHL



Summer was dying gracefully, and August heard its swan song in the late-blooming fireworks as she sat crossed-legged on the front step. It was cooling off early for late July, but warm enough still for Capri's and sangria. August hoped the slight breeze would blow away all thoughts from the phone call she received earlier, but it only brought her sadness and the sour smell of sulfur. Keeping company with cabernet, she waited for Danny, her husband, and prayed the fruity wine would do what the wind could not.

Danny, much like the reports from the leftover Black Cats and Ladyfingers, was late. August assumed his meeting ran long or that the traffic from the city was congested. Whatever the reason, she didn't mind. As much as she loved him and still desired him after thirteen years, she liked the idea of having a few extra minutes to herself to straighten the twisted yarn in her head. It was only when Danny's car pulled into the driveway that August whispered to herself, "I thought I made friends with this."

The dust the wheels kick up traveled little in the near-still air. When the motor died and the car door opened, she was puzzled at first to see the Doc Martens and Levi's. Then, like a flash of light behind her eyes, she remembered what day it was. At first, Danny had remarked to her that casual Fridays were the ruination of professionalism, but as he walked about the office he realized the change in demeanor amongst the other workers. Men who were constantly checking the crease in their pants were now unafraid of sitting on the corner of desks and eating lunch from their laps. The women were spending one less day removing the rail-spike shoes and massaging their feet and calves. In short, Danny had grown to like the idea of casual Fridays. He

liked them so much, he told her he wished more days could be casual.

"Hey babe," Danny said as he walked up to her and took the drink from her hand. August grimaced as the last sliver of ice slid into his mouth. Pulverizing it with his teeth and talking with his mouth half full he added, "Sorry I'm late. Accounting lost some file and there was a bit of panic right at five o'clock. All kinds of chaos, but we got it fixed. How was your day?" He swallowed the last of her wine and threw a lime wedge onto the dusty driveway. Her afternoon buzz became suddenly lonely.

"It was fine," she said, revealing little expression. He took her by the hand and pulled her up from the step and into him. She smelled end-of-the-day cologne on his neck as his arms encircled her.

"Are you sure?" he asked, looking down at her face and into her eyes. He had a way of making his bottom lip stick out as if he was pouting and pleading at the same time. That usually made her confess, but there was something about her particular afternoon that he couldn't put his finger on. It was as if she had been unwound, and he needed only to see her for a moment to notice.

Pulling back she continued, "I just worked around the house a little... housewife things." A smile spread across her face that he couldn't quite trust as she told him everything that was ordinary. "I washed the windows and the sheets. Oh, and I started refinishing that picnic table outback."

"Is that how you got this?" Danny gently seized her by the wrist and held her hand in the air. She looked confused as she stared down at the white tissue paper cinched around her index finger with silver duct tape. Only then did she remember the bee-sting sliver the picnic table had given

her, and how she searched the house for Band-Aids. Unable to find them, she one-handedly ravaged the junk drawer and made do. She blinked twice at the paper ghost sitting on her finger and then blamed her forgetfulness on the wine.

Danny peeled off the tissue paper delicately, like petals. "It's fine," August injected, pulling back as if she had just touched something hot. "It's just a little splinter from the table. It will work itself out."

Danny grabbed her hand again, with more force this time, and brought her finger closer to his eyes. "Looks pretty deep to me," Danny said. "I don't even think tweezers will get to it. I'll have to use a needle," he added, catching her attention. "Let's go inside and take care of this."

"Right now?" she whined and then hated herself for doing so.

"Better to deal with it now," he said, "than to let it fester later. I promise you won't feel a thing."

With Danny leading her into the house, August shuffled her feet. What if she wanted more time to prepare herself for the pain this little exorcism could bring? Or what if she wanted to keep this wooden souvenir as proof of her hard work? Danny always questioned what she did all day, and now she could show him. Her mind spun around for more excuses, but while August didn't like the thought of someone digging under her skin, she knew she was being ridiculous holding onto something that shouldn't be there in the first place. Reluctantly she conceded and followed Danny into the living room.

"Sit here on the couch," Danny spoke in gentle tones. "The light is better in here." He opened the shades and the late afternoon sun bled into the room. "I'll be

right back. I have to get the tweezers and a needle. Stay put." He smiled and pointed at her and added, "I mean it." Danny then disappeared into the kitchen.

As August waited she stared out the window. She could still hear the fireworks but saw no signs of them. She leaned closer to the glass, her forehead almost touching, but even in her peripheral vision, she saw no sparks. Exhaling, she breathed warm air

WOODEN STUMP

by Megan Walding
graphite and charcoal drawing



onto the glass but was surprised to see no condensation. For a moment she thought maybe she was the ghost.

"I'll get it!" shouted Danny splitting the silence.

Startled, August snapped her head

QUARREL & STRUGGLE
by Cassandra Spence
linoleum print



back. "What?"

"I said, 'I'll get it', hon... the phone. I'll get the phone!"

"Oh... okay." Dizzy in her search for her own breath, August did not hear the telephone ring. She shook her head to free herself of the wine that haunted her, but the haze did not lift. From far away she

wipe it clean but found it was the splinter itself. August stared at the tiny speck just below the surface. What a small thing, she thought, to cause such bother. She tipped her head back, closed her eyes, and tried to time the explosions in her finger with the ones outside.

"I didn't lose you, did I?" Danny's voice was cold water to her face.

"No," she said, her eyes opening sharply. "Just closing my eyes and listening to the fireworks." Sprawled on the coffee table were tweezers, a needle, a ball of cotton, and a bottle of rubbing alcohol. She hadn't heard him layout his tools.

"Good," Danny said. "With all the questions surrounding the disappearance of my first wife I'm not sure how I would explain it." He laughed as he said this and ran his palm down the front of her face, first over her forehead, then her nose, and down past her chin as if he was closing the eyes of the one who just died. This is something he did when he wanted to say he loved her without talking. She managed a crescent-moon smile.

August could faintly smell the alcohol as Danny pressed the cotton to the mouth of the bottle. Saturating it, he carefully took her hand as she stuck out her finger. Without resistance, he pulled it closer to him and with small circles cleaned the tip.

"That was Piggy on the phone," Danny said, not looking up from his task at her hand. Piggy was one of August's oldest friends. Piggy wasn't her real name, but since junior high that was what everyone called her. August was Auggie and Peggy was Piggy. After high school, August threw off that name as fast as she could. One too many times were they referred to as Doggie and Piggy. Piggy was the only one who kept the nicknames alive. "I told her you'd

felt an ache almost as if it was outside herself. At first she could not find the source. Then she paused, concentrated, and felt the throbbing at the tip of her right hand. Looking down she saw the small crimson freckle. Thinking it was blood she tried to

call her back later.”

Danny then took the needle and passed it through the cotton ball as if he was stringing popcorn. Setting the cotton aside and keeping the needle poised between his right thumb and forefinger, he took her right hand again in his left. As he rested the needle against her skin he said, “She wanted to know if you heard the news.”

She jerked backwards as if she'd been bitten.

“Whoa! Hold still babe. I wasn't even close to it.” He eased her hand back in his direction to begin again. After a moment he continued. “She said some classmate of yours from high school died. I forget his name. An accident I think.” She stared at him, fixing on his eyes.

“Did she say anything else?”

“She said you two were close... that you used to date.”

Not pulling away, but instead leaving herself in his hands, she said slowly and softly, “I can't talk about that right now.”

“Okay hon,” he replied, sensing her sorrow. “It's all right. It's okay.” His gaze lowered to the finger she had now forgotten about.

After a decade of silence she said, “I should have...” She stopped. “I'm...” For a moment she considered her words, not necessarily the right words, but her words. “I just needed it to be mine.”

“Did you love him?” Danny asked. She knew she was the only girl he had ever slept with and the only one he ever would.

“He loved me,” she said, but heard the words as if someone else had spoken them. “His name was Cylas.” She paused. “He moved into town the winter before I was to start college. For months he didn't know

I was alive, but I knew him. Then we met one night at a party, and I don't think there was a sentence I said that June didn't start with ‘Cy and I’. Cyanide,” she whispered the last word, smiling at a joke only she understood.

“It was July fourth and I had to work. I was waiting tables and saving tips for school. He showed up and just stood outside. I saw him out the window, and I had never wanted anything so badly. I dropped my apron and walked out. We drove up the coast on his bike and didn't get back to my parents' house till dusk. He walked me to my door, and, out of nowhere, he asked me not to go away to school. I thought he was joking,” she laughed ever so slightly, she could feel her bottom lip trembling, “but then he said if I loved him, I wouldn't go.” As her words flooded the room, she stared off at the wall painted freckled apricot that Danny had chosen for her.

“I was so angry. I told him I never wanted to see him again, and I ran inside and up to my room.” It was her eyes flooding now and she snapped them back at her husband with brutal divulgence. “I didn't mean it!” she wailed. “...And he just stood outside calling my name. Who does that? ... Nobody does that!” She shook her head in fear her words would not convince him.

“I fell asleep that night to the sound of fireworks and his voice. When I woke in the morning... he was gone.” August pulled her hand away, to cover her mouth and near silent sobs. Unaware that the sliver was gone, she slid down next to her husband; her back against his chest and his arms around her. They did not speak again that night, but rather listened to the rhythm of each other's breathing punctuated by late-July bottle rockets.

I.

Forty-six days ago
my thirty-one year old brother
moved back home
for the eighth time this year
and it was only April.
My crank addicted brother
hasn't been clean
for more than an hour
and I tried to sleep soundly
while he trembled
for a fix in the next room.
My mother's mascara smeared as
she wondered what she had done wrong.
So she went out with blackened eyes
to buy groceries
and hoped that when she returned
her jewelry would still be
in its box.

II.

A week ago
my brother got out,
released after thirty days of good behavior
and sent back to disrupt
our happy home.
He rode in on his black horse,
unopened bible in hand,
scoffed at our closed arms
and lectured sin.
He promised to stay
only a day
or five but that was four too many
for his second-hand smoke
began to seep into our healthy lungs.

III.

Last night
my brother yelled
at my mother and I
couldn't take it anymore.
His guilt trips oozed
out of him like tar
and stuck to everything he touched,
leaked in under shut doors
and dripped down from ceilings;
blackening our quiet home.
He told me to stay
out of it, keep my big mouth shut, but
I didn't back down and for an instant
I wondered if he would hit me,
part of me hoped he would,
so the sirens could come
and he could go back
to hell.

RACHEL CASTILLO

PERSONAL GENOCIDE

weeds
they were white
well, mostly anyway
white and limp
with tips turning green
pale corpses, dirt still clinging
to limp bodies
just weeds
not important but
my hands laid them in a row like that
nice and organized,
row of bodies
which won't be buried
rather ripped
torn from soil
we always dump them
in the ditch
after every single one has been
torn from the beds
unwanted

STACY K. BALDUS

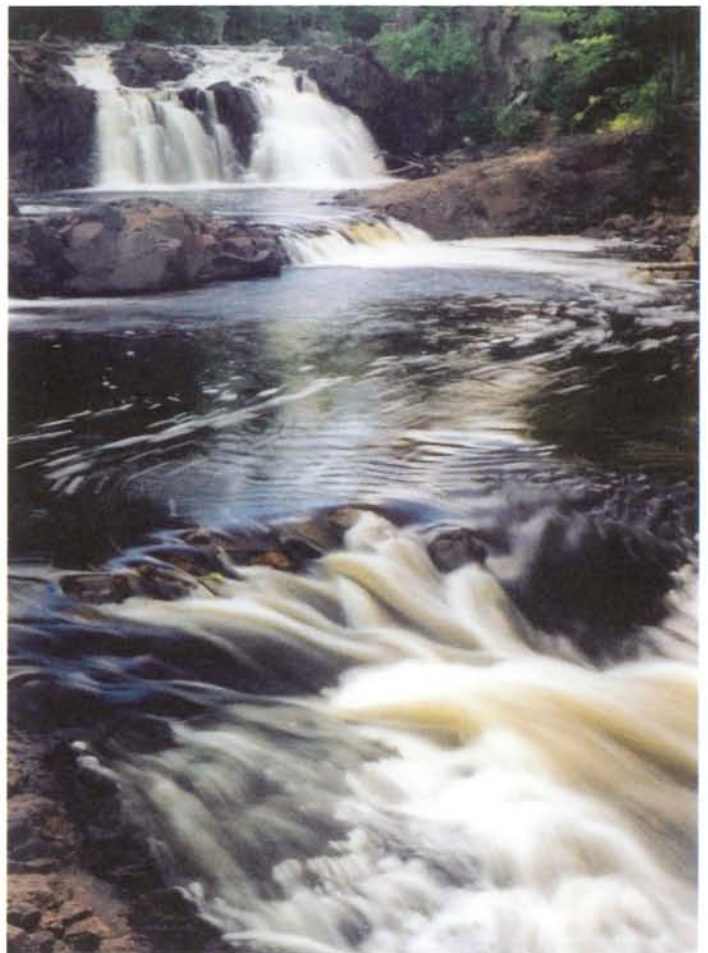
bruises rising to the surface
after nights of drunken disillusion
I don't know the story
but it's gory
enough
to forget
or misremember
I might like lacking
gender
and jealousy
and mockery
and the lines
of sugar
running through my veins
I'm a girl
sweet but vain
I'm a girl
emotions verging on insane
take my hysterics
and my baby-maker
and say I will make her
I will make her
more
... or less

JESSI PLUEGER

TRANSFORMATION
by Meredith French
acrylic painting



TEMPERANCE FALLS
by Stacy K. Baldus
color photograph



OTHER WOMAN

I wish for you,
Cats and canaries—
A clock's loud ticking,
Your empty stair-case
Creaking in the night,
And for the rest of your days
Never a man in your house.

ELEANOR MOHR, 1949

UNTITLED

once
 i was a cow
 and
 in a barbedwiresurrouned pasture
 grazed i
and chewed my cud and was
 content
 anopen gate
 ...hesitate...
 /abitoftfear/
and
 boldly
 travel
 through
and then above them
 I was and flew
 a bird soared
 and I
 and knew
a cow I could be nevermore
 (for I had tasted the sky)

BILL RUSSELL, 1968

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