



HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

# Apogee Magazine

*Spring Two Thousand and Fifteen*



*Setting Off Before Dawn* by Jonathan K. Rice



HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

Apogee Magazine: *Spring Two Thousand and Fifteen*

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**Cover Art:** The Distant Evening View When the Weather has Cleared

Jonathan K. Rice is founding editor and publisher of Iodine Poetry Journal, which is in its fifteenth year of publication. Iodine Poetry Journal has had the distinction of having work included in Best American Poetry 2006. He is the author of a chapbook, *Shooting Pool With A Cellist* (Main Street Rag, 2003) and a full-length collection, *Ukulele and Other Poems* (Main Street Rag, 2006). His poetry has appeared in numerous publications and he has been a longtime host of poetry readings in Charlotte, NC, where he lives with his family. In 2012 he received the Irene Blair Honeycutt Legacy Award for outstanding service in support of local and regional writers, awarded by Central Piedmont Community College. He is also a visual artist. Recently his art has appeared in the online arts journal, *Levure Litteraire*.





*Ground Swell* by Celia Glenn

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*Words and Images by Karaina Callahan*

## The Multiverse

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I was sitting the other day watching an orange ladybug walk across its maroon table world. A small white fuzz was stuck to its back, under its wings. I watched it exist in the *physicality universe*, not stopping to think what universe its head was in. Did it have a conceptualization of what was below it, above it, before it, inside it? Was the fuzz important to it? In that moment I saw myself as the being that watches over humans and us and me, aware of us and our three dimensional capabilities, wondering if we were aware of the higher dimensions existing next to where we walk talk sit and play. I became aware of the higher dimensionals looking down on us like ladybugs walking across tables, pondering our conceptual abilities. For a moment, I was aware of so much more than what we can see.

There's the universe then the universe then the universe and so on and so on. Physicality is limiting. The *multiverse* is infinite and as of yet undefined, my universe is not defined but it rubs against yours and yours and yours as we collaborate and float together in the endlessness. We all prescribe to different kinds that have different rules. It is important for all of us humans to understand the universes we all live in so that we are not simply ladybugs walking across tables not knowing where we are going. We are conscious creators, understanding where our intellect and inspiration and insight derive from.

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# Physicality Universe

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Our common trait as human beings is our origin in the Physicality Universe. Touch an object next to you: a table, a cup, you're dog's fluffy head. This is physicality in its glorified *three dimensions* with laws of gravity laws of thermodynamics laws of motion laws of conservation and Newton's laws of energy. *Isaac Newton* was a very smart man who lived in the Physicality Universe but whose head and heart lived in the Cognitive Universe. This is why he was so brilliant.

In the Physicality Universe it is hard to understand how there could be anything else in the world. We are so governed by the great *Mother Nature* and her lover *Father Time* that we can't know what exists beyond. They keep us confined to the laws and make sure we are not allowed to break them. The lovers only live in the Physicality Universe. It is impossible for them to leave journey explore beyond their own universe. This is where humanity finds itself superior to the greater lawmakers. This is why they are jealous of us.

We say we see things tangibly in colors and shapes and touches of objects. However we are limited by not being able to enter one another's bodies. See, as little children, humans are sent to school and taught their colors. The teacher points to a piece of paper and says *that's green*. So little child one and little child two both go their whole lives calling that color green, but child one's green could look like child two's yellow but they would never know because they are taught that the color they see is green. No one stops to get behind another's eyes and double check. We could all be seeing lawns in different colors but not know because we all say that color is green. Pigmentation is a funny thing. This is why, generally, the Cognitive Universes are seen as a better place for exploration. Its where the sheep go when they ask themselves, *why are we being counted; I don't want to be cloned thank you very much, I have my own say; I wonder what the sparkly things in the sky are.*

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# Cognitive Universes

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It is well agreed upon amongst the human race that there are those members of society that are beyond what we are living in. They are what we have coined spaced out and not present in the now. Famous names such as *Albert Einstein*, *James Joyce*, and *Bill Nye The Science Guy* have been known to exist mentally in a different place. The reason Einstein was always lost in his own neighborhood is because of the Cognitive Universe. He couldn't pay attention to the street signs when he was lingering in a parallel universe with 4th dimensional space. Einstein was a scientist. Joyce was a creative. We will get to those later on.

There is no way to know for sure what exists in the Cognitive Universes. We know none are the same and that none are similar to what we are confined to in the Physicality Universe. Mother Nature and Father Time don't make it easy for us to explore beyond the Physicality, due to their insatiable jealousy at our ability to travel. These are the greater planes of thought beyond physicality beyond law beyond boundaries—these are the *Universe-Branes*.

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# Infinite

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These are the universes of grandmothers and storytellers trying to pass their stories on forever and ever and ever. It is quilted in patches, flat, dense, and without end (see figure 1.0). The *seamstresses* never quit the process of adding on new squares. There is only so much material in the universe, however, so they are bound to add the same square over and over again multiple (infinite) times. My grandma never liked sewing much. No one really knows who the seamstresses are or why they are there or who put them there but they are there. In this universe not a single person is unique, is made up of parts that don't belong to another someone in another patchwork piece.

It is a rather judgmental conclusion to make, but unfortunately we only have the research that has been conducted so far, but this is the universe where the average typically reside. It is the easiest to elevate the mind to, but there is bound to be a double there somewhere, someone made of the exact same thread as you. If there is a person you have ever met or seen but seems so familiar it has to be true, you probably stumbled into them in the Infinite Universes. This is normally where minds reside until the end of *puberty*, in which some mature and move on and others never leave the universe. Or puberty.

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# Parallel

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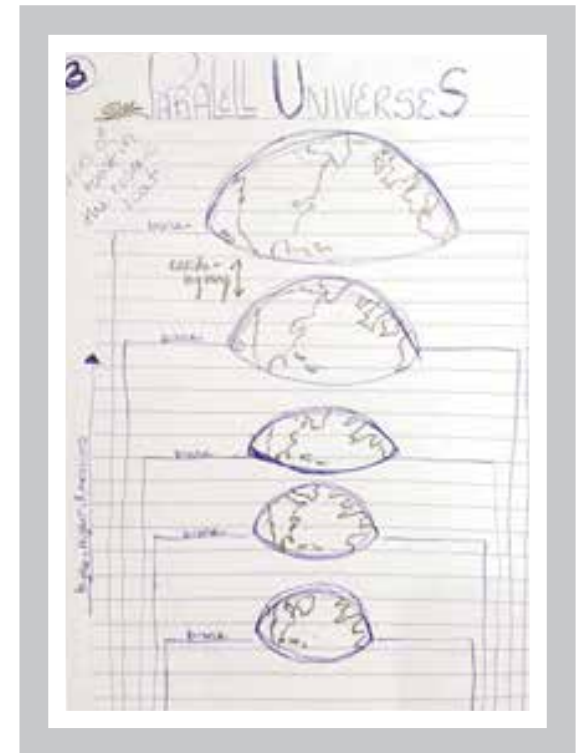
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This universe belongs to the mystics. They are a highly misunderstood branch of humanity since everyone thinks they are frauds and making everything they say up. Well, unfortunately there is quite a large group of humans who try to claim the title of mystic when they aren't one. These are normally those that have not left the Infinite Universes yet and are jealous their minds cannot access anything greater than infinite versions of themselves. *Mystics* are those that can conceptualize beyond our dimension and comprehend what could exist beyond three dimensions. Even they are not sure but their guess is better than any other type of humans. My mother is a mystic, but she doesn't realize it. She is a mystic that represses what she is blessed to see scared of the impossible and the beings she has met.

See, in the Parallel Universes, there are fewer possibilities and more layers. The universe is our same world and existence, but repeated in parallel on higher and higher dimensional scales, slices of toast in a cosmic loaf (see figure 2.4). Mystics are in touch with whatever exists beyond 3 dimensions, but oftentimes they sound a little crazed when they return, for the other dimensions are so different, they cannot translate into our languages correctly. This is why they mumble to themselves so often; my mother mumbles often. They have no idea how to say what they have seen.

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# Daughter

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This is the universe of decision-makers the decisive ones the logical minds. In the Daughter Universe, each decision that you make turns into a new universe where a clone version of you goes off and lives the decision you didn't make. Indecisive thinkers do not thrive in this kind of universe and if they ever stumble or make their way there by accident they usually leave pretty quickly. Scientists love lurking in these universes because they feel like they have all the answers already. A *scientist* is an intellectual that swears off emotion and non-logical deductions in favor of facts and quantitative data. This is not a bad skill. In fact, scientists are the reasons creatives figured out where their heads were going when they left the Physicality Universe. However they do not value the research creatives collected because it exists without numbers and reasoning and that is why creatives and scientists don't get along. A creative is a human that values the world in emotions and human experience and what you see what is beyond what you see what you could never see or understand. I once dated a man who wanted to be a scientist. He didn't value anything that couldn't be determined by a definite answer. I once asked him *what do you feel when you looked at the moon* to which he said *that it is 238,900 miles away* and I felt unfulfilled.

In the Daughter Universe, every time someone says yes or no there is a new version of him or her existing in a new universe (see figure 3.2345). Now the thinker can only follow the path of the universe they decide to go down, but scientists like this process because they treat each decision like an equation with an obvious answer. Creatives hate the Daughter Universes, because they like to follow all their separate selves through their separate journeys and consolidate them into who they are as a whole. They don't like to say goodbye.

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# Bubble

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The Bubble Universes belong to the creatives, for they are crafted for collaboration and connectivity of ideas. Only those with open minds can elevate themselves to this level. When the first intellectual thought was conceived, the multiverse as we know it was created in an explosion of intellectual thought, the *Big Bang*. They would look like bubbles, inflating and separating from one another as they expanded out into the void. They push on, sometimes rubbing up against one another (see figure 4). This friction is called *collaboration* and is as important in the Cognitive Universe as the Physicality Universe. When two bubble universes harness twice the intellectual power great things are created.

Each mind created more and more and more but sometimes a mind would stop. This is due to death. We are not sure where great minds go when their bodies die, but our best guess is the 6th dimension. That is somewhere we have yet to explore. Sometimes I think someone is putting a hand on my heart or turning my body a certain way; those are from the 6th dimension, I believe. Generations remaining in a form of existence we will never understand but always near. When their minds do stop, that universe ceases to continue inflating and becomes still. Those who are still creating and thinking continue on, losing the frictional connection between the thinkers that came before. This is why it is so important they document their travels in research for all creatives to examine.

This explains why periods of common thought occur because these great thinkers are all thinking and inflating together and therefore the friction between the different bubbles is great. We live in an age of great collaboration, but it is because Father Time invented the *Internet* so that creatives wouldn't want to leave the Physicality Universe and instead stay to do all their explorations over the world wide web. It is the wrong kind of collaboration. It is artificial and no longer real.

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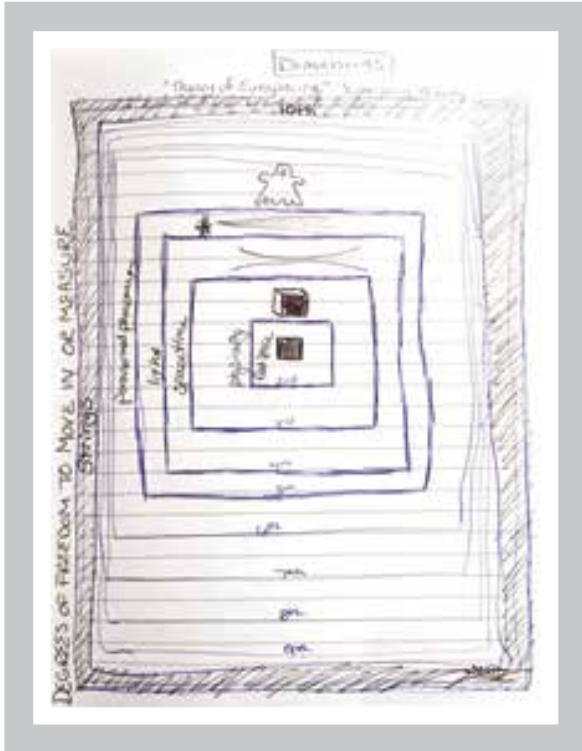
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# Dimensions

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The dimensions of space and time exist both in and above the universes. It is through these higher dimensions we can see the universes in all their complexity. Sadly, even for the minds with the greatest awareness, our brains in our young development have inhibited our understanding of anything beyond the 3rd dimension. We may visit other universes that defy these traits of the universe, but cannot remember in full what we experienced, for conceptually, these things cannot exist in the Physicality Universe. The artist creative thinker writer waits for the moments when the wormholes open for these travels, not knowing if journeying to this section of the Universe-Brane will enhance their work or inhibit their minds.

The 4th dimension is ruled by *Space-time*, Father Time's father, a more powerful and transcendent individual. He can bend change collapse expand travel across all the universes by creating wormholes. *Wormholes* are a device for traveling in out around and through various universes. I have to pop into one all the time to get from the Physicality Universe to my Cognitive Universe. Out of all the means of travel at the creative mind's disposal, wormholes are the most efficient, over teleportation black holes and accidents. Lately, Space-time and I have been getting along quite well and he has kept the wormhole open for me, but occasionally we have an argument and I am stuck in the Physicality Universe unable to get out and suffer from a condition called *Writer's Block*. The symptoms include extreme frustration child-like tantrums bad writing and a generally sour mood. Space-time keeps up with all the creatives. He enjoys their work much more than the scientists but gets easily bothered with bad quality. Normally, Space-time shuts down the wormholes when he feels you aren't using your Cognitive Universe to the best of your ability, letting you back only when you have learned your lesson.

In the 5th dimension we have light in the 6th dimension we have paranormal phenomena and in the 7th 8th 9th we are not sure what resides there. The 10th dimension is where the strings of existence exist. There is a *great musician* who is plucking them causing notes of gravity light energy matter to exist in every universe. No one knows who the great musician is or why he exists to benefit our existence, but we all thank him very much and appreciate the notes he plays.

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# Conclusions

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Trying to understand the multiverse in all its complexity is something we are unable to do. We cannot actually imagine what we experience when we travel away from the universe we are confined to. The scientists are working on a way for us to travel out of the Physicality Universe physically to another universe we transport ourselves to in our minds. I don't think we will ever make it. Father Time is too upset with his father Space-time to let us leave. Even if Space-time let us go, Father Time wouldn't give us enough time to get to the exit. Scientists are always trying to do silly things. This is why paying attention to emotions is a much better route to take.

The research keeps compiling in libraries bookstores notebooks doodle pads around the world and with every day we have a better idea of what is in the Universe-Branes we all travel to. We must continue to strive for pure collaboration in an age of distraction. We must continue to explore and keep reaching beyond what we know. We must continue to read the research of others who have traveled before us. And we must continue to teach the little children the importance of traveling to a place beyond the Physicality Universe to find their Cognitive Universe to find their inspiration imagination intuition invitation—to the rest of the multiverse.

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Blasphemous

Wardens

*Words and Images by Karaina Callahan*

# Wisdom

Father built our wood house  
from beech and fir and oak,  
next to the Black Wood  
where old voices often spoke.

Mother told me plant  
box bush by the gate,  
branches knotted inside  
out, twisted up like fate.

One branch, two, three together  
the witches can't keep count  
of weaving, swerving, warping  
limbs. We can keep her out.

Rosemary by the door,  
ivy growing on the walls,  
before the waning moon begins—  
bad spirits begin to call.

Blue beads sewn into sleeves  
to keep out evil thoughts,  
Tall Man likes to place them  
there and turn your mind to rot.

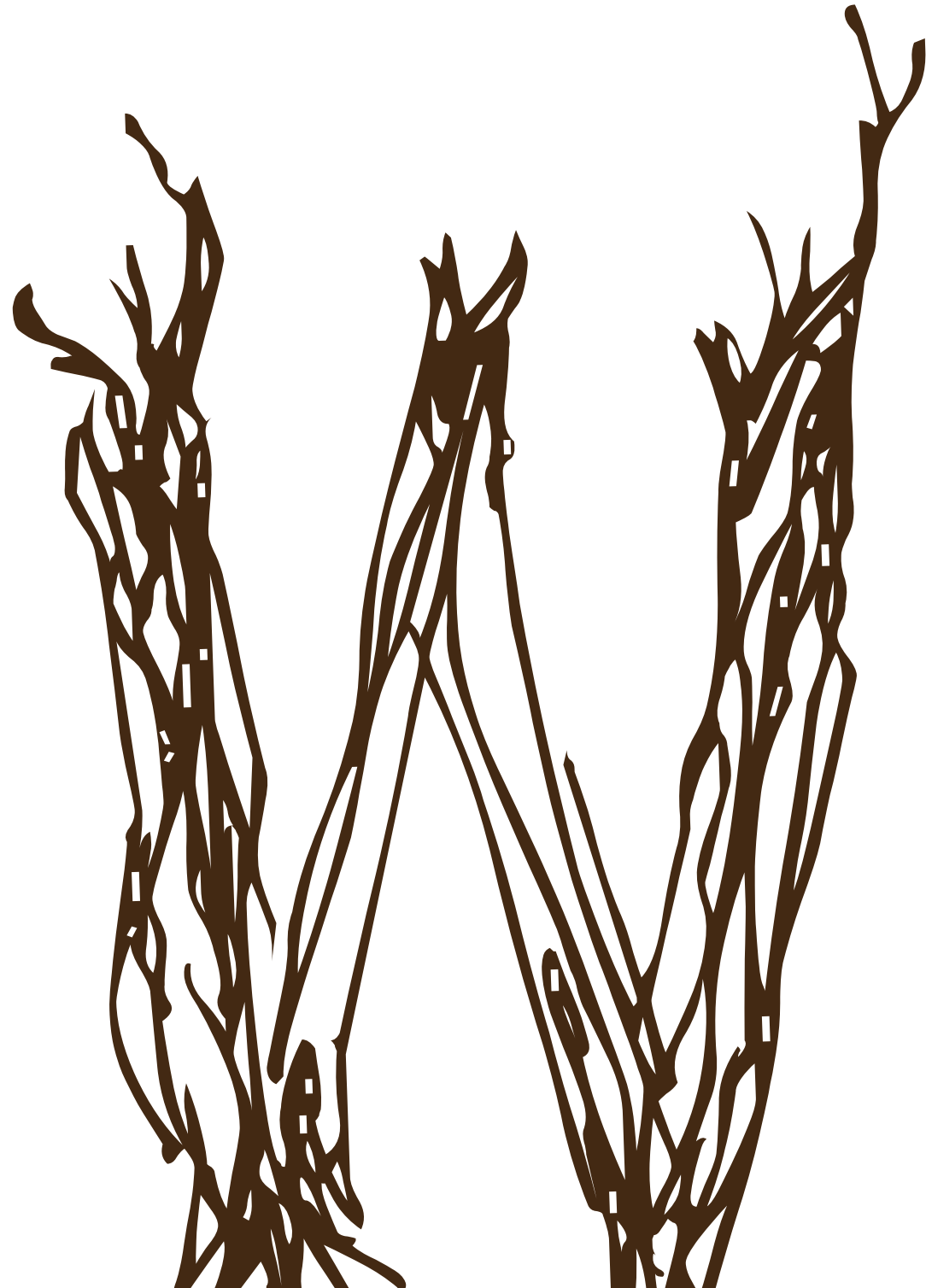
Watch your words, Father said,  
they have more power than you know—  
If the wrong ones leave your lips  
they'll taint your heart until it slows.

Blue beads, blue beads,  
keep falling off and hiding,  
keep you falling on your knees.  
Father bows his head, deciding.

The broken hall clock chimed,  
it called three times at three.  
The witching hour had begun.  
Father said, let's set her free.

Time to open the windows,  
a sparrow's stuck inside.  
Father said it was a sign,  
the day that Mother died.

She flew out the window,  
and I watched her go,  
carried by feathered wings  
as white as fallen snow.



# Bites

Father wanted us to find a snake,  
to find a snake as white as death  
so he may cut it up and eat it.

We ran our fingers over damp  
soil and rabbit holes,  
leaves and tree roots.

We ran our toes through  
mushroom trails we used  
to walk with Mother.

Sister caught it in her palms  
and how it shook and shivered.  
Before I whacked it on its head  
it turned around and bit her.

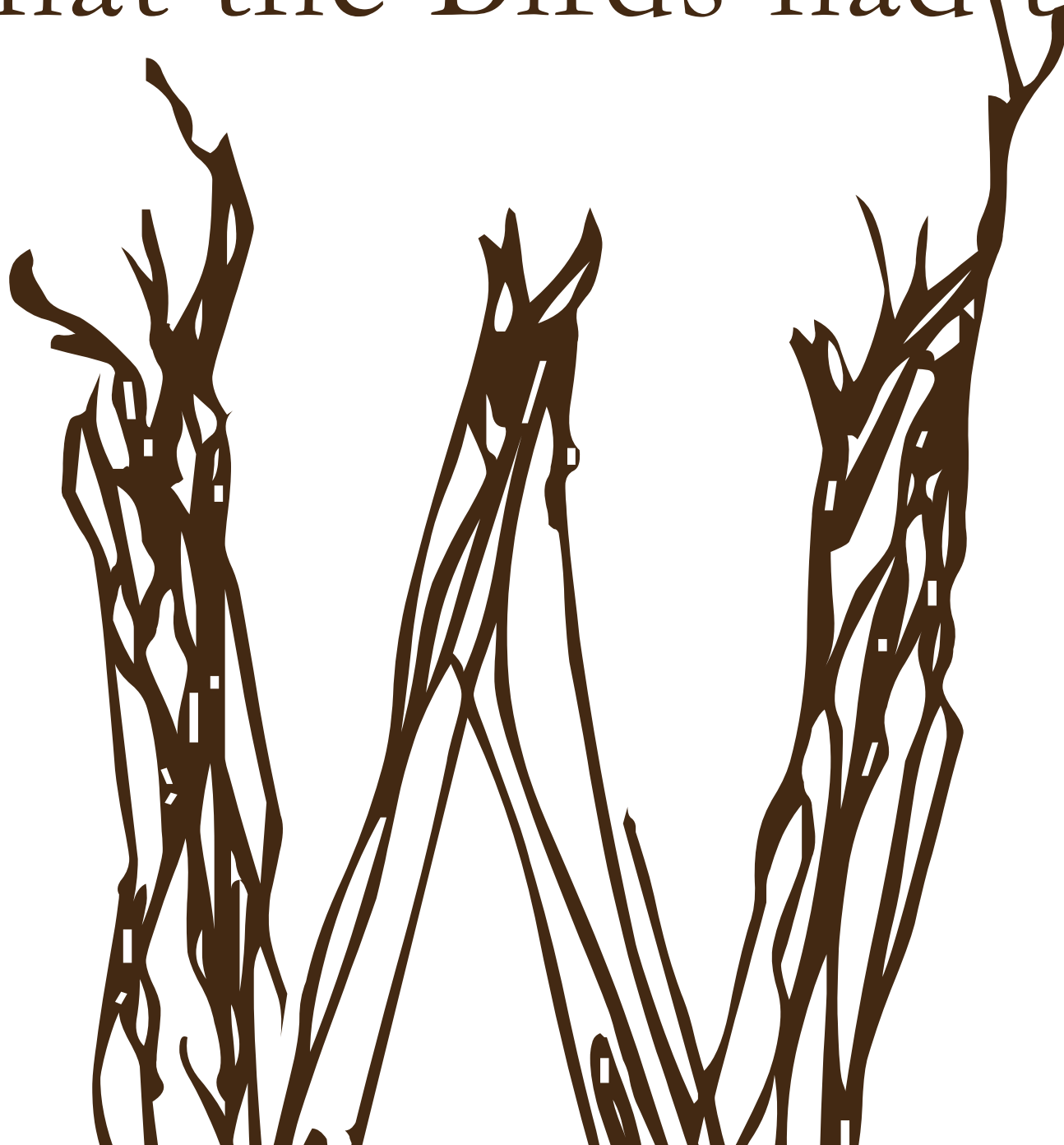
Sister swore she felt no pain,  
she whispered she was fine.  
Sister stoked the cooking fire,  
she whispered she was tired.

Father watched the fire cook  
the snake after he skinned it.  
Father watched the fire die  
as sister fell before him.

Father ate the White Snake  
and now he stays up late  
asking the birds about  
mother.



# What the Birds had to Say



about Mother was  
little. They told him,  
yes she was with them  
no she wasn't around

why are you so  
concerned? He said,  
Mother was taken  
away from me.

and now for a voice  
youve taken sisters  
and we cant take  
her with us. No,

he cried, Mother will  
come for her. she can  
only collect the spirits  
without stains on their

souls you made her  
catch that snake for you  
you let the monster  
bite her mother can

not come sister will stay  
in the ground with the  
worms and when its time  
youll join her.



# LOSS

We carried her pale body  
between our own, her limbs  
barren, her skin exposed  
to frost. Father had no

linens to spare. We brought  
her to the Black Wood  
where Father dug a hole  
to keep her. *I see a*

*man.* Father shed no tears  
when we lowered her below—  
a soft thud. *A tall*  
*man is watching behind the*

*oak trees.* We patted the ground  
around her grave, mixed  
salt in the dirt, planted  
rosemary by her feet. *The*

*man is smiling at me through*  
*the tree limbs, he has no mouth,*  
*no face.* Father walked home.  
I stood alone over

Sister to say farewell.  
*His hand is on my shoulder,*  
*his words in my ear, hissing,*  
*mine, you're mine.* The first

snowflake falls on her  
grave and sticks.



# Visions

Alone in the house  
felt a hand clasp  
over my eyes & mouth,  
in one fowl grasp,  
long-fingered hand  
on my neck—

Released but not  
alone anymore  
fell to the floor, fingertips  
on my back, I spun around  
to see, not fast enough, up  
against the wall,  
retreated, hide—

Heart should be thu-thudding,  
no thudding, there's nothing  
it felt like it died, not cold  
but covered in chills, not sad  
but crying—

Prickles on my shoulders  
my feet rubbed together  
my arms encased me  
my eyes not staring into his eyes.  
His eyes.  
No eyes—

Stared at his face,  
saw evil, its wanting,  
anticipation—

My memories left as tears,  
translucent & black; gone forever—

I go back to the  
fire, stirring the stew.  
Waiting for Father.



# Mid-Winter

The house was void of heat; the fire would not start. Father lit sage over the logs. A spirit was taking the warmth from the sparks. I asked for a bundle to burn next to my bed.

There were dreams, I said, like nightmares—I can't remember—I think they are real. But we only have so much to last through winter. Father says no bundles.

Sister used to sleep beside me. Now I sleep alone.

chair on its side, keeping wind from inviting spirits to sit down. He doesn't want Sister to come home.

Father stays inside his head.

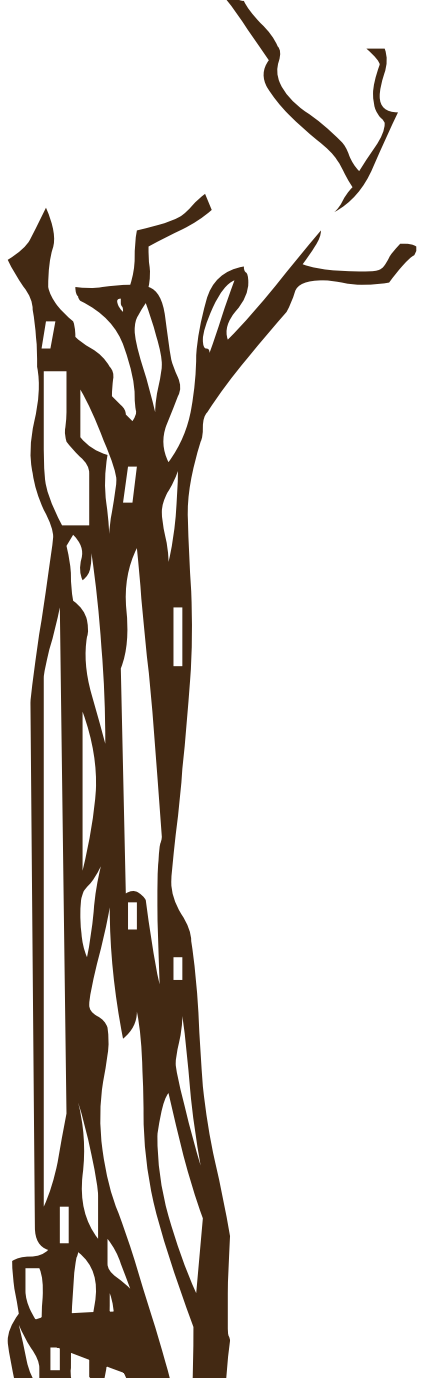
Mother would have ground lavender and mushroom root, told me to lay in its waters until my worries floated away. But we must conserve water. Father says no baths.

Father turned the rocking chair on its side, keeping wind from inviting spirits to sit down. He doesn't want Sister to come home.

The sage burned out the logs lit up, and I held close to the flames, keeping the light inside my body, terrified of what I could not remember, accepting what was to come.



# I Remember the Tall Man



and the way his eyes  
weren't there  
and the way his lips  
didn't show teeth  
clenched and sharp.

in black noir, sleeves  
on white clay skin  
sculpted from the ground,  
inanimate as the dirt.

I remember the Tall Man  
in my bedroom windowpane  
staring with non-eyes  
during cycles of the moon.  
I'd snap mine shut—you're  
not there, you're not there.

and how the floorboards moaned  
a warning, he called without calling.  
My toes stopping at the door,  
my hand on the knob.

I remember the Tall Man  
and the crooking fingers  
moving without moving,  
images behind my eyes  
pulling the lids to the black wood.

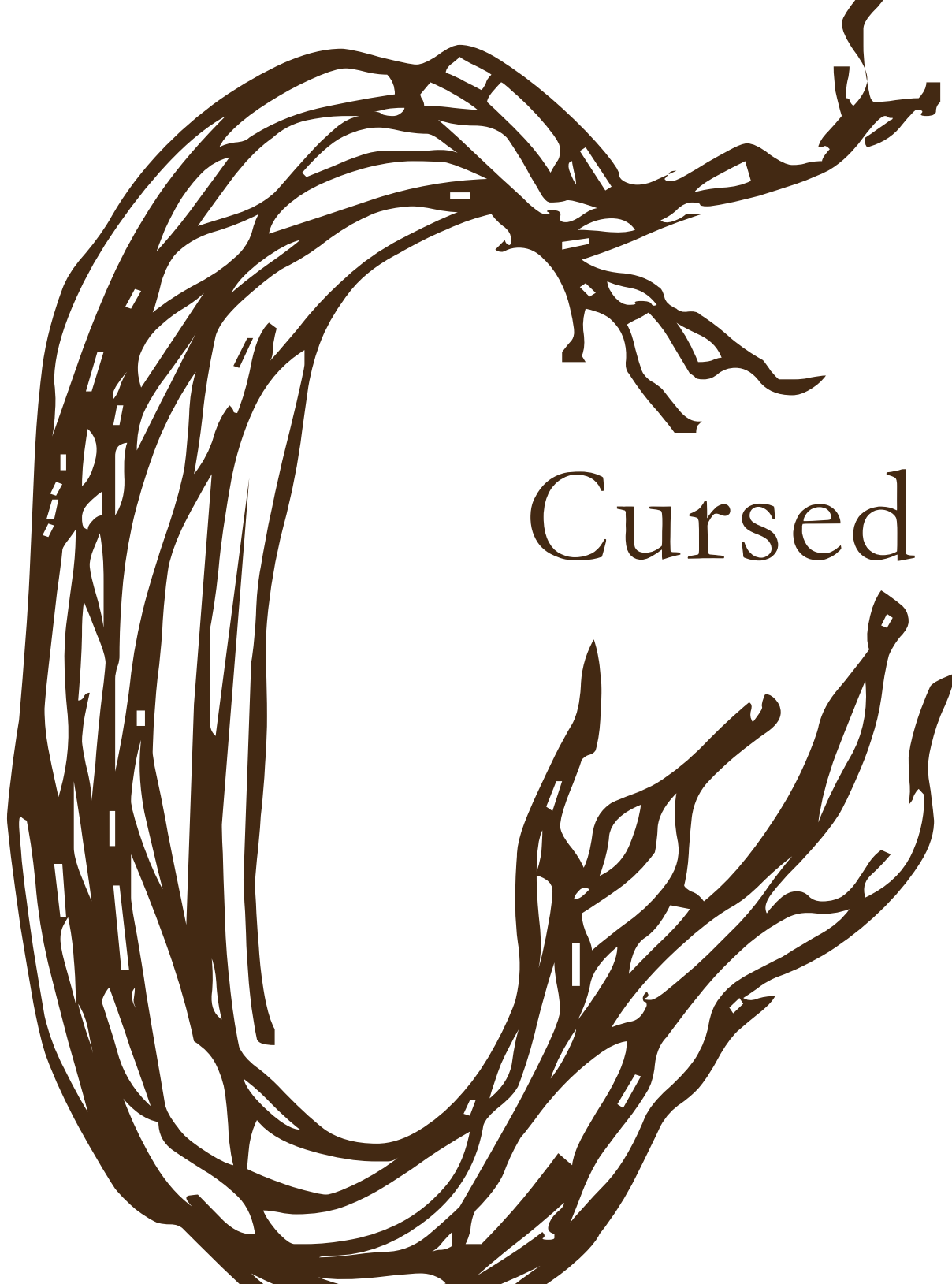
and the way his chest  
didn't feel, crafted by stranger  
hands than his. His voice  
inside my head, hissing & crying,  
be still, be still—

I remember the Tall Man  
and how he lay me on the ground,  
his arms creeping closer, fingers  
jerking in the snow, a flash  
of veins pulsing across his molded face.

My eyes closed tight.

I remember the Tall Man  
when I wake between the sun  
and the quilts on my bed.

I remember the Tall Man  
when the saplings grow in spring  
so tight they could be bone.



# Cursed

As the sun rose,  
he walked into the kitchen.  
The fire went out overnight;  
the stew pot was empty.

As the sun set  
he walked into the kitchen.  
The fire had never been lit;  
the stew pot was empty.

Now he understood  
what the birds had to say.

# Gone

He is sitting in  
front of the fire and  
he is alone.

She is gone they  
are gone we are  
gone all gone

and he sits alone in  
front of a fire waiting for  
them to come home.

But they won't  
come home, they are  
she is gone.

Three days  
he has been alone  
in the chair.

Three days  
since she told him death  
whispers on snowflakes.

Three days  
since snow turned to ice  
fire couldn't melt.

Three days  
ago she talked about  
Sister sleeping in her bed.

He had walked around  
the house, circling for her  
steps in the snow.

Tall Man watches  
from the window  
crimson & dirt on his fingers.



# Ascension

I walk in circles  
through the halls  
of our old home.  
Void. My footsteps fall  
silent on creaking  
floor boards.  
My words fall silent  
on open ears.

Father is alone  
now. I find him on  
the front porch—sits  
in the chair, rocking.  
My hand out, I step  
towards him

—but I feel nothing—  
No heat.

He turned,  
looked me straight  
in the eyes,

his deep & blue  
with loss, but he  
doesn't see me.  
He stands, the chair  
rocking, my hand

resting above on the arm.

He casts me away  
into the dirt.

“There is no place  
for you here.”  
No place for me.  
No place.

I turn towards  
the wood, and  
he waits

Tall Man crooking  
his long finger  
smiling without smiling  
welcoming me back  
into the wood.  
I was his forever,

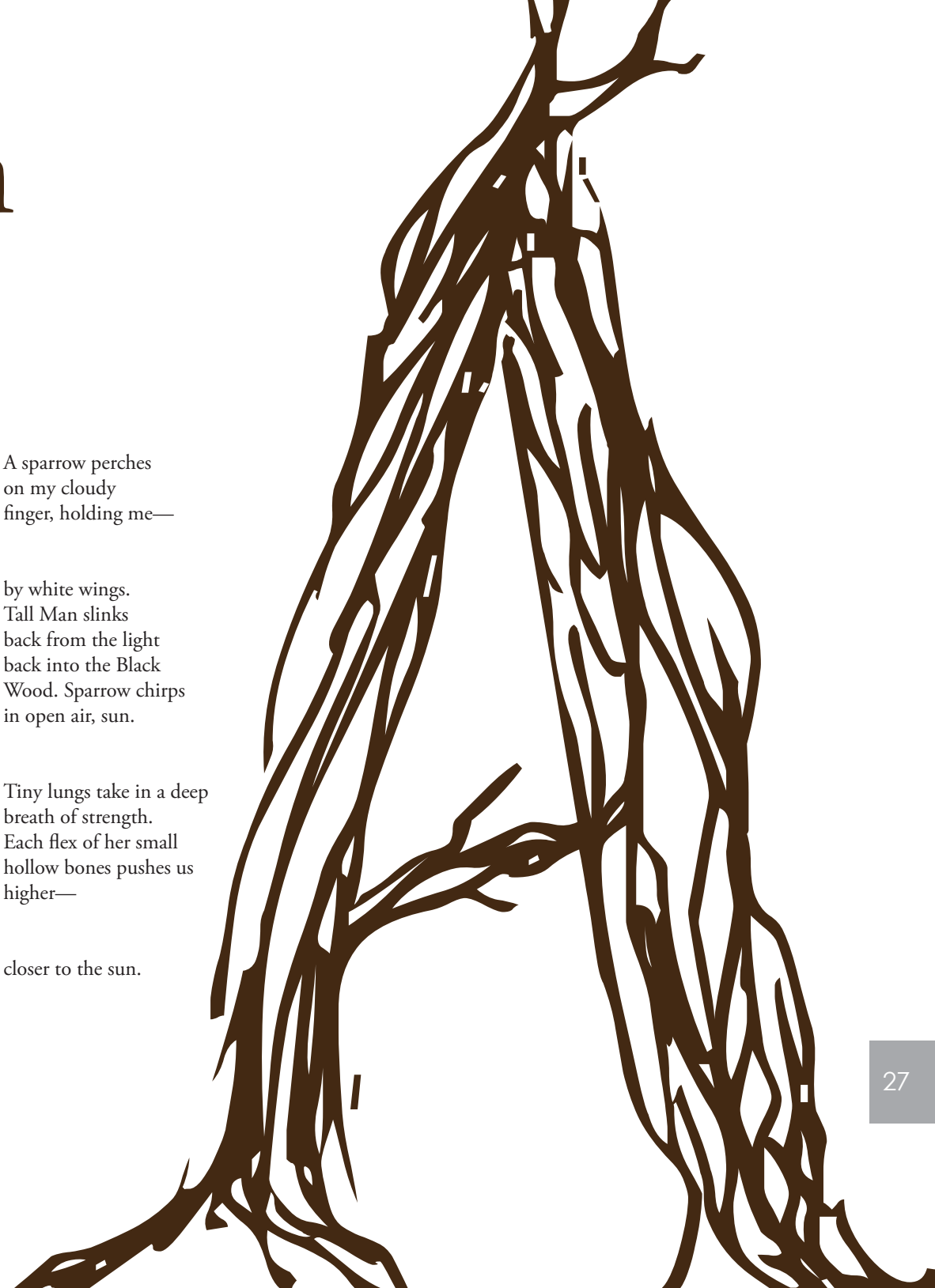
forever his  
with each step,  
my heels pulling  
the rest of me to follow.  
I reach to join  
his cold clay skin with  
mine now gone.

A sparrow perches  
on my cloudy  
finger, holding me—

by white wings.  
Tall Man slinks  
back from the light  
back into the Black  
Wood. Sparrow chirps  
in open air, sun.

Tiny lungs take in a deep  
breath of strength.  
Each flex of her small  
hollow bones pushes us  
higher—

closer to the sun.



## Words by MJ Duggan

Men who talk to invisible idols  
hear voices  
from immortal disciples,

sky of moving bone sapphire  
on knees respiring prejudiced recitals.

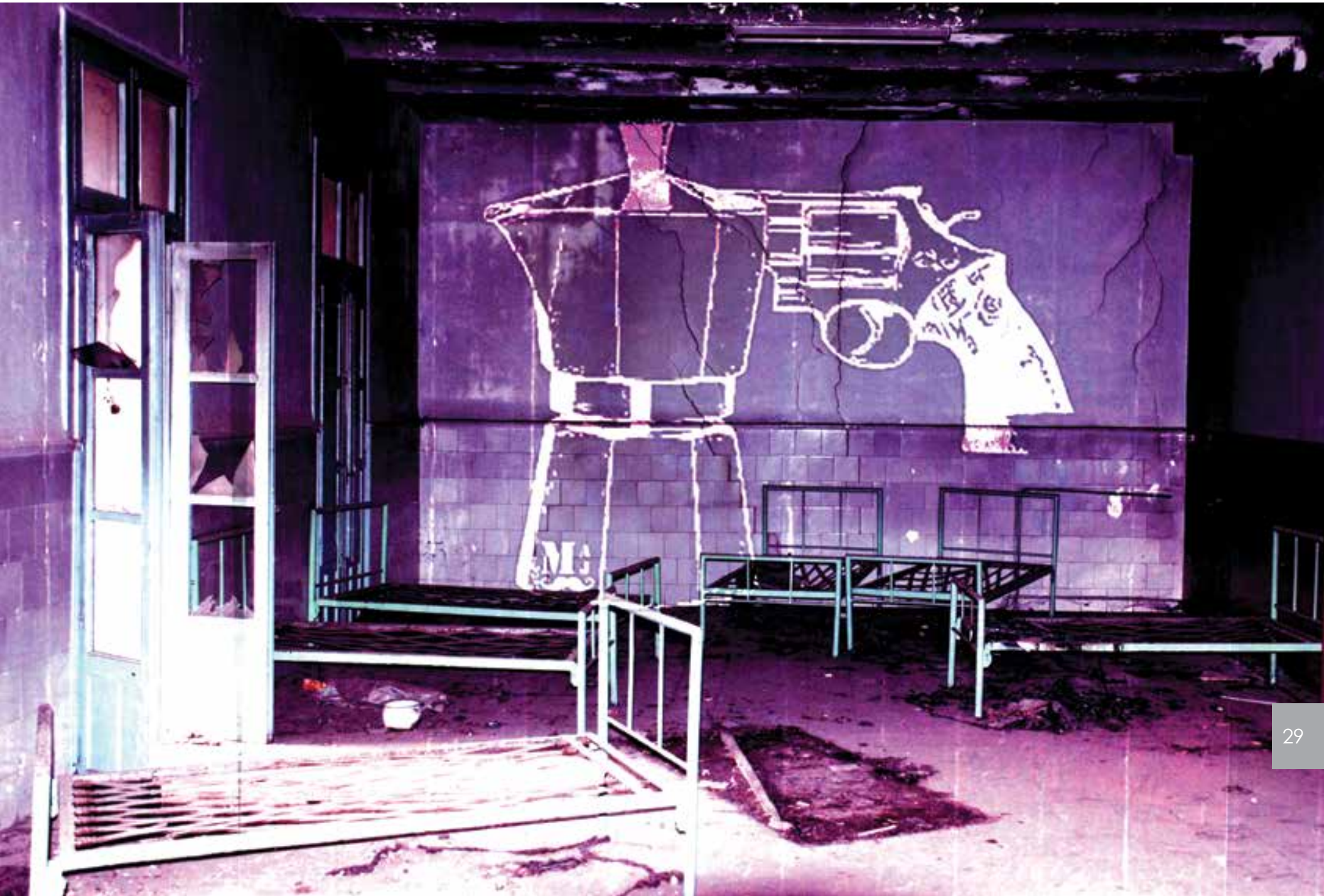
Crave to enter otherworldly dimension  
martyring intellect  
for celestial ascension

one hand a bucket of bloodied bullets  
one mind the arrogance of spiritual condescension.

Reside for eternity in bedlam - Mad gods are locked away in asylums  
leaders of cross and crescent moon,

No longer harness sin from child to tomb.

asylum





*Earth* by Jonathan K. Rice



# daylight

Words by MJ Duggan

The circular bulb of daylight  
flight of a pattering red admiral  
gliding in weaves of air and honey sun,

it's beautiful red markers  
are like the binding flame of Summer.

Zenith light hounds the rustic stars,  
a rounded pebble of moths flee from empty acorn shells  
buried in dead rainbow moss.  
In daylight we see prayer  
to beacons of god in sky of red cirrus

bulbous moon gathering  
the cadaver of this oncoming evening.

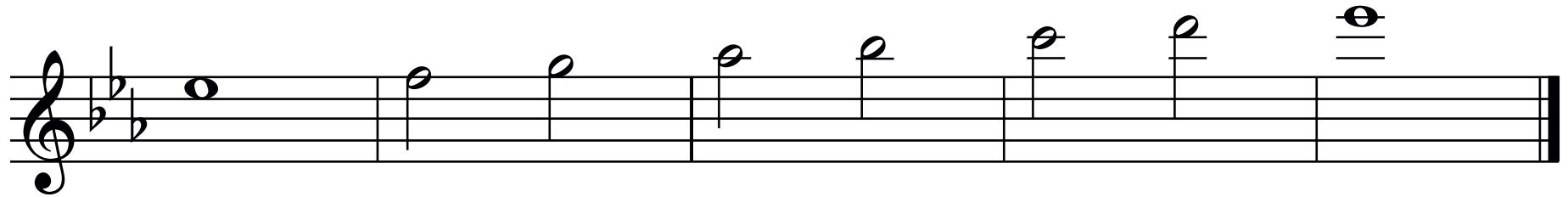


*Happiness Scale* by Jonathan K. Rice

# STEPPING THE SCALE:

An exploration from E flat to E flat

Words by Becky Irons



## *E flat Major Scale*

In the musical language there are eight notes. Eight letters, with their own variations. Unlike in the English alphabet, there is not one starting or ending point. The variations of start and end points for the musical alphabet are called “Scales”. Each scale is classified by its starting note, C Major Scale starting on a C, D Major stating on a D, etc., and ascending from there in its respective key.



## *E flat (middle octave)*

Here an escalator begins in the middle, between floor one and floor three. Not in the bottom octave. Nor in the upper octave

(because how can you go up from the very top?) But in the middle octave. Floor two, if you will.

I always find that the bottom of the escalator is the easiest part of the mechanized staircase. An easy step, no different than a regular, non-moving set of stairs.

But sometimes, the first is indeed the hardest.

It takes a baby between nine and twelve months to take his or her first step. Nine to twelve months of practice,

and patience, crawling, crying, and contemplation. Until finally, development escalates and the child elevates. And finally, the child takes his or her first unsteady step.



## *F natural*

Experts and moms everywhere say that the first step is soon followed by the second, then quickly rockets into leaps

and bounds of independence.

On July 21, 1969 at 03:15:16 UTC, Buzz Aldrin took his first, mankind’s second, steps on the moon. The farthest footsteps that mankind has taken yet. Photographs of these men’s footsteps are proudly displayed in the Smithsonian Air and Space museum. This being a culmination of the space race between Americans and Russians, the space landing of Apollo 11 was celebrated for decades.

Until controversy commenced.

Was the moon landing a hoax? Did they fake the footsteps? The video?

Is Big Foot real? They’ve got impressions of his

footsteps. There is even a video of him strutting around in the forest.



## *G natural*

Big Foot has a wide stride. Wide enough to cover two human steps, two half Big Foot-steps.

A whole step, from F to G.

Not a step in a hole, there is no sinking, no tripping, no twisting of an ankle because your dog dug a whole lot of holes in the yard and hid them with grasses and leaves from Big Foot’s forest.

A whole step. A leap without break in the middle. A leap wide enough to cover the Grand Canyon in a single bound.

The Grand Canyon, carved by the Colorado River, is estimated to be about 17 million years old. (Imagine how many steps that child from *E flat* and *F natural* could have taken in that many years.) The national park is a huge attraction for about five million tourists per year. Of these millions of visitors, about 600 have died since the 1870s. Many from taking one too many steps over the edge.



### A flat

At least 53 of these 600 lives lost at the Grand Canyon have fallen *flat*. Perhaps they each considered their life to be *A flat* one. And even if

the fall was an accident, these people still ended up as *A flat* human pancake at the base of the canyon.

Perhaps I am naive to assume that it takes a good bit of liquid courage to jump off a cliff.

Too much liquid courage can land you in two places: 1) in a serious health predicament (like dead at the bottom of a canyon) or 2) at an AA meeting.

Alcoholics Anonymous follows the twelve steps outlined in “The Big Book.” The current “Big Book” has been in development since 1939, and now contains the “Twelve Steps” to recovery as well as the “Twelve Traditions” of AA. The program places a large focus on admitting weakness and reaching out to a Higher Power for help. Even so, Alcoholics Anonymous has only helped between five and ten percent of its members.

While it may take twelve steps for some people to conquer intrapersonal problems, it used to only take ten paces to solve an interpersonal fued.



### B flat

Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr battled out their quarrel on the bank of the Hudson River (On the New

Jersey side of course. New Yorkers were too good for dueling by this point) on July 11, 1804.

The Burr-Hamilton duel ended with Hamilton mortally wounded by his foe. He died the following day. Burr was charged with murder in both New York and New Jersey but did not end up facing trial.

Since then, dueling has been outlawed in the United States and considers the taking of another human life murder. Even with the laws against murder, not all acts involving the dead are explicitly outlawed.



### C natural

Did you know the act of Cannibalism isn't explicitly outlawed in the United States of America? There are no laws that state “Thou shalt not cannibalize” in the law books

of the US. Of the three steps of cannibalism, the murder, the cannibalism itself, and the aftermath mess, the first step and last step are the two with applicable laws. The precursor to and results of cannibalism fall under the laws against murder and desecration of corpses respectively.

Cannibalism, while frowned upon for humans to take part in, exists in much of the natural world. Chickens in a coop will peck at and kill the weakest chicken in their ranks. Due to an influx in lobster breeding, older lobsters have been known to treat young lobsters as prey, opening up an entirely new food source. Sand tiger sharks cannibalize even before they are born, killing and eating their siblings in the womb as a form of pre-birth survival of the fittest.

Even more extreme is the octopus, who will indulge in self-cannibalism when stressed.

Hiding in their caves among underwater pillars, eating their tentacles one by one, not unlike a human biting his or her own nails. Who wouldn't be stressed, living in a cave with sharp natural pillars?



### D natural

Stalactites and stalagmites, also known as dripstones, are mineral formations on the ceilings and floors of limestone caves.

Water flows down through the ground and into the caves, carrying with it a mineral called calcite. When the water drips from the ceiling of the cave to the floor, it will leave some of its dissolved calcite behind which collects and forms stalactites. The water that then drips to the floor still carries some of the dissolved calcite and leaves it in a pile on the floor, thus creating a stalagmite to match the stalactite above.

An easy way to remember the differences between the two dripstone formations, stalactites from stalagmites, is to remember that “c” is for ceiling (thus stalactites grow on ceilings) and “m” is for mountain (and stalagmites grow in mountain like shapes on the ground).

While “m” is for mountain, “e” is for Everest, the highest mountain in the world.



### E flat (upper octave)

Here, Mount Everest peaks at 29,029 feet above sea level. The very top of the world. About five and a half miles above the world, you can't go any higher. At the top of the highest

mountain, the scaling ends.

I've always been terrified of heights. The top of a mountain, the end of a long hike to the top was always the hardest part. Much different than an escalator. Higher.

But usually, that final step is the most rewarding.

It takes six to nine weeks to climb Mount Everest. Six to nine weeks of acclimation, breathlessness, exertion. It takes much more time for a child to learn to walk before they could even consider hiking Everest. Nine to twelve months. Yet it only takes seconds to scale from middle octave *E flat* to upper octave *E flat*.

*Words by Becky Irons*

in

out

Stomach leading the way.  
Shoulders stationary.

Pull the head up  
with invisible string.  
Body fully erect.  
Stand straight  
starting with the heels.

Expand the chest like a barrel.  
Fill it with air.

out

in

**Breathing Deep**



*Without a Song by Jonathan K. Rice*

# DEEP BREATHING



# SENT A SONG OF SONGS

*Words by Becky Irons*

I have not come to sing to sing  
music to you from me to you  
sing a thing  
a song to sing  
a muse from you to me for you  
from me for we  
to sing a song of music.

You want a song  
a song to sing  
from me to you  
a song to ring  
I cannot use your muse, you know  
but still you choose to want a song  
a song to sing  
from me to you  
to you from me  
a song for we for us.

If I sing  
a song or songs  
for you from me for us for we  
your muse will dance  
and dance and sing  
a song and dance of music.

Yet I have not come  
with song to sing  
no muse to use  
for us for you from me to you

no song for we from me you see  
no song to sing for us.

But if you ask  
for me to sing  
a song or songs  
from me to you, just one or two  
I'll sing a thing  
a song to sing  
from me for you  
you bring the muse  
I'll sing a song of music.

Your muse is sick  
the song is sung  
the we are done  
no song for you from me to you  
I cannot come to sing to sing  
a song or songs for us.

# HOMETOWN GLORY

*Words by Cameron Kockritz*

I grew up in the 360. I didn't realize the irony of the area code until I left. Even the best of us had a 45 degree perspective. We saw what was right in front of us. Always forgetting to fully look around, always forgetting that there is more than the future they've flung out before us. We forgot that the yellow brick road wasn't always what we were meant to follow. That there were other colors, other paths.

I grew up in a town where dreams are only as heavy as you can hold and when children looked up at the clouds, there was no exclamation at fictitious shapes. They saw their futures, smoke stacks chained to factories. I took the escape route. They heaved their wouldacouldashoulda's on my back, and sent me on my way. But even Boxer waned with time. I was once capable of balancing every responsibility in two hands, stacked miles high with no fear of crumbling. But now, the spaces between my fingers have stretched to distances of canyons, and my palms have shrunk to sizes of teaspoons. I've found myself looking for the glue factory.

I grew up in a town that I hated. Fish only grow as big as the tank they're put in. My town was a bowl that I've watched stunt too many people, but at least there's water there. I was the one who was supposed to get out, never shackled to one zip code. But now I find myself waiting. Black x's and a ticking clock. I used to dream of bigger things, bigger places, a bigger me. I thought I was too big for that place, that my dreams would never make it inside the city limits. But maybe Dorothy was right, maybe there is no place like home.







# SEX TALKS

## *in a Drive Thru*

*Words by Cameron Kockritz*

It was in the back of the line in a Starbucks drive thru.

*Mom, where do babies come from?*

Each vowel tumbled from her lips as she searched for the words to explain the one conversation she thought she had avoided. (I was ten and in the fifth grade. I already knew the answer thanks to the ever informative public school system. But if Kim Possible gets “the talk” then God forbid that I miss out on the opportunity as well). Her eyes triple checking in the rear mirror making sure I had really asked that.

*You see, sweetie, men and women fit together like a puzzle.*

Then a green vizor popped out of the window. My mom exchanged her five dollar bill for her latte. Exchanged uncomfortable conversation for mock finality. All I got was a sentence, but that was enough. The relationship with metaphors, and when you’re young, you see, is that they’re more visual. More literal. “Hold your horses” left me grabbing for my nearest toy horse. I leapt backwards at “If it were a snake it would have bit you.” So when she said puzzle, all my ten year old ears heard were *Sex will complete you. Another person will complete you.*

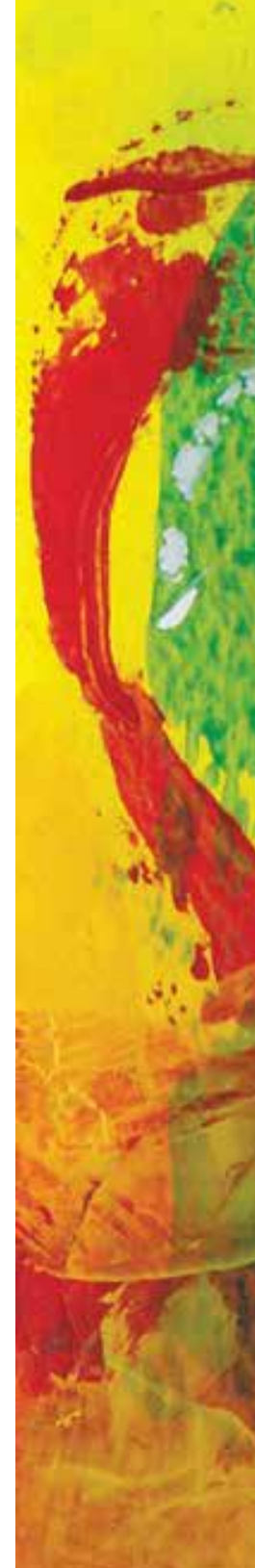
# hiding in asterisks

*Words by Cameron Kockritz*

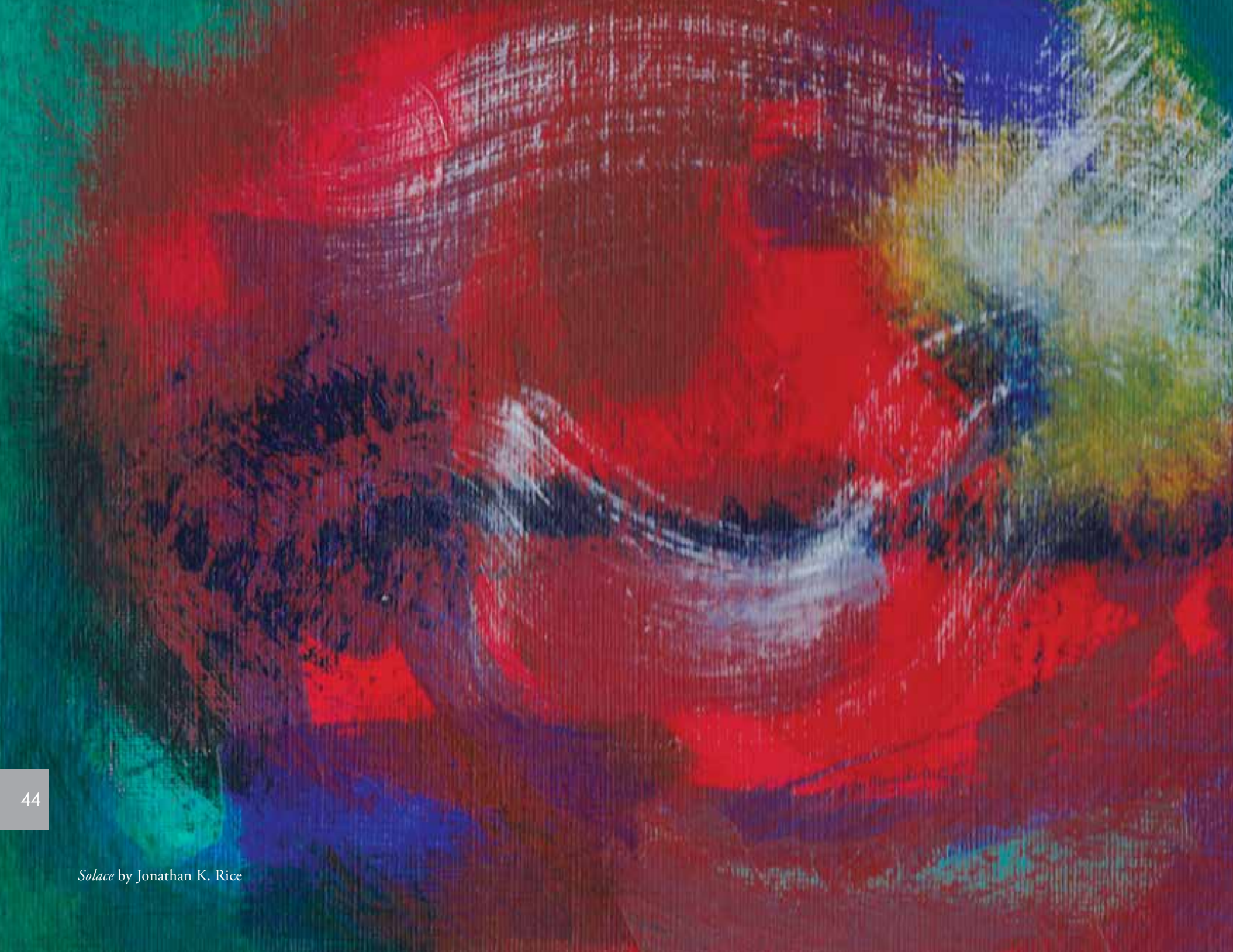
Why it took me so long to realize that I loved\* you  
I'll never know  
All I know is that I did\*  
And I'm sorry.  
I will never tell you.

\*Love

\*Do









# who needs ‘im

*Words by Cedric Tillman*

who needs ‘im

I thought it'd be ok  
to watch them sigh  
easy into relapse  
through the cracked door.  
I am here  
to see what I'm doing.

There was the lingering over toys at bedtime,  
how I clapped and barked patriarchy  
until furniture moved,  
all the air I take into lungs  
the size of the strength  
I need for cradling, the scoop and tote  
from a cheap SUV  
after sleep-sodden arrivals,  
so they wake up tucked and snug.

At first though, her lilting whispers  
over naptimes,  
and how she'd brush stroke  
their pink heart lips, gradually  
into latching.





# Sundays on Rosehaven

*Words by Cedric Tillman*

She had just yanked a friend's ponytail,  
full of black hair long and thick

too heavy for the April wind to budge,  
and spun toward the street so fast

*cuidados* were caroled  
from the bus stop,

where fathers sat sipping muffled bottles  
in paper bags.

When she trained all the sass  
of her whirl and stomp at the bench,

the full flop of her red hair bow  
and the arms braided in attitude

in their general direction,  
she was still too close to the curb,

too smart to notice the traffic.

Luxury

*Words by Cedric Tillman*

here it is 70 degrees in April  
no matter what you hear about Aleppo  
and there are loose boards on my deck  
that I do not want to fix  
which I can pay a handyman to replace

so even if the mosques they bomb  
date from the 8th century  
two houses over  
a man watches two big dogs  
run around his yard  
the white one occasionally pushing  
and mounting the grey one  
trying to get at the throw toy first.  
their barks echo  
between the gaps in the houses,  
pock the eardrum  
like gunfire in the souq.

at Al-Nuqtah  
the mosque of the drop of blood  
Husayn's children spill blood  
until no one can discern Husayn's drop  
and I have the man come out to seed  
and aereate  
so while there are greener yards than mine  
in this subdivision, there aren't many.

Tranh's restaurant is next to Ali Baba's  
El Copan shares the strip with Sheba  
a Burger King is thrown in for the timid  
up on Central Avenue.  
The Catholics and Methodists  
suffer each other's edifices  
and everyone wears the reds and blues  
of their precepts  
with impunity.



Words by Douglas Rothschild

# 14 POEMS

BLUE SKY OZZES 'HUMANITY'

O' for the love of the real  
world, here today clinging  
to this rock face with only  
piton bowline & carabineer

SALMON HEAD SOUP: PEPPER YES

The toaster oven  
on the counter, waits for  
what a New Year brings.

8PM: DOUBLE HAIKU

Call 6 people who  
won't respond, or go to bed?  
Horus weights the soul  
against a feather. Either  
one is better or  
neither one is worse. One way  
either weighs the soul.

3AM AWAKENING

It has rained & a wet car  
sloshes down the street  
dragging the sound of  
water with it. Somewhere  
a hollow clock tocks.

FRAGMENT SENT

Let the anxiety wash over you  
at the edge of the whirlpool,  
clinging to what is it? A branch?  
A box marked with enigmatic symbols?  
The root of an olive? Is this all...[?]

THE NEW SHAMAN:

Reading about the origins of  
Indo-Europeans & their horse  
sacrifice, i've decided to  
take a bath, a la Bugs Bunny,  
seasoned as if cooking food.

POEM: UNCERTAINTY

At any moment, like  
Schrodinger's Cat, anyone  
you know might not any  
longer be alive. Until you  
check & find that unlike  
the cat, they are.

UNTITLED

Tear away the veil of  
daily distraction & there's  
nothingness. We hold the  
abysmal back by covering  
it with other people, busy  
work, acquisitiveness & the  
companionship of things.

POEM OF THE 7TH CALVARY

Send cavalry, not for  
rescue but to record  
hoof prints, number of  
arrows & to collect  
& bury body parts.

PEOPLE MADE IN SNOW

Big flakes hanging,  
floating gently.  
Dropping slowly,  
barely sticking.  
Nothing showing  
for all the snow.

POEM

Although I'm on the bus,  
& would be heading to see you  
& even though it's only  
October, you're still dead.

JULY 25/14

I am sad but will not die.  
The world is still beautiful.  
I hope you stay safe.  
-Bunny

THE GREAT FIGURE

i saw the figure  
'5' in red , before  
sunset, on an idling  
fire engine, parked,  
facing in the wrong  
direction, in front of  
Tiger Abrussese's pub.  
No one seemed alarmed  
& the firemen milled abt  
as if nothing notable  
had transpired.

POEM: ACROSS THE PASSAIC

Penski Truck merges  
left right into Grey  
Hound. Bus & truck  
kiss, stop to exchange  
numbers & then move  
on.



## *Words by Bria Ballard*

“No – I’m not doing it again!”

“One last time! I almost had –”

“No!” He said, “You weren’t even close! You’re never close! It’s a good thing too—if that wagon hits you –”

“It’s not gonna hit me! Besides, it isn’t even full, so it can’t hurt me,” I say, casting a glance at the old wagon. It wasn’t the same one as before—that one never left the old, old barn anymore, not after that happened. At one point it was going to be thrown away, but I stopped my parents from doing that. Just like how I stopped my parents from throwing her doll away. Like geez, don’t my parents care anymore? Sympathy—an eight letter word; was recently used as a bonus word on one of my spelling tests. Something that I have and my parents don’t. Or is ‘empathy,’ the word I’m thinking about? I don’t know, I got both of those words wrong. But the point is that I have sympathy/empathy/both, but my parents don’t.

It was a simpler time, when I was little. Well, people say I’m still really little now which is true I guess, but I don’t feel like it anymore. I used to have fun back then - me, her, my parents...it was fun. Less stressful. No anger. Tons of caring and kindness.

When that happened my parents had cared, or so I thought. But one month passed by and they stopped going into her room. Six months and they stopped speaking of her. One year and they tried to throw her stuff out (the word is ‘tried’—five letters, I got that one right on my test, thankfully, and my parents failed in their quest, also thankfully).

“Just one last time,” I say, staring at the doll that was laying in the path of the wagon. It was getting dirty from

having to sit on the road all day—I’d have to wash it later. The doll was a lot like an American Girl doll, but also a lot cheaper. It was your average-sized doll of a human; a naturally tanned little child with dark hair and brown eyes, and it looked just like her.

He protested some more, like he always did. I sighed and spoke a little louder to be heard over his words, “Look, after this we can go do whatever you want to, alright?”

He looked at me like I was crazy. “The sun’s setting.”

“Oh, well, I didn’t notice,” I say, glancing at the pink sky before looking at him. “OK -- we’ll do whatever you want tomorrow. But I have to try this one last time. Please?”

He rolled his eyes but grabbed the wagon anyways. “Fine. But I’m not doing it again.”

It was getting harder and harder to find people willing to do this. Luckily this boy, whatever his name was, was new to my school. Moved in about two weeks ago...or something. He was made fun of a lot for always getting A’s on his tests and for admitting that he liked to learn. People called him a nerd, I called him nothing. There were more important things in life to worry about than whether or not someone actually liked doing math. I felt sympathetic (empathetic?) for him, I know what it’s like to be ignored and ridiculed by our classmates as well.

I’m glad I have him so he could do this for me. It was getting really hard to find people who were willing, and I felt good about this try. He pushed the wagon to his designated stop at the top of the road, which was also on top of a hill. It was a pretty place I guess, out of the way from the city but near where I live. The dirt path was originally only used by my family as a way for them to

easily carry things across the farm. But they don’t use it anymore since it led directly to the old, old barn. They don’t even come near this part of the farm if they don’t need to. Which is actually a blessing - it makes it easier for me to hide what I’m doing. If they caught me doing this then they would probably make me stop. I walked off the pathway and a minute later I stopped next to a familiar tree.

He waited until the signal before he let go of the wagon. I ran back towards the road as it started to careen down the hill, my eyes focused on the doll sitting in the middle of it. I knew how far away I was. I could see its little brown eyes staring into my own. I can do this. I know I can.

I jumped onto the dirt path – it’s currently the furthest I’ve ever gotten. I could hear the squeaking of the wheels as the wagon got closer, its path well-worn down over the course of the two years.

I had all the steps counted out. Five more left. Four, three two – jump!

I heard my name being yelled as I hit the road and tumbled, the wagon barely missing me.

That boy came running back down the hill, calling for me and asking if I was okay. But I ignored him and instead looked down at what was in my hands. It was the spitting image of a small child, the same one calling my name out in my dreams. It wasn’t a real child though, it was a doll, and after two years of trying, it wasn’t caught up underneath the wagon.

“I knew it,” I whispered to myself, staring at the once-loved toy in my hands. “I knew I could’ve saved her.”



*Withholding Judgment* by Jonathan K. Rice



# Still

*Words by Kyle Rother*

I want to be where the water stops moving; where the coast is barely in view. There's something so fitting, so surreal about this place that no matter how far I venture or how long I drive, I find myself right here. Right where the water stops moving. It isn't through reluctance that I stay, nor that I return, but that stillness is all I've ever known. Quite truthfully, it's all that I've ever wanted.

There's a pub that sits on the corner of Pavlov and 32nd, tucked away from the cobble and shrouded by bankrupted strip malls and fast food joints. It's the kind of pub that many would call a hole-in-the-wall type establishment. Its structure has decayed over the decades, visible through rotting beams and holes chipped by woodpeckers. Most that pass by believe it to be vacant and stepping inside might even reinforce that idea, despite its falsehood. Thus, the glowing, neon blue light that reads, "OPEN," comes to many lad's surprise. The entrance, littered with spent fags and shattered glass, keeps most passersby at bay.

The interior, albeit somewhat of an improvement to the exterior, is still a sore sight for most eyes, but not mine. The barstools have loose legs that often wobble under the weight of its patrons, but that gives me something to focus on when I'm sitting on my ass for hours. The air itself is tainted with a lingering staleness that you can't quite put your finger on, but to me, it smells like safety. There's a jukebox in the corner, and having not been touched in well over a decade, it quietly hums Godot's *The Fragrance of Dark Coffee* on an endless loop. The patrons never seem to notice.

This isn't the type of pub that I, or anyone for that matter, would take their acquaintances to. This is the type of pub that you stagger into for two fingers of whisky, no ice, to hide from work, the wife, or whatever excuse you can find to justify getting pissed at 2:30 midday.

The owner, stricken with Alzheimer's at an early age, has his good days and has his bad. But it's the days that he sincerely believes it to be 1965 that I like him the best. He doesn't know my name, it always seems to evade him, but he knows my drink and preference of ale. That's all that matters in the end.

The fascinating aspect of this pub is not that it has survived eight Prime Ministers, three earthquakes, or nearly the life of our Queen. The truly fascinating aspect of this pub is that during all of this time, all of this turmoil, it has never once changed. When the world wanted something new, something refreshing, it stayed put.

And through our stillness we have survived together.

My desire to seek the place where the water stops moving brought me back the following day, just as I had been there last week and the week before that. After stepping on broken glass and kicking some shriveled fags to the kerb, I found that my sanctuary, for the first time in nearly twenty years, had its door locked shut and locked shut for good. Turns out that chavs prefer the place that'll make you an apple martini and *The Fragrance of Dark Coffee* doesn't get people laid anymore.

Lost, bewildered, and afraid, I drove to the coast. All I've wanted, all I've ever wanted was to sit and observe. Can I make it out? That. There, in the distance. That's where the water stops moving. That's where I want to be, where the water stops moving.

Just as the pub did, I may drown there, but that's all right. You can only tread for so long before your arms begin to weaken.

# MY OWN MAN

*Words by Catherine Bakewell*

She liked to watch the fog roll over the banks of the river; every day by and by the little silent ritual was the same.

From birth she was afflicted with a soul too big for herself, too big for her tiny, thin body. The doctors said that there was not much to do but wait and hope that she would not suffer as a result.

Perhaps she comforted herself by watching the fog mingle with the dawn; perhaps the beautiful lack of emotion she felt in that moment was what she loved the most. When she was feeling empty enough, she would skip rocks across the still surface of the river and try to feel nothing. Over time she had learned to submerge her feelings back within herself, otherwise she would be caught up in her own personal tide. Sometimes she nearly drowned, thanks to her enlarged soul.

She spent days overcome with her own happiness, her face almost glowing with laughter, joyous tears rolling down her cheeks, and her nights were spent curled in a ball on her bed, her body trembling as a dark sadness strangled her like two dark hands wrapping around her throat. Her parents saw her soul engulfing her, and they silently shared the same thought—something must be done.

An operation would be dangerous, and many were reluctant to perform one due to the fact that such a procedure was hardly conventional—and many argued it was a non-issue.

“This is an excuse for her to do good,” the doctors would say. “Think of the love she could give to people!”

The little family did, in fact, think of the love she could give. And they were afraid of this very thing.

She was schooled at home to prevent herself from loving anyone

too much; loving her mother and father took enough out of her already—adding another person to her life would have tortured her, and she knew this very well.

When she was twenty years old, as she stood by the riverbank, as with every morning, her greatest fear—a fear that left her shaking and wide-eyed if she thought about it for too long—came true.

A boy came to the riverbank, a boy with brown hair with a little curl that rested against his forehead and a lanky body and a striped shirt and old blue-jeans with holes in the knees and squinty brown eyes and a jaw with a faint shade of stubble and a smile that made her soul burn within her.

The boy and the girl loved one another. Every day pained the girl. She felt joy that made her shriek into the night, she felt anxiety that made her pick her hands raw and weep as she walked to the riverbank. And the boy was always at the riverbank. It was theirs, now.

The boy with the brown curl and the striped shirt loved her, and he loved her gold hair that fell over her right eye like a curtain hiding a magician and his lovely assistant, he loved her gray eyes and her soft lips and how her face glowed when she was around him.

She confided in him her problem of her too-big soul, and after much meditation and discussion, he agreed to undergo an operation to transplant part of her soul onto his to lighten her burden. The boy awoke from the operation with a stitch across his chest, and she woke up with an identical one across her breast.

Her soul was still big, but not enough to pain her, she was told. So she and the boy loved one another. His eyes were brighter and

# SOUL

his laughs were longer and his bouts of rage were stormier and she, on the other hand, found herself at a strange state of normality. His jokes were not as funny and his smile was unreal and it did not make her soul burn.

“I can’t sleep anymore,” he told her one day as they sat on the docks. “I keep crying too much, over the stupidest things.”

“I’m sorry,” she said, and those words didn’t hurt her like they once did.

“I can’t,” he started, “I can’t do this...” He clawed at his chest with wide eyes and deep breaths. He scrambled to his feet and ran from her, vanishing into the fog, and she tried to chase after him but her heart beat and her feet could not carry her far and he was gone.

When the fog cleared, she could see his footsteps, with spots of blood on the ground. She was confused—she knew this feeling even in its lighter form—and then suddenly felt a snapping in her chest. And her soul, her soul that was once complete, felt torn in two, felt empty—a feeling she had not known before.

The boy, police said, had ripped apart his stitches and pulled her soul apart from his. Where it was now, no one could say. It was out there, somewhere—and while initially this was thought to be a good thing, the girl could not live while part of her soul roamed.

She felt nothing.

She did not watch the fog roll across the riverbank.

She did not cry until she slept, she did not laugh until she cried. Her gray eyes were wide and empty and hollow. Her thin and little body was breaking and her family knew it and there was nothing to do about it.

One day, the girl got herself to walk, down the road, up the hill, past the market and to the docks. And at the docks, her soul trembled within her.

The street leading up to the dock was a silvery color, slick with rain. She remembered how there were once bloody footprints on the street, how her striped-shirt boy had vanished in the fog.

Today on the street, standing at the edge of the dock, was a stranger.

The stranger, with straight, blond hair and a round body, a black shirt and crisp, brown pants, and wide, blue eyes and a clean jaw and a sadness in his eyes that made the girl’s soul burn within her.

“Pardon me,” said the stranger meekly, “but I think I have what you’ve been looking for.”

And the stranger held a hand over his heart and she held her hand over hers, and she did not feel like she was missing, anymore.

“I was born with a small soul,” said the stranger, “and when I found yours, I took it for my own.”

But the girl did not mind. When she stood beside the stranger she did not want to cry and she did not want to laugh and she felt no need to stand by the riverbank and be empty.

She fell in love with the remnant of her own soul within him.

He loved her bright eyes and her smiling lips and how his mangled soul glowed around her.

And they laughed at the riverbank and cried to the stars and the stranger never gave up his half of her soul; he took care of it as if it was his own forevermore.



# PITHOS

*Words by Sam Schoenfeld*

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“It’s okay to go ahead in now,” the faceless nurse says. Her tone echoes distantly, and softly; the voice is like the wind, gingerly rustling tall trees. Then she’s gone. I don’t remember her coming or going; rather, just being. Nondescript with her blue nurse’s scrubs and plain, eggshell tennis shoes. There has to be some kind of lyricism worth remembering there. Heavy news carried on light feet with such airy deliverance.

I turn to Ava. My back straightens against the uncomfortable, mass-produced material, barely cushioned chair. The plastic flexes with my grief. “You don’t have to come if you don’t want to. I’ll only be a minute.”

“No,” she replies with a sternness that undermines my strength, “I’m coming with you.” The words slither through lips pursed beneath flared nostrils. She’s clutching her handbag in a vice grip, her painted nails threatening to puncture the sides.

Suddenly we’re at my father’s bedside. Sobs and muted grief fill the small space; they desaturate the flowers collected along the beige linoleum. Thus, the lingering scent of chrysanthemums clings to the edges of my nose and upper lip. The air is thick with a sterile sickness only possible in hospitals. Maybe it’s the light. A single panel, diffused by the translucent pane overhead, shines down on the scene. Ava and I stand on the fringe, still cloaked in soft shadow. My eyes fall to the side, unable to pierce the veil of family members and friends which have come to see his passing.

I watch a green line climbing, peaking, and falling repeatedly on a screen to the electronic beat of a metronome. A pendulum in the form of an electrocardiograph. Ticking down, emitting electronic notes, reminding with each fading beat the brevity of the situation.

A storm rumbles outside. The conversing clouds drown the room in the grumbles of thunder and quickly follow with the paradoxical constant yet irregular pitter-patter of rain pelting

the thick windows. A shell of my father lay, swaddled in white linens, where a once strong individual stood, resolute. Mortality had caught up with him, yet Death could not usher out the life in his gaze.

“My son,” his wrinkled lips parted. I could recognize the rasp from a mile away, through any cacophony of sound. The mourners parted before me like the Red Sea. I walk the miles that time has put between us, covering the exodus in a few short steps.

“I’m here, Dad.”

A hand reaches out over the plastic guardrails which contain his feeble form. The bones shake, tired of the exhausted skin and muscles that bind them.

“Adam. Adam, my son.” There’s a spark of happiness which melts away the wrinkles and liver spots. It regrows colorful hair and brightens one’s soul the way that only youth can. For an instant, my father is how I will always remember him. A twinge of a smile at the corner of his lips.

“How’re you holding up?”

“Dying,” he rasps with a chuckle. “But I have enough time for a conversation with my estranged son.”

“It’s been too long,” I deliver with a solemn honesty.

“Yes, yes, far too long.”

A silence descends not unlike Death. What am I supposed to say?

“Still writing?” he asks.

“Yep. Trying, at least.”

“I never liked your poetry,” he confesses with a grin.

“I never wanted you to,” I smile sadly.

“I see you brought,” his eyes shift with the greatest effort, “your wife.”

The room grows dark. His head threatens to fall back against the thin, blue pillow.

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“Dad,” I lower my eyes, “please—”  
The hand grips with a strength I wouldn’t believe he still possessed had I not felt it bruise. “Why do you not listen to me?”  
“Because I love her—”  
He’s already shaking his head, “She is utter guile, a beautiful evil. Your mother—” He’s said all this before. The words shred the fleeting happiness between us.  
“Dad, please. Stop—”  
“She will see you to nothing but an early grave. Buried with your doubt.”  
He’s lucid again, rambling. The familiar words fall on deaf ears; I’ve silenced all the world but my heartbeat, thumping with its own accelerating tempo. Its own electrocardiograph. An anger swells in my breast which has no place in the small, overcrowded hospital room.  
“You never came to the wedding.” I pull away from his rigor mortis hold. “You never saw your grandchild, never saw me grow to be a man, a father,” there are other hands on me now, pulling me back from his side. “Never witnessed what I was capable of, and you never saw my wife for any more than what you judged her to be. You—”  
Nurses move past me. They shove me aside, from the cooling corpse which I’d been directing all of my hate towards. I turn back to Ava. Lightning pitches the room in high contrast. For an instant, everything is black and white. I see half her face hanging in suspended light. A pale mask is painted in the quick flash. A subsequent clap of thunder violently rattles the room.

I wake to the dissonance of nature. Clouds wrestle with one another in a heated battle. Lightning precedes their roars. My windows quiver in fear, exposed to the elements. Glass and white, sheer curtains are all that separate myself from Zeus’ anger.

The digital clock casts faint, ivory light from its screen in the form of numbers. The hours have slipped by, carrying the world into a messy Thursday morning. The white sheets cohere to my body, fused to my skin through my night-sweats. I peel back the linen snakeskin and move to the edge of the four poster bed. My fingers find familiar grooves along the length of the nearest poster. They provide a small comfort.

Nagging suspicion pulls my attention over my shoulder. The bed is empty, other than myself. Of course it is. An involuntary sigh inflates my breast and exhales with audible sadness. My thumb slides along the lip of my wedding ring, tracing the worn edge with practiced habit.

I rise and stretch until vertebrae pop in relief. My feet stagger towards my desk chair. The cheap cushioning does little to hide the uncomfortable plastic seat underneath. Fingers, dysfunctional from sleep, pry open my laptop. The screen illuminates the room with the a familiar word document. Blank and stagnant. The cursor blinks to the electronic beat of a metronome. I allow silence to take the room for its own; nothing but the light rain disturb it.

My screen dims. The chair spins on its axis and I pour over the room for inspiration. A wilted chrysanthemum droops beside a decorative, ceramic jar. My father’s ashes. I rise and gingerly lift the urn, my fingertips pressing against its cold,

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engraved surface.

The doorknob clicks, announcing my wife's entrance. Startled, I place the urn down on the desk beside my laptop. I wait for the door to close behind her. She doesn't realize I linger on the fringe, cloaked in soft shadow.

She lifts her head to remove her blue scrubs, kicking off her plain, eggshell tennis shoes. Her motion halts upon seeing my silhouette. "Adam? What're you doing up?" She asks in a whisper.

"I could ask the same of you," I say with a coldness I can't control. I wish nothing more than to leap from where I stand and embrace her, yet my suspicions tether me to my desk.

There's a moment of hesitation before a sigh. A sigh overflowing with exhaustion and frustration. "I had to work late."

"Your shift ended four hours ago. You couldn't call?"

"Adam—" she moves around the bed, closer to me.

But I'm already shaking my head. "No, you couldn't, could you? Who were you with?" A rumble of thunder adds gravitas to our exchange, empowering my anger.

"Why are you like this right now?"

"Like what?"

"Like your father."

My eyes look to the urn. "Don't talk about my father."

"No, I've had enough of this."

"Enough of what?"

"All this—this shit." She gestures to the urn. "This is once a week now. Every late shift, every—" She stops her train of thought and recomposes herself, preparing for the overture.

"You're never here."

Ava reaches for the jar. It looks so heavy in her hands. "Tell me: now that he's gone are you going to resent me in his stead? Harbor all of his unwarranted suspicions, his babbling bullshit, until you're old and alone too? Why do you think your mother left him?"

"She—"

She pulls off the lid of the small jar. "He drove her away when he doubted her. And for as long as I have been in your life, he has treated me like the root of all evil. Just because his wife—"

Lightning flashes. We are pitched in high contrast. My hand moves with blind rage, offended. The slap rattles her bones and shifts the ash between us that was once the same. Ava holds her head to the side in shock, mouth agape in pain and in disbelief. My palm stings with the resounding power of thunder.

The Greek pottery strikes the floor, its contents spilling out onto the carpet. The ash bleeds from the urn's mouth. I stand, transfixed on the remnants of my father. There are no hands to pull me back, to push me aside, now. I fall to my knees and scoop the loose flakes between my fingers. It moves like sand and dust.

I look up and Ava is gone. I don't remember her getting her things and leaving, just the silence. A silence which is not unlike Death.

The urn resumes its place on the high shelf. My laptop screen flickers back to life with my command. I sit once more in the uncomfortable chair and write, "Then she's gone. I don't remember her coming or going; rather, just being..."

# Women

Words by Cara Sinicropi

## I. Blanket

The blanket in Native heritage is a tradition woven in our history, engrained in our culture, our myths, our DNA. They are symbols of comfort, of warmth, of home. We use them for ceremony, as symbols of honor, bestowing specially crafted blankets on those who have honored the tribe, as representations of our births, our deaths, moments we wish to commemorate in our lives, our ongoing histories, our heritage.

Today these blankets are usually Pendleton, & have been for hundreds of years. They were once made by the hands of our tribe, but now they are made by the hands of Pendleton, the hands of someone else. They are still true, to our culture, art drawn by Natives, art reintroduced to the present from discovered work of the past. They contain myths, stories, symbols important to the Tribal heritage. They remind us even off the reservation of home, of wrapping ourselves in what we left behind, in where we've come from, in the fact we are still, proud. Each blanket contains a story, & this story is my blanket, my heritage, a woven, amalgamation of Native culture, of Italian pride, of an identity undulating between white & not, existing in the other, an uncanny.

## II. Heritage

I am migrant, like my mother, she from the plains, I the Midwest, grown among hostas & open plains & cornfields. Nurtured a love of myth, of story, a love passed down by my mother's hands as she wove tales together, as she braided my hair, thick & black, side by side. I would listen to her stories, wrapped in my blanket, a story of pride. She would weave narratives, tales of other migrants, other migrants whose children who would go on to pass—passing, the act of acting & looking white. Those migrants came to this country from all over, from countless nations. She told me of my father's people, young, poor, foreign, a boat to Ellis Island, no English, Napalese soil clinging to their feet. She told me of their troubles in America, of leaving their homeland, of my father.

My father who fostered a love for business for an American drive, that in America you can be anything, do anything. He was tender, the son of an immigrant, a second generation who knew his people's struggle but forgot those the nation was built on, built on the decimation of a people, the enslavement of another, the erasure of stories, of lives, of a language. A people relegated to the role of a Halloween costume, a myth, a movie, an imagined history.

She told me other stories too. She told me stories of Mexico, of Aztecs & Incas & Mayans & of their temples made of gold. She told me a white man came, with his people. He enslaved them, broke them. The Indians became a new, a new, people, nations, integrated into societies that forgot.

She would finish her stories as she knotted the braids, smoothing the fly-aways down, the silver crescent of my scalp shining between two hills of charcoal black. "The only good braid is a tight braid," she would say.

## III. Birth & Radio

My mother never forgot her birthplace nor I my conception, reminded on how radio was my creator, my ticket to ride. I inherited a love for creation, a love learned in a test-tube in a Japanese Doctors Lab—"Two for the price of one." A love learned when we meant three, when we were unnamed, were still embryonic. A love for creation where we cannibalized the third, in the third trimester, a we that became you & I at birth, separate, 3 & 4 pounds. This was a love learned through radio, radio that paid for our birth, a birth that bankrupted a father, a father who cried when he held two girls, two girls wrapped in two separate blankets—separate stories.



My mother never forgot, her birthplace, the plains, the red clay. She raised me on the myths of music & rain songs, & my father instilled a tenderness for ad speak, our way to bond, a love of a modern invention. Father glowed with pride when he spoke, told his stories, wine in hand, cranking the knobs of a radio, not for the music but for the sweet sounds of advertisements, money made by convincing you to buy dish soap, cable, a new sweater—products you didn't need, until now.

I grew with this love of language, nurtured by a duality between metaphor & myth, fast speak & capitalism that built both a man & a nation. I fell in love with writing, with reading, with the craft it took to convince an audience your work was worthwhile, a skill I learned through my father's pitches, hard sales, that someone will buy your premise, your promise.

#### IV. Ties that Bind

My father fostered my love of literature, his collection of books, leather-bound and not, lining the shelves of his study; a study clad in black walnut stained oak, decorated with a picture of two girls turning two, two girls finally paid off—the real celebration. The titles of his library have changed, evolving from *On the Road* and *Cat's Cradle* to Jack Reacher novels and Dean Koontz's ghostwriters.

He was a businessman, a suit and tie, a neat pallet. A suit became his preconception, keeping the family afloat, remaining elsewhere to keep my mother present.

He would read my stories, when I was young, fostering a burgeoning love, a secret we grew out of sharing. He dug through a closet, pawing over football mementos, the degree he never bother to hang. He pulled out a story, college ruled paper, yellowed and curling. "I wrote once." He held me, his lap, my limbs gangly & awkward & unaccustomed to his knee, a seat that had gone unused. He read and I listened, a

disruption of my pattern, un-ceremonial.

He read about a boy & his father, familial heritage. He read from start to finish, self-conscious bounces of his knee. It was the only story he ever wrote, before he moved on to bigger dreams, dreams lined with nice houses, with fast cars, without the fear of a doctor crushing the petri dish that contained his children.

#### V. Stories

As I grew older, her fingers still twisting my hair into thick braids, I began to tell her stories, stories I had learned in school. I told her once, about a story I read, about migrant workers, moving across the country to pick apples. She was a mestizo, I said, Indian & white. My mother smiled. I would tell her stories about our people, stories by those I had read, by Black Elk & Sherman Alexie, by Susan Power. I would ask her questions, about myths, about relocation, about her childhood. I would sit in my blanket, draped around my shoulders, an essential tradition to our private ceremony. She would pull the braid tight, "The only good braid, is a tight braid."

Language taught me about difference, about what could be said, understood, & ascertained. The language of my mother was gentle, was filled with metaphor & history, with lyricism—my father's was born from narrative from the way you get from start to finish. My lingual path has been about finding beginnings & endings, but they don't necessarily coalesce, have a true origin, or one ending. If I've learned anything from this blend of languages, it's that multiplicity is where meaning is discovered.

#### VI. America the Beautiful

I went off to college & she could no longer braid my hair, could no longer tell me stories, it was time to find my own—new stories, my own language.

World politics class—we learned about the world's migrant peoples, the plight of natives. We learned

about a place in Argentina, Plaza de Mayo. We learned about a government killing it's people, leaving the mothers to march, hands clutching pictures of their stolen children, demanding to know where they were. Instead the mothers were carted away—concentration camps. Their children never returned.

I called my mother to tell her the story, running one hand over the back of my head. She said we still cry for our stolen children, for our stolen Mother, for our families in the concentration camps America forgot.

But we are America the beautiful, America the free. Never forget how she was built or to be proud you are what's left, remember your stories, our stories, woven in your blanket. "The only good braid is a tight braid."

I wrapped myself in my blanket, chieftain on my back, watching & I protected. What is that? Aren't you white? Let me see your card. A half-breed, a halfway between one norm and another, between two America's, one mother, one father, one story.



*- a traditional blanket of the Plains Tribes, a symbol of honor, respect, & tradition; the image features a Chief wearing the War Bonnet, made to protect the wearer*



The Magnolia

*Words by Cara Sinicropi*

The magnolia; a symbol of beauty  
and perseverance.  
– Chinese Folklore

Three rooms, five people, one burgundy Suburban. That Suburban has been with me since I was four. That Suburban carried us— three children, two parents, across the Midwest, around lake Michigan, from one side to the other. We settled back into suburbia, transplanted our roots just like my mother transplanted her hostas.

The Midwest has grown my family. It grew my mother, my siblings and I, and it welcomed my father when he was still small, still young enough to claim it as his roots when he sees fit.

Three rooms, five people, one burgundy Suburban. Those statistics would come later. Because, for now, our home was nestled in the safety of suburban Detroit. I didn't know her history then.

We, my siblings and I, fell in love with our house, with the play set our father built. We knew our bus route, the driver— her name was Nancy. And Nancy, and Michigan, was an improvement over Wisconsin and walking to school and the nannies that would come in and out of our childhood.

We, like my mother's hostas, grew. My mother grew into her role and abandoned the notion of nannies and my father grew into the man who was home by five, who coached little league games, who held my mother's hand.

Three children, one home. We became a family. We became the type of family that caught fireflies on summer evenings, that made homemade ice-cream for the nostalgic memories, the kind of family that ate dinner every night, that celebrated every birthday like a grand occasion, because, after all each year was a blessing.

Michigan was nothing permanent. My father's occupation called him South, and my mother's body begged her to stay in the comforts of the Midwest, of a home with three bathrooms. We moved: before the housing market crashed, before Detroit sunk deeper into stagnation.

Three rooms, five people, one burgundy Suburban. That Suburban had her oil changed, her motor checked. We packed our lives into suitcases and boxes and backpacks.

My siblings and I said goodbye to our house, to the wine cellar we had used as our hideout, to the swing set, to lake Michigan for the last time. That Suburban carried us, three children, two parents, across the Mason-Dixon line.

I clutched my hands tight, as though I could hold the promise I'd made to return in my hands. I remember my Raggedy Anne doll (passed down to me at birth from my mother's childhood) laid across my lap. The one artifact of home I had been allowed to bring; a doll my mother had let the movers pack, a doll she spent two days searching to find.

I haven't seen more than a dusting of snow since I left, and if I were to go back there would be nothing to find, no wine cellar, no floral wallpaper. We escaped Detroit, but our house is now the inner city. I couldn't find it if I tried.

Three children, two parents, one burgundy Suburban. We had laid new roots. A temporary fix, leading to a new solution, a new beginning, my father said. The Suburban delivered us to this new home, pushed us out, spat us on the cement of an apartment complex. The Magnolia. “We are home.”

We carried our bags inside, one backpack per child, my parents with three suitcases, three suitcases between the five of us. Three rooms. Five people. Three beds. Five people. “Just wait it out, it’s just two months.”

We clung to my father’s promise of two months, my mother with a desperate kind of hope, my siblings and I with a lack of understanding, an understanding that we were supposed to share in my mother’s desperation. Our newly constructed family unit could not cope, did not have the comforts that come with ownership.

Two months became a year, a year became middle school, and that year I shared a bed with my sister, my brother’s bed two feet over. We were enrolled, a school with uniforms. My father didn’t believe in public school back then. My mother didn’t want her children to repeat outfits on a bi-weekly basis. “We’re not poor,” she said.

My sister and I turned twelve that year. We did not invite friends to celebrate. “There’s no room for them,” my mother said. What she meant was, “They can’t see this.”

Three rooms, three children. I did not see my father that year. Not on my birthday, because a night at home around a plastic kitchen table was not worth it, and two girls turning twelve was no occasion. Not on Saturday mornings because he couldn’t stand the fire alarm going off when he tried to make breakfast, a ritual he had perfected in Detroit but one The Magnolia rejected. Not even Christmas. We didn’t celebrate that year; no need to buy things we had no room to store. We had no spirit anyways.

Like all years, the year in The Magnolia passed, passed along with several other things. Passed onto another new school, a new house, a new master bedroom my mother couldn’t leave. Her body, much like our family unit, could not cope. Perhaps her body couldn’t handle the stress of rented cement floors, maybe she had not yet learned to love the South, or perhaps her body just gave up. Because bodies, like years, pass. My mother’s body destroyed itself. Consumed its own spine. Paralysis, missing bones, decaying nerves.

That year we lost the apartment, lost it because that’s what was supposed to happen; only we lost my mother too. We lost her to her body, to 28 addicting prescriptions, to a bed, to chemotherapy, to radiation. My mother did not have cancer. Cancer was still to come. In her eyes her body has always been an enemy, the enemy. Autoimmune diseases are kind to none.

A disease is the body’s inability to cope. And an autoimmune disease is the bodies’ inability to cope with itself. My family has a history of self-destruction, hidden somewhere in our genome. We all have one, or two, or three. My mother has two diseases. They sound harmless. Osteoporosis. Fibromyalgia.

Osteoporosis is coined as the “silent disease.” It silently takes over the body, silently destroys you. You will notice pain— unexplainable, sharp. For most people this disease is minor. For most people it can be treated. My mother is not one of those people. My mother has been shrinking. From the day we left the Midwest to the day she became bedridden, my mother lost four inches. Four inches.

The most common sign of this disease is spinal fractures. My mother’s spine fractured at every vertebra. Her prognosis worsened. My mother’s spine was dissolving. She had three collapsed spinal disks and two were completely gone. She was paralyzed by forty.

Her body was not done spiting her. Beyond immobilization and a collapsed spine, my mother’s nerves suffer

from another incurable disease. Fibromyalgia is characterized by intense musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, excessive sleep, loss of memory, and unpredictable mood swings. Her body became a prison. Effectively, her nerves are miswired; they send constant messages of pain.

I didn't understand this disease when I was younger, why she would forget my birthday, the name of my best friend. She was trapped, for two years, in a body where her only respite was her cooler filled with pills, pills to kill the pain, to make her sleep, to make her forget her body. That cooler that she kept in the kitchen and would have us carry to her three times daily. Maybe that was the worst part. The hope. The hope that maybe that day she would be strong enough to get up and get the medication of her own volition. I watched that hope break three times a day. I watched her eyes squeeze shut, refusing to cry as my father would lay beside her, stroking her hair, whispering jokes into her ear. That was his greatest kindness.

My mother's body began its inability to cope with the world around it at the ripe age of 20. No suburban, no children, one house. An old brick home and a young marriage. These were the statistics of Milwaukee. My mother was active, ran daily, danced on tables. She was young and believed in youth's immortality. She fell, one morning, shattering her hip. She was a rarity. Early Onset Osteoporosis. A diagnosis of Fibromyalgia would come two years later. Give time a few more years and my parents would come to realize they could not get pregnant. They began In Vitro trials. My mother's body would fail her. One year of trials, one million dollars. My father, on the outskirts of bankruptcy, had them try again.

The implantation took, and soon my mother would come to her first flirtation with a paralysis, with being bound to a bed. The pregnancy was high-risk, demanded weekly injections, the skin swollen with nutrients to support the growing embryos, to support the twins who had already cannibalized their triplet. My mother gave birth to two twin girls, healthy, and on schedule.

Her second pregnancy was of natural conception. The risk repeated, risk for her body, for the unborn child. She found herself in a hospital for months on end, only her body wanted to abort her mission. My brother came two months early, housed in an incubator, my mother sobbing, begging to know why she could not hold her child. My father stood behind a glass window, clutching the hands of my sister and I, tears collecting in his premature wrinkles.

My mother's sickness was grown in Wisconsin, was fostered by cold, by three screaming infants, by tiny fists clawing for the life force of her body. Detroit lent us time, but it could support nothing, not my mother's health, not the housing market, not the auto industry. Detroit was her temporary solution.

Three children, one husband, one mansion later. My mother had surgery. The refractory period, one-year long. My father took her to the hospital, drew the X on her neck and wrote, CUT HERE. The doctors rebuilt her spine. They lashed it to a metal rod, inserted cadaver disks to replace the three that disappeared. They straightened her spine, mended the fractures. One-year post op, the paralyzed could walk. My mother had lost her faith, the doctors, not god resurrected Lazarus. Only, this surgery was no permanent miracle. It bought her time. It gave her hope. I've seen what hope can do.

The Magnolia is not a place I think of often. I do not think of the months spent sitting on other people's furniture. My mother always claimed her body was her enemy; I blamed the apartment, the cement floors, the ubiquitous hotel duvets you can never get clean. I blame one year, three rooms, three children, one burgundy Suburban.

THE  
DOGS  
OF  
HELL

*Words by Robert Ficociello*

Since my brother, Todd, and I were kids, we wanted a pet. We got fish. Todd and I gladly accepted the guppy-filled ten gallons as a new responsibility, figuring it would lead to bigger and furrier things. We got more fish. My parents always baited us with more responsibility that my brother and I thought would lead to the ultimate: a dog. When a stray poodlish dog we named Blackie appeared regularly for clandestine handouts, we asked to keep it. My dad told us to stop feeding it and it will go away. Before my parents got home from work, we'd let Blackie run about the house, jump on the beds, and drink out of the same bowls we used to eat salad. When we were caught my dad said, "Out!" And we weren't sure if he only meant the dog. Poor Blackie looked at us through the storm door until my dad closed the door in his canine face. That image has never left me. I was always jealous of my cousins, my friends, and strangers in the park who had dogs. I harbored my desire for a four-legged companion through high school, college, and into professionalism, where apartment living and pets are like cats and dogs.

In my early twenties I relocated to West Palm Beach for an job. Six months later two co-workers and I fortuitously stumbled across a fantastic three-bedroom house only five-minutes walking distance to the beach. Shortly after that, my twenty-fourth birthday rolled around, and the girl I was dating said she had a big surprise for me. She picked me up on a Saturday morning and drove me to the Palm Beach County Animal Shelter. Vindication at last, I thought. After several hours of deliberation, I chose a one-year old chocolate Labrador from the hundreds of dogs kenneled. I felt good about saving the little girl from you know what. Once she got wormed, spayed, and washed, I picked her up and brought her to her new home. My roommates were as excited as

I was. Gleefully we watched her sniff her way around the house and yard. I called my parents with the good news.

"It's the best gift I ever got," I said.

"We're glad," my mom said, "you live in Florida."

"I named her Basil."

"That's great. How's the job going? Steady we hope."

I bought Basil at least a half-dozen chew toys for when I went to work on Monday. She had the whole house, and I left the slider to the yard open as well. After work I walked in to all the chew toys where I'd left them. Sprinkled around the patio were a myriad of not only my shoes but my roommates' shoes also. I reimbursed them for a pair of Nikes and Birkenstock sandals with personal checks.

The next morning I left the slider in my room open but closed the other parts of the house off to Basil. I put all my shoes behind the closet door. When I got home that day, my pillows were torn to shreds and dispersed among the shrubbery. The third day she wasn't even in the yard but waiting on the front steps. Finally I got to a point where my room, the yard, and the house was Basil-proofed. I still feel as if it was a small price to pay for her companionship on walks to the beach and particularly at night after my girlfriend and I split up.

A few months later one of my roommates was laid off from our ailing company. Two months later so was I. The closest and quickest job I found was across the peninsula in Fort Myers. Apartment hunting was futile until I found a woman willing rent me a room in her three-bedroom house. Other

inhabitants of the house were two pitbulls and a witch. They were all nice, and Basil and I were accepted. That lasted about six weeks until the owner told me that Basil was "showing" her dogs how to chew things. The three dogs apparently chewed some heirloom newspaper clippings about her great-grandmother. I needed to find another home for us.

When I visited some friends back in West Palm Beach, Basil escaped from my car and was never found. I was heartbroken. I thought maybe Basil ran away because she knew how difficult it would be to find a new place to live, leaving for altruistic reasons. I vowed to never get another dog.

Until five years later. I started working and living back in New England. The girl I was living with, Sara, and I decided to purchase a small house on five rural acres in a New Hampshire town of twelve-hundred people. Soon after we moved in, I started hounding Sara for a dog. All the boxes weren't even unpacked yet.

I began visiting the local Humane Society shelter during my lunch breaks. One dog caught my eye: Greeley. He barked at me, jumped so high the volunteers put a grate on top of his cell, and acted as if he was on cocaine. The perfect dog.

About the same time, the deer that frequented our yard lost their romantic appeal when Sara and I saw them feasting on the landscaping. Also, ground squirrels were burrowing through the lawn and carrying away the tulip bulbs in their buckteeth. The conditions were ripe.

"Maybe a dog would help," I suggested.

"Hm."

For the first time I saw a flicker of weakness on her face. "It would keep the deer away. That's what I read. The squirrels too. I read." I tried to remain logical about it, but inside I was a kid again.

"Maybe we'll go look," she said.

"When?"

"What are their hours at the shelter today?"

"Until noon."

With a stern look, she said, "We are just looking."

At the shelter I took Sara directly to Greeley's cage.

"He is pretty cute," Sara said as Greeley barked at her. She put a finger to the cage, and he came to sniff it. He put his neck against the grating for Sara to pet him. As she did, a Humane Society volunteer came to us and asked if we wanted to take Greeley out for a walk.

That's where the sales pitch starts. The volunteers must have a class to teach the dogs how to look damn cute so they'll appeal to the public. Then the volunteers lure you into taking the dogs for walks and praise the dog's disposition, obedience, and house-training. I bought it all. Sara was skeptical. Nonetheless, we took Greeley for a walk around the grounds. Out of the kennel Greeley's heralded friendliness, alertness, and gregariousness blossomed. When we came back into the office, two families came in to inquire about Greeley. He was in demand. We took him back outside. We saw the parents and children watching us through the glass doors of the shelter. I thought about what it would have been like if my family were in their shoes. The lucky kids that

got to pick out their own dog, I thought.

The volunteer came out to us and said, "What do you think? There are some people here who are interested in adopting him."

I looked at Sara. Sara looked at Greeley. Greeley just looked cute.

"Well," I said to Sara.

"Well..." she said.

The volunteer said, "I'll leave you two alone. Bring Greeley in when you decide. We close in an hour, and it takes some time to fill out the paper work. Be it you or someone else." She went back in the shelter.

"I knew this would happen," Sara said.

I did too. "He'll be adopted today."

"I know."

"If you're not sure, we should wait."

She scratched Greeley behind the ears. "You can't take them home on the same day, can you?"

"I don't think so."

We stopped at the pet store on the way home to get Greeley food and water bowls, toys, and dog-food. He watched from the front seat of the car as we walked into the store.

"I can't believe this," Sara said to me.

We both worked with Greeley on obedience. He

responded well, but problems arose when he was left alone. He severely damaged the door of the basement where he was kept while we were at work, chewed a portion of our book collection, but kept the deer away.

One day I heard Sara scream while she was hanging laundry on the clothesline. I ran outside. She was chasing Greeley and yelling, "Drop it."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"He's got a squirrel."

I approached Greeley and told him to drop it. He did. All three of us watched the squirrel squeak and writhe in agony. As I got closer, Greeley picked it up and threw it in the air. He continued tossing the squirrel around as I chased him into the woods. When the squirrel lost its liveliness, I assume, Greeley dropped it on some leaves, and I grabbed his collar to walk him back to the house.

"Well?" Sara asked when we returned.

"At least he's helping with the squirrels too."

This was only the beginning of Greeley's killing spree. I buried many moles and mice. When the three of us went to the beach for a week, he caught two foxes, a skunk, and a seagull. Unfortunately on several occasions he also displayed aggressive behavior toward children. And Canadians.

On a camping trip, Greeley bit a Canadian woman who was riding her bike near our campsite. He was leashed to a tree, but she came within range when it was getting dark. The woman needed stitches on her calf. This was the final straw.



After careful deliberation, Sara and I agreed that we needed to put Greeley to sleep. His aggression worried us, and at this point we knew that if he ever got a hold of an infant, the repercussions could be fatal. We recalled the manner in which he lifted a full grown fox off the ground to shake it to death. For the two weeks between our decision and the appointment at the veterinarians, we treated Greeley like a king. We fed him people food at the table with us, and he slept on the bed.

We didn't speak much when we brought him to the veterinarian's. Greeley sat obediently on the floor as the veterinarian explained the proceedings. She'd give him a sedative followed by the lethal injection. When Greeley felt the sedative, he crawled up onto my lap and put his head against my chest. Sara began to cry, and the veterinarian reminded me to tell him he was a good boy. Each time I did, he looked up at me as if he was trying to resist the effects of the sedative. We watched the veterinarian administer the lethal shot into Greeley's leg. I could feel his breathing diminishing against my stomach. I patted his head as Sara bawled. For some reason no tears came for me. Occasionally Greeley's tongue slipped out of his mouth, and I gently pushed it back in for his dignity. The veterinarian put a stethoscope against his chest. She told us it was almost time. I felt his breathing stop. The vet asked if I wanted to lay him on the floor, but I declined. I wanted to feel the heaviness of his body. She placed the stethoscope against Greeley's chest again and told us he was gone. I laid Greeley on a blanket in the middle of the room, then held Sara. When Sara calmed a bit, I walked her to the car then came back to make the cremation arrangements. We drove home but didn't talk about it.

I searched for some purpose of having Greeley for less than a year. What first came to mind were the families that wanted to adopt him. They'd both had

small children, and I wondered if Greeley would have caused any harm to the children. Then I remembered the night during the winter when Greeley's barking woke us up at 2:00 in the morning. When I got up, I smelled smoke. I followed the smoky trail to the basement which was filling with smoke and carbon monoxide. I'd closed the flue of the woodstove too much before going to bed. He may have saved our lives. This fact did little to appease me, and I vowed to never get another dog.

Within a few months, the deer came back to eat all the hostas to the ground, the squirrel holes began peppering the lawn, and the mice could be heard in the ceiling above our bed. I tried all kinds of organic solutions. None of them were entirely successful. One Saturday morning Sara said we had to do something. I looked across the breakfast table at her and knew what she was thinking. I refused to even hint at suggesting what she meant.

"What about a cat?" she asked.

"I don't know. It won't keep the deer away."

"No, it won't."

I continued drinking my coffee and reading the town newsletter.

"Should we go to the shelter and just check it out?" she asked.

"It's completely up to you." I wasn't exactly batting a thousand in the pet department.

"Cats are much easier than dogs."

"Have you had one?"

"Never."

"Me neither."

I followed Sara through the front door of the shelter to the cat cages. Then to the dog kennel. It was all too familiar.

"That ones kind of cute. It's about Greeley's size. It looks pretty passive too."

"It certainly does." A tan boxer mix lied curled into itself on the concrete floor while all the other dogs in the kennel yelped. This dog had the absolute saddest, worried face I'd ever seen on a dog's face in my life. The ribs and spine were distinguishable through its short fur. I looked on the information sheet hanging its door. "It's a female named Snickers." We both winced. "Spayed, housebroken. Knows sit, come, stay, and lay [sic] down."

Snickers got off the floor and wagged her monkeyish tail when Sara crouched at the cage's door. Snickers sniffed and licked Sara's hand through the grating.

A volunteer strategically descended upon us. "Want to take her out?"

I pointed to Sara. "She's the boss."

"I guess so," she said

Snickers led Sara out the front door of the shelter with sudden enthusiasm. Around the grounds, Snickers heeled, sat, and gave up her paw for Sara.

"What do you think?" Sara asked me.

"It's up to you."

"She'll be mine. I'll do most of the work." This sounded familiar too.

We stopped at the pet store for food. Snickers kept that worried look while watching us walk into the store.

"I can't believe this," I said.

Sara worked diligently with the renamed Bailey on obedience training and house rules. But Bailey had an intense separation anxiety. She was always trying to escape from wherever she was. Bailey ripped through the canvas door of my Jeep at the supermarket one afternoon, and continued where Greeley left off at the basement door.

Sara's job as a geologist started requiring her to work progressively later and travel more. It was often Bailey and I eating dinner alone. This and other complex factors led to Sara and I parting less than amicably. Sara got most of the furniture, and I got Bailey. It took us almost a year to find a buyer for the house, and with that nearly completed, I looked to my parents for temporary housing.

"What about Bailey?" my mom asked over the phone.

"I guess I'll put her up for adoption."

"Really? She's such a good dog."

"What other choice do I have?"

"I'll talk to your father."

Both my parents loved Bailey, but I never thought it would happen. Just before the final closing of the house my mom called me.

"What are your plans after selling the house?"

"I think I'm going to apply to graduate school."

"Really? Where?"

"Someplace warm."

"Well that might soften your father a bit if he knows you'll be leaving soon."

"Soften him up for what?"

"Bailey. I'll let you know."

Bailey and I moved into the downstairs bedroom, nicknamed the dungeon. Barring a few accidents, it went smoothly. My dad breathed a big sigh of relief when the acceptance letter from the University of New Orleans arrived.

I planned to visit New Orleans for a week in June to find an apartment. I had a strategy; if I found a place during that week that accepted pets fine; if not, I'd have a few months to find Bailey a good home.

I looked at several apartments that week, and none of the landlords accepted pets. The last apartment I looked at in the Broadmoor sections of New Orleans would be the one I liked best. I asked the landlord about pets, and she said, "I'm sorry but no." She hesitated. "Why?" I explained about Bailey and moving to New Orleans for graduate school without knowing anyone. "I'm sorry," she told me. An hour later, she called to tell me I could have the apartment in August if I wanted it, but I told her I was still holding hope for a pet-friendly location. Another hour later, she called me back to say that I could bring the dog! I called my parents, who dogsat Bailey in Massachusetts, to tell them the good news. Man, they were relieved they

wouldn't get stuck with a dog.

At the end of July, my friend John helped me load and attach a UHAUL trailer to my Jeep. The three of us started south with plans of stopping in Memphis for a short vacation. We pulled into Memphis after three nights of camping and sprung for a room at the Red Roof Inn, which allowed small pets. We washed up then went to Graceland. I took Bailey out for a walk when we got back. John and I wanted to get ribs on Beale St. so we hopped on a bus going downtown leaving Bailey in the room again. We had a good meal, and I put some rib bones in a doggy-bag.

When we got back to the motel, our door was wide open. Bailey was gone, but our stuff was still there. I checked the front office and the grounds. I drove the neighborhoods around the motel until it got dark. Sleeping was impossible that night, and I occasionally went for walks around the motel calling her name. The next morning I called all the shelters in the area, but no dogs fitting Bailey's description were picked up. I didn't know what to do. The trailer needed to be returned so I reluctantly headed for New Orleans expecting someone to call the phone number on her tags.

No word came over the weekend. I unpacked some pictures and typed up some reward notes to place at the shelters. On Monday I drove John to the airport while he reassured me she would turn up. Tuesday I drove the six hours through the heat of August to Memphis. All day I visited the five closest animal shelters but came up empty. I stayed at the same motel and asked again if any of the staff saw Bailey. The next morning I placed a lost dog classified in the Memphis newspaper. Three months later I stopped running the classified.

I get sad thinking about Bailey roaming around a big city like Memphis while I do the same in New Orleans. And I've vowed to never get another dog.



*Caterpillar Dreams* by Jonathan K. Rice

# Authors

**BRIA BALLARD** may be a sophomore in college but she's still a kid at heart, preferring to watch cartoons and Disney movies over all else. She thinks comedy should be present in every story no matter what the genre or subject matter is and that the ability to tell a good dark humor joke is a sign of a great writer. She likes keeping her stories on the lighter side of things, even when they cover serious topics such as heartbreak, loss, and death.

**CATHERINE BAKEWELL** is a Freshman Spanish Major at High Point University. She has a passion for language, whether it's writing historical fiction or poetry, singing opera, or building her conversational skills in Spanish or French. During her time at High Point University, she hopes to continue to grow in her writing, to strengthen her foreign language abilities, and to study abroad.

**KARAINA CALLAHAN** is a senior English Writing and Literature major at High Point University, with a concentration in playwriting and adaptation. After graduation, she plans on making her way out to LA to work as a writer in the television industry. In the meantime, she continues to take care of her fish, Kurt Vonnegut, and plans to take up knitting as her new hobby.

**MJ DUGGAN'S** poems have been published by *The Journal*, *Sarasvati*, *Roundyhouse*, *Illumen*, *Inkapture*, *The Seventh Quarry*, *Turbulence*, *Carillion*, *The Cobalt Review*, *Square*, *Dwang*, *The Dawntreader*, *Peering Cat Poetry Magazine*, *Zouch*, *The Jawline Review*, and others. His first collection of poems, *Making adjustments for life expectancy*, published in January 2014, was reviewed in *Carillion* and *Roundyhouse* magazines. He hosts a spoken word evening every month at Hydra Bookshop in Bristol UK called *AN EVENING OF SPOKEN INDULGENCE*, and is the editor of a new political poetry magazine called *The Angry Manifesto* that launched in February 2015.

**ROBERT FICOCIELLO** is Assistant Professor of Writing at Holy Family University in Northeast Philadelphia. His creative work has appeared in *North Dakota Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Short Story*, and other journals.

**CELIA GLENN** is a freshman at High Point University in the Media Fellows program. She explores the world through painting, photography, and writing. "Ground Swell" is the cover image for her first collection of poetry by the same name that she coauthored with Meghan Brown.

**REBECCA IRONS** is a Junior English Major at High Point University. She enjoys writing and studying poetry and short fiction and also has a passion for music performance.

**CAMERON KOCKRITZ** is a Washington State native and a sophomore at High Point University. Her biggest writing accomplishment so far in her 19 years is winning a regional writing competition in third grade for her story on Sandy the Sand Dollar. Since then, she has gravitated towards her interest in poetry.

**KYLE ROTHER**, a junior at High Point University, is studying secondary education and English literature. After graduating with a bachelor's degree, Kyle plans on teaching English abroad, primarily in developing countries.

The poet **DGLSN.RTHSJCHLD** does not really exist as such. Having considered the various possibilities, it seems in all likelihood, that these poems were produced by some sort of synthetic syntactic system, created by some form of semi-autonomous 'emotive' generator.

**SAM SCHOENFELD** is a junior and Media Fellow at High Point University. He was born in Baltimore, Maryland and raised with an appreciation for immersive storytelling.

**CARA SINICROPI** received her B.A. in English Writing and her B.A. in International Relations from High Point University. Her interests include reading and writing and being adventurous and curious on a daily basis. You can find her with a book in her hand or in a café working on her fashion blog, *Mirrors&Mimosas*. Her experience in HPU's English Department has been one for the books. It taught her how to push boundaries, to excel, to think critically of texts and her own work and, to quote Samuel Beckett, it taught her how to, "Try again. Fail Again. Fail Better."

**CEDRIC TILLMAN** hails from Anson County, NC and was raised in Charlotte, where he currently resides. He is a graduate of UNC Charlotte and The American University's Creative Writing MFA program. In 2013 his debut collection, entitled *Lilies In The Valley*, was published by Willow Books.



*Following the Harvest* by Jonathan K. Rice



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