



Christian Cern  
*Quick Exit*  
Charcoal

Cover Image  
Danny Goodwin  
*New Construction*, 2014  
44 x 52" Archival Pigment Print,  
edition of 4.



HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

# Apogee Magazine

*Fall Two Thousand and Sixteen*

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Apogee Magazine

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Include a cover letter

with a brief 2-3 sentence biography.

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*With Special Thanks to Cheryl Harrison, Jacob Paul, and Molly Seabrook.*

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## FEATURED ARTIST

Danny Goodwin

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work is, in equal parts, an ongoing interrogation of photographic veracity and a critique of authoritarian power. Except when it isn't (I am learning to embrace contradiction and paradox).

I've worked for more than a decade on projects that relate to the United States intelligence community and attendant issues such as surveillance, secrecy, deception and violence, but my more recent work departs from the specificity and overtly political agenda of that work.

Nonetheless, in my recent Decoys, Duds and Dummies project (goofy, minimal still-lives, and film-scratched landscapes) my preoccupation with veracity finds a foothold in spaces, objects, and surfaces that

masquerade as quotidian and familiar but are clearly unreliable narrators.

Object Oriented Ontology factors into this equation, as does the modernist obsession with the grid, particularly as it informs photography's digital evolution. The familiar checkerboard grid of a transparent layer in Photoshop, which is now more a signifier of empty space than actual empty space, represents more than a passive, benign background.

Hand-constructed environments and objects impersonate their virtual counterparts and reveal the circular logic that undergirds the current popular fascination with 3D printing and related imaging technologies.

Emily Judson  
*Farrier at Fox Run Farm*  
Film photography  
October 2016





Vinnie Romano  
*Storm Clouds at Fox Run*  
Film photography  
October 2016



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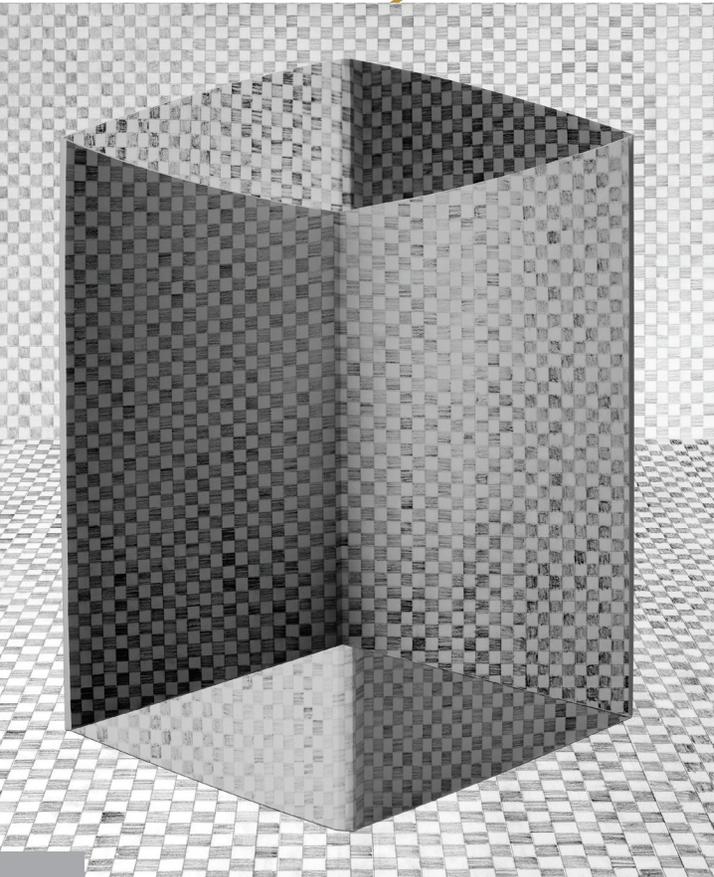
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## CONTRIBUTORS

# The Divorce

Words by

Britt Conklin



6

Danny Goodwin  
*Invisible Object #24*  
2016

They say it was like water

hitting an easy seal bag,

“It could suffocate you.”

Or you could

poke holes in what existed and let it steam out.

Lose control.

Let every single thing you cared about

empty.

The soccer games more like parades of the forget-me-not’s.

And the tennis matches

like the reason you fell back in love.

But she’ll lose

and like a kite hitting the wrong gust of wind,

you’d fall away forgetting that the love

was permanent.

only remembering that she looked my way  
and I looked back

and she smiled

and now its twenty-five years later and she only makes me

frown.

But it’s only an easy seal bag,

and I heard they sell twenty-five packs,  
back at the corner store.

Half half half half, thirty, fifteen. Full.

Percentages.

White by not white but white.  
You but not me but you but me too.

But you look the same but you're not  
But I am not the same but I am,

I am I am I am.

because I am me but I am also half of him and half of her.

Her her her her.

So that means color of skin and eye and hair,  
but also happiness, sadness, athleticism,

Resentments.

But seeing myself as her and then seeing him as  
a stranger,

Him him him him.

But being that stranger is inside of me,  
being that stranger is that we share the same heart.

Being that stranger is being unknown myself.

Filipino but British but White but Tan but Cocoa but Irish but Dark Brown Hair.

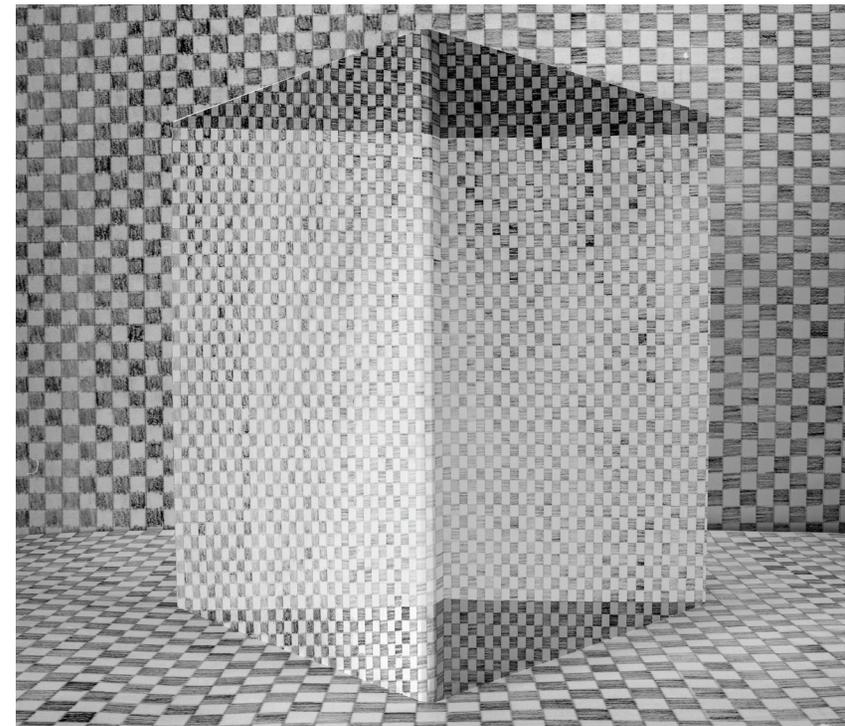
White white white white.

But you look the same but you're not.  
But I am not the same but I am.

I am I am I am.

# Half

Words by Britt Conklin



Danny Goodwin  
*Invisible Object #6*  
2016

# UNCORKED

Words by Logan King

I wish the words poured out of me like fine wine,  
falling from my bottled brain

I wish they'd spill and stain the page

leave it bloodied with the chatter of my bothered veins

dense with a hint of bane

they'd singe my taste buds and claim my clothes

marking their dominance

with a dribble of scarlet

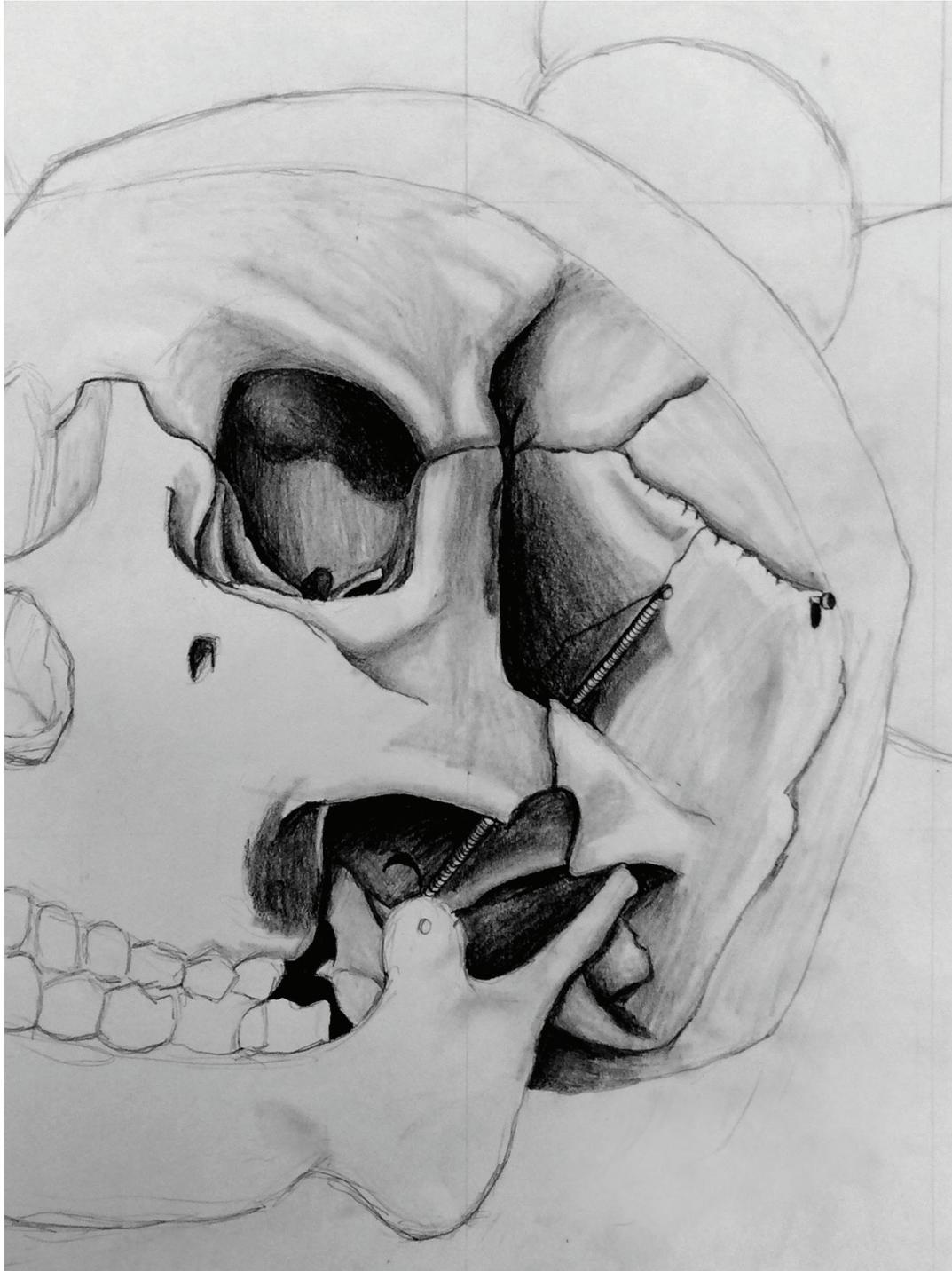
the kind you can't get out of the carpet

they'd be smooth and opulent

they'd compliment my competence and open up

my fragile core

*rich and uncorked.*



Natalia Hopkins  
*Elegant Skull*  
Pencil  
October 2016

# KINGS

*Words by Jacquie Cafasso*

Never have I ever kissed a girl & liked it  
in the Katy Perry sense of a song.

Never has he ever publicly wept  
in the Justin Timberlake sense of a “Cry Me A River.”

Never have I ever been to the G-Spot  
in the New York City sense of a food truck.

Never has he ever played football  
in the tight end sense of a position.

Never have I ever been a stripper  
in the flexible sense of a dancer.

Never has he ever sat still  
in the “restless leg” sense of a syndrome.

Never have I ever used red lipstick  
in the cheap sense of a statement.

Never has he ever cheated  
in the Tiger Woods sense of a scandal.

Never have I ever broken an arm  
in the Jem Scout sense of falling out of a tree.

Never has he ever told me a lie  
in the Judas sense of betrayal.

Never have I ever been fishing  
in the dating sense of a finding a good catch.

Never has he ever been a gentleman  
in the chivalry sense of a word.

Never have I ever been in love  
in the Nicholas Sparks sense of a book.

Never has he ever been the POTUS  
in the Buddhist Sati sense of awareness.



Vinnie Romano  
*Emily*  
Film photography  
October 2016

# Absolved

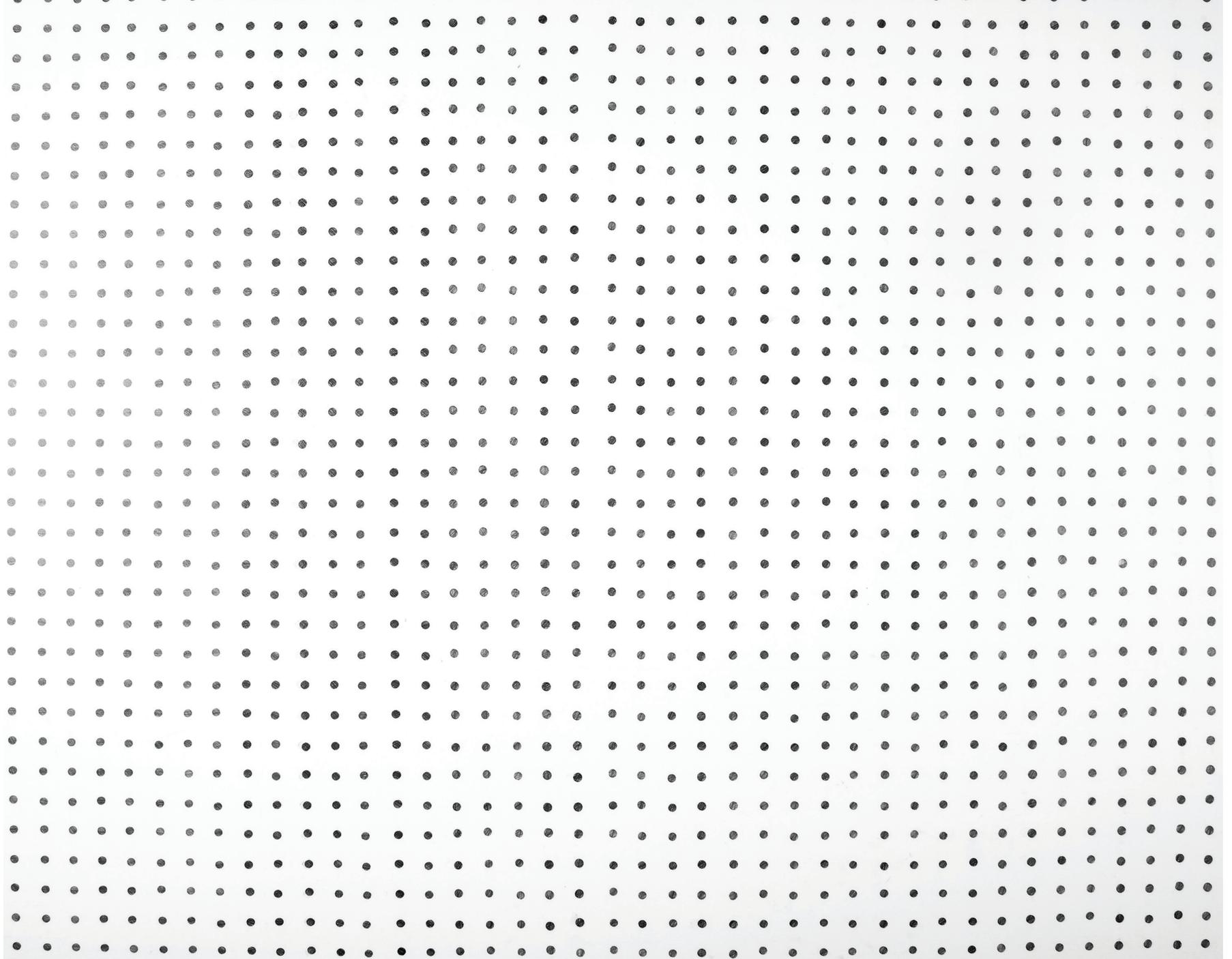
Words by Taylor Tedford

Before you immerse yourself within the shower's sanctuary, the splatter ricocheting off the floor creates its own melody. Once engulfed, you become part of its static noise. The heat relaxes your muscles, running over you, cleansing you. Allowing tears to fall without acceptance or recognition. Freeing your mind to flow seamlessly between disjointed topics. It follows its own tide, tempestuous bouts of recollection falling into the gentle melody of reminiscence.

The process is methodical. Red bottles with gold caps. Fingers massaging temples, running through sleek strands. Shaving cream and a blue razor. A bar of soap bubbling. But this is the external cleansing. It is the pulmonary vein, allowing cleansing to become internal, allowing oxygen to flow from right to left. Keeping your body alive, your blood oxygenated; keeping you breathing.

The water's melody allows your mind to drift. Regrets usually pushed to the background of busyness fall with the patterns of your isolated rain. Some you allow to seep, welcoming the burn of the pain of remembrance. Some you immerse yourself within, recalling the sweetness and laughter that is constantly craved. Some are fleeting, frivolous matters, brushed from eyelids and blinked away rapidly. What you wish you had said. Did you turn out the light. Some are meandering, slowly trickling down your body. Recalling the sting of the vodka, running through the words that dripped freely from your lips, when you said, *I want this*. Sweet and savory, soaking, dripping along planes, delving within crevices. Moments explored by fragments of seconds.

Water cascades with purifying powers. Scouring the body and purging the mind. Scalding but welcome, ivory skin blushing red, warm to the touch. Soap and shampoo, making you feel new. Solace and stillness, a private symphony to the massage of a million droplets. Absolving you of the weight of regret and allowing the release of memories. Wallowing in their reality—in their harshness and their honesty. Vulnerable to your own thoughts and fears, unguarded to the wave of insecurity. Exposed to your own aversion, panic threatens to rise. But as the droplets fall they cleanse you and the water's familiar serenade beats a reminder of absolution.



Danny Goodwin, *Pegboard*, 2016

# ANAMNESIS

*Words by Taylor Tedford*

Alone with your mind;  
the sands floating and drifting,  
forming piles without formation.  
It's the way your thoughts flutter rapidly  
until they latch onto an idea.  
We can be consumed with our fixations  
analyzing 5 seconds  
as if each was its own novel,  
every sigh a page to study.  
We fixate.

The  
moments  
felt  
sl-  
ow

Memory, quick.

Lost at the desire to recall the color of his shoes,  
perplexed to remember the color of my own.

Did he say hello first?  
Did he notice me trip in my step?

What did I say?  
How is this all so  
fuzzy.

\*\*

Warmth coursing  
    widening my capillaries  
turning me red  
    hot to touch  
Sweat sticking us together

Tracing fire down my back  
overloading my Somatosensory system

Giggling as I trip backwards through the doorway  
    Looking up to crawl into the bed  
    Head tilted, lips parted

My fingers  
    moving  
        restless  
running through ninety days of history  
    grazing along his epidermis  
Eyes open to blurry shapes and moving shadows  
    Before succumbing to sensory

\*\*

My eyes are heavy  
but the lacrimation refuses to begin.  
The pain is fresh but the wound is old,  
each instance another daisy in a field of wildflowers;  
    predictable.  
The blade is dull and it scratches  
but cannot cut.  
The black of both absence and absorption  
feeling everything  
exposing nothing  
    when tired is all that is left.



Alicia Hines  
*Guidance*  
Film photography  
October 2016

Words by Taylor Tedford

# Breakups

Hit you with  
the frying pan

then want to  
kiss your hand.

It hurts

to be the breaker

but

remember.  
Remember

only a masterpiece  
in memory's eyes.

Remember

the watercolor  
the mustard yellow  
the mint green  
didn't blend together.

Remember

the weight  
of the shadow,  
of time.

You know you had your best sleep  
alone  
last night.

It hurts to shatter  
mirror with fist

one broken  
one scarred

shards always stick.

All the voices are blending  
inside and out.

My mind  
fighting  
distraction's padlock.

Remember

you don't know what you want,  
you know you don't have it.

Remember

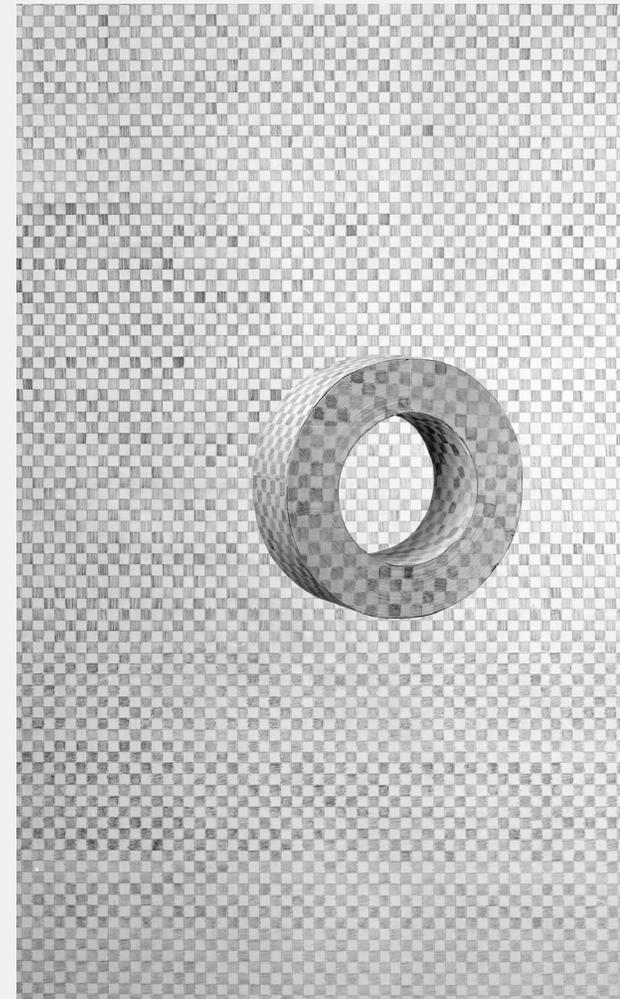
no use holding on to cream  
when the recipe calls for milk.



Molly Couick  
*Solo Hand*  
Film photography  
October 2016

# CLOSET NERDS

Words by Sam Schoenfeld



Danny Goodwin  
*Invisible Duct-Tape*  
2015

Mountains contort their spines along the horizon. Snow is visible on their peaks from the twisting roadways below, which cut through and around the formation's natural curves. Our car banks around another winding turn, the rock sheared away for our convenience. It's my first time in Tennessee, and although it's not my first time seeing mountains, the Appalachians are always an imposing sight.

Our ride bumps along in relative silence, Smash Mouth bumping quietly on the radio. I clear my throat. "I'm just saying Masked Rider<sup>1</sup> would've been able to take on at least most of the Rangers." The words are meant to instigate a debate.

"You know there was an episode where that happened, right?" my friend responds without taking his eyes off the road.

"No shit?"

"Yeah, man. Generation One<sup>2</sup> of the Rangers got featured in a crossover episode cuz both were owned by Saban. It's not like we knew that as kids, so it blew my freaking mind."

We both laugh.

"Well, I guess my question still stands."

"Question?"

"Yeah, whether or not Kamen would beat Tommy."<sup>3</sup>

"Oh there's no way Tommy would've lost. Tommy was my boy."

That's Hogan. By looking at him you wouldn't guess his love of *Power Rangers*, *Kamen Rider*, or any and all things nerdy and '90s. But for Hogan, and many like him, there's a certain level of pride and heritage in being a '90s kid.

Of course, not all kids born in the last decade of the 20th century have reserved knowledge of geeky things. Hogan is what I like to call a "closet nerd." It's how we became friends our freshman year of college. Obviously common ground is always the foundation for friendship, but there's an inexplicably stronger bond formed when the common ground is more obscure and/or deviant.

<sup>1</sup> Masked Rider is in reference to the adapted *Kamen Rider*, a liveaction tokusatsu kids show, which originally aired in Japan and then later the U.S. between September 16, 1995 to August 31, 1996. There's probably a good reason for you not remembering it, but if you want to check it out you can find it pretty easily on Youtube. It's... better preserved in childhood memories. Don't say I didn't warn you.

<sup>2</sup> *Power Rangers* is currently on its eighteenth generation/iteration of the team, however only the first generation lasted more than a single season. Not only did it continue for THREE seasons, it spawned a full length feature film focused solely on the first iteration of the team with all the same actors. And there's a reboot movie in development to bring back the original team. (My inner child/nerd may spontaneously combust with excitement.) Essentially, the show peaked early on and has yet to recapture its former glory.

<sup>3</sup> Tommy was the name of the leader of the Power Rangers, widely accepted by fans as the best, brightest, and most popular. Originally, he was the badass evil green ranger when he was first introduced. But, due to his popularity they brought him back as the white ranger to lead the team, a move entirely independent from the Japanese source material. As the white ranger, Tommy had a unique, sentient sword, named Saba, and his own Megazord (which are the giant robots they fight in at the end of every episode). Saba could offer in-battle advice, boomeranged back to Tommy when he threw or lost it, AND could fire lasers from his hilt. Because Power Rangers.

“Ok, ok, so how about this?” I start up another conversation after the radio once again wears out its welcome.

“Yeah?”

“You can have any superpower you want, or set of powers, you want. Within reason. So no time travel or any of that.”<sup>4</sup>

“Alright.”

I ask Hogan this question about once a year. Last year it was superspeed. The year before he opted out to be a Batmanlike vigilante with no powers, choosing gadgets and immense wealth to fund his heroics.

The silence stretches on like the empty road before us, framed by pine trees and rounded mountain tops. Clouds obscure the sky in lazy grey and white brushstrokes.

For Hogan, his geeky knowledge involves all things superhero, '90s, videogame, anime,<sup>5</sup> scientific, and car related. I could tell you about his white Toyota FJ, its raised suspension and custom work to both the interior and exterior, or how it glides silently past the dead trees of Tennessee. No one I talked to could help account for the amount of time he spends browsing online weird and relatively credible science forums just to be on the bleeding edge of what potential sci-fi future we might meet.

“Electromagnetic powers.”

“What? Like Static Shock?”<sup>6</sup>

“Yeah, kinda like Magneto meets Static. Control over electricity.”

“Why?”

“Because you'd be a fucking powerhouse.”

“No telekinesis?”

“Is that what you'd pick?” he asks.

“Eh, depends on what level we're talking about. Akira<sup>7</sup> level is too much, might as well be God. Maybe more like Superboy<sup>8</sup> then?”

“Superboy is such a pushover,” Hogan scoffs, “just say *Chronicle*<sup>9</sup> next time.”

“Never seen that.”

“Seriously?” Hogan asks in shock. This is a first for us as friends, a movie he's seen that I haven't.

“Yeah, seriously.”

“Well we're watching that when we get back.”

“Cool. So if you had electromagnetism, do you think you could take Batman?”

“Oh, pfffffft, no way in Hell, dude, no one can take Batman.”<sup>10</sup>

And that's that.

Born and raised in the southeast Georgia, Hogan manages to hide his Southern accent well,

4 Time Travel, Space Manipulation, Reality Bending, Telekinesis (particularly high level), and Electromagnetism are regarded as more or less God powers in comic books. Usually the only thing limiting characters with these abilities are, of course, hiccups and overall incompetence from the character's perspective, or “because the writer says so”, which is also a load of bull. Don't create a character with potential for limitless power only to constantly limit them, Stan Lee.

5 Actually, Hogan was only into *Pokémon* and *Digimon* when we first met. Both are considered anime, but they're mainstream Saturday morning cartoons. A mutual friend of ours, and myself, really educated him in anime with *Dragon Ball Z* (another mainstream anime), *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (seriously check this one out even if you don't watch anime), *Sword Art Online* (season one only, because everything after season one is trash), and the psychological crime/cop anime *Psycho Pass*.

6 A DC Comics superhero who had his own show in the early 2000s. Static is a cult favorite among comic book fans, as he is shown in future timelines to end up leading the Justice League (if you don't know who the Justice League is, they're Batman and Superman's version of the Avengers) mostly because he's super intelligent and has electromagnetic powers. As previously mentioned, unless you're ignoring my footnotes, this is sort of a God power as it's the strongest force of nature in the known universe, over atomic and gravitational power. Seriously, look it up.

7 1988 Japanese anime movie considered a landmark for the genre for its accomplishments in both story and animation. Akira, the titular character, is an all powerful telekinetic who gains his powers from government experiments and transcends his physical form to become the equivalent of a god.

8 The DC comic book character, Superboy, has minor telekinetic abilities which let him fly, simulate superstrength, and read minds, to name a few abilities.

9 A 2012 movie where three boys gain telekinesis and end up fighting one another.

10 We have an unspoken reverence for Batman as the greatest superhero of all time. If you would like to debate this, you may seek me out at any time.

articulating and annunciating better than most twenty-one year olds. He's a salesman, full of Southern charm and bravado. He's modeled himself off of the swagger of Robert Downey Jr., or more specifically, Tony Stark, as they're one and the same for Hogan.

His business mentality and strong Southern values clearly stem from his upbringing in the Deep South. However once you've seen Hogan's nerdy side, you come to understand how his life falls into place. It's almost like revealing the inner workings of a magic trick, or seeing how coincidences line up just perfectly in order for something to work. How he dresses and tailors his appearance is a mix of the playboy billionaires from comic books. The formerly mentioned Iron Man and Batman are both hyperintelligent, affluent, well dressed men. But there's more to them than that. Beneath their own masks, Tony Stark and Bruce Wayne are the values they represent as heroic icons. Justice, willpower, intelligence, dedication, sacrifice.

Being a nerd helped shape Hogan's identity. His role models, albeit fictional, were guaranteed to never disappoint and far more interesting than any athlete. They were figures to look up to without the reality of their flaws, or if they had flaws, they were explained and dealt with as only literary characters can be, juxtaposed to the complexities and often disappointments of real world idols. Besides, real world idols never save the city/world from impending doom, or fight crime.

I ask for Hogan's phone and call his younger sister on the subject of role models and what her brother would have wanted to grow up as. "He most definitely would have been a Power Ranger if he could have," Macall, now in high school, says with a snort of laughter. I laugh with her as I exit the parked vehicle. Gravel crunches beneath my boots as I step further away from the lingering smell of gasoline, and Hogan's ears. It feels good to stretch my legs, as well as get some insight into my subject from a family member.

"Alright, so he'd definitely be a Power Ranger, but can you blame him? They're pretty cool." I reinforce my mutual love for the kids show in an effort to justify my fandom to a fifteen year old.

"Yeah, I guess."

Cut low in three words.<sup>11</sup>

"So, uh, would you call Hogan a nerd? You've clearly known him longer than anyone else I can talk to."

"Um...Well it depends on what you mean."

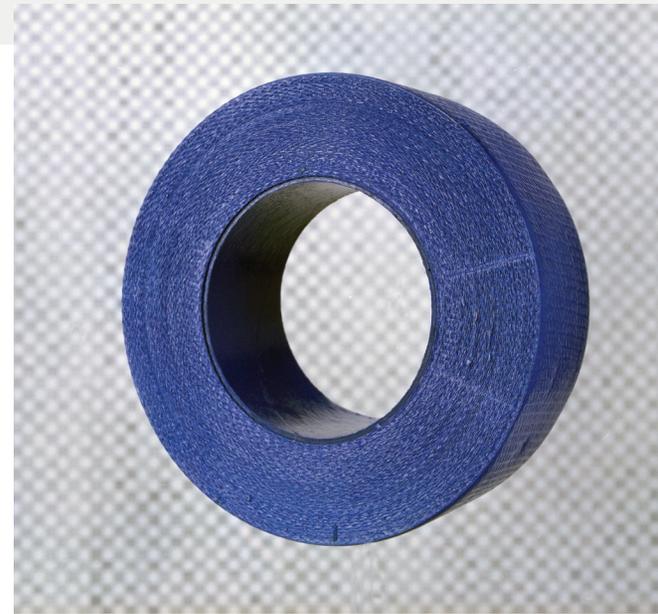
"Oh? Well why's that? Isn't a nerd, a nerd?"

"Well... So there are like multiple definitions. Like some people might think he is, but I feel that's more like a mislabeling. It kinda goes too much off what television and movies show."

"So he's not your stereotypical nerd, okay, fine; but would you still categorize him as a nerd?"

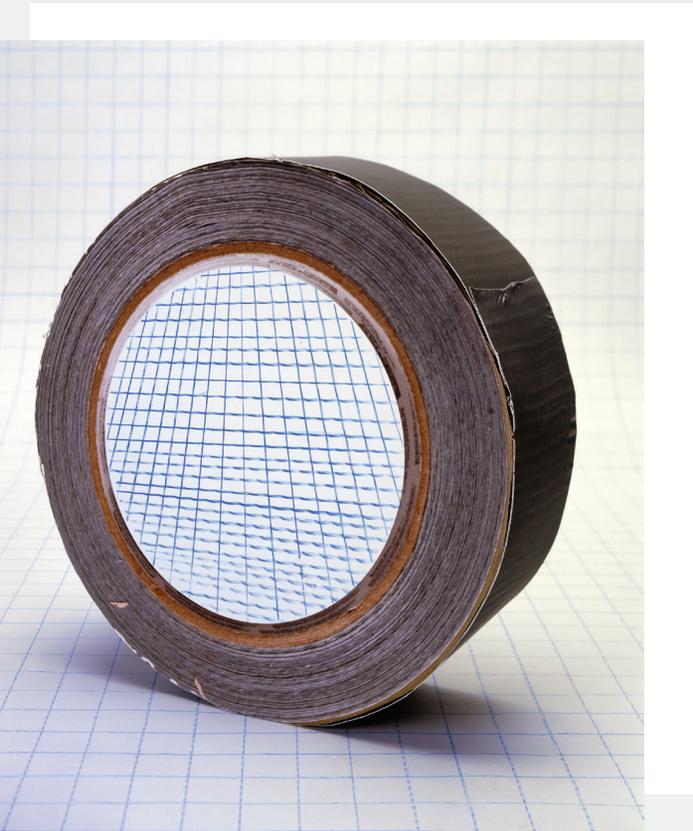
"No."

"Okay, so why not?"



Danny Goodwin  
*3-D Duct-Tape Prototype #2*  
2015

<sup>11</sup> High school girls have a way of gutting you to your core. It's gotta be a superpower of some sort.



Danny Goodwin  
*Duct-Tape Decoy*  
2015

12 Courtesy of Jason Paige, who created the greatest opening theme song of all time. No other childhood show simultaneously got you pumped for another installment of an entirely fictional universe and conveyed a deeper message of peace, harmony, and the ambition to improve. It's also interesting to note that Jason Paige hasn't done anything significant since the *Pokémon* theme song. Talk about burning out on one great hit.

“Because everything he loves was cool to large groups of people (more or less) at the time.” There’s the golden ticket.

“Can you give me an example?”

“Well, *Power Rangers* is still around.”

“No, no I can’t use that, I’m a little heavy on *Power Rangers* in my piece as it is.”

“Oh...” Silence on the other end of the phone as she thinks. Hogan flashes his car horn at me to signal it’s time to go.

“Pokémon!” his sister exclaims at the end of the call. I thank her.

*Pokémon* first premiered in the U.S. in 1998, but everyone knows the ’90s didn’t really end for ’90s kids until 2004. The show is still a phenomenon today, with more games, cards, and episodes released than it probably should have.

But Macall had a fantastic point. *Pokémon* was, and I use past tense in the scope of our current age in relation to the subject matter, the pinnacle of something both simultaneously nerdy and widely socially accepted. It was a Saturday morning anime show from Japan, a series of video games, and a collectable trading card game. People threw their money and time at it and continue to do so today.

I talked to a series of anonymous peers, almost all of whom had watched, played, or collected Pokémon in their childhood. It was the ultimate common ground; something undeniably nerdy which transcended into the mainstream. A similar comparison can be made to Disney’s Marvel movies, which have made killings at the box office with every new comicbookblockbuster installment. Suddenly super heroes are widespread and cool beyond their comic book origins.

Feeling an uncontrollable urge to break the silence, I start singing the show’s opener: “I wanna be the very best, like no one ever was”

Hogan’s face lights up and he immediately picks it up with the drums, “BUM BUM BUM. To catch them is my real test, to train them is my cauuuse”

“I will travel across the land, searching far and wiide”

“Each Pokémon to understand the power that’s insiiiiide”

“POKÉMON!”<sup>12</sup> We sing in unison. Hogan then goes through his iPod and finds the real copy to spare his eardrums my singing voice. The music takes the wheel.

Now, if you had a television and/or were exposed to any children around 1998, you probably heard this song at least once. For a lot of people, *Pokémon* was a phase. But for nerds and closet nerds, *Pokémon* can be a lifestyle. This brings into question an invisible social line between culture, subcultures, and subsequent countercultures. Not everyone bursts into the song of a childhood anime cartoon at random, even fewer are accompanied by a friend with such excellent air drumming skills.

“Favorite Pokémon?” I ask.

“Mewtwo,<sup>13</sup> without a doubt.”

“Seriously? The dude had balls for fingers, that’s so ineffective.”

“It doesn’t matter, he could pick shit up with his mind; and he was the strongest psychic type. You’re telling me you’re gonna question the functionality of his fingers, in a world full of Pokémon?”

Touché.

So where do you draw the lines? The larger one between “normal” and “nerd”; and then another smaller pair of lines between “nerd” and “closet nerd”, and “closet nerd” and “normal”? Many see that maturity has stripped them of their time to involve themselves in more childlike things such as *Pokémon*, or that it’s beneath them. They’ve shifted to sports, or fashion, or something else; tracking athletes, or celebrities, etc. They grow out of their childhood likes. Hogan held that foundation near and dear to his heart and saw that the culture around him was shifting. So he shifted with it.

“So do you consider yourself a closet nerd?”

“Hm?”

“A closet nerd. Do you think you are one?”

“No.” He hesitates. I watch his mouth open and close, one hand casually resting on the wheel. “Well, alright, sure. Yes.”

“Why the hesitation?”

“Because I grew up under the impression ‘nerd’ was a negative thing, ya know? I mean it still is and anyone telling themselves otherwise lives in an idealistic fantasy realm. You can’t generally be considered,” and he does air quotes for me, “‘cool’ when you’re a nerd.”

Maybe Hogan is living in the past. We are in college now, around open minded peers; we’re not alone in our interests. “Why? I mean, I get all the media telling us nerds weren’t exactly the coolest guys, but why care now?”

“Because society still plays off of that mindset. And we’re twenty-one. We just sang the damn *Pokémon* theme song. People are gonna look at us in ten years the same way they look at *My Little Pony*<sup>14</sup> guys.”

“Bronies,”<sup>15</sup> I clarify. He has a point.

“Damn Bronies. My dad would disown me if I became a Brony.”

I’ve met Hogan’s father and, while said for exaggerated effect, there’s a small kernel of truth in his statement. There’s an incredibly heavy opposition and animosity towards the uncomfortably large population of older male following of a cartoon meant for girls.

Instead of being ourselves, or embracing an identity which outwardly shows our likes and dislikes, we adapt, and in turn conceal elements of ourselves. There’s a pressure from peers and society to do so, counter to deviance which true, honest nerds ignore (something which I have to respect, as they

13 Mewtwo was the villain of the first *Pokémon* movie and the strongest Pokémon in the game. He is the first and only man-made Pokémon, stronger than all others and much more intelligent than his human creators.

14 An animated show for kids (?) about several female horses. Think *CareBears* (if you remember that show growing up) and apply horses.

15 The widely accepted nickname for the surprisingly large male fandom who watch *My Little Pony*. They have Bronycon, which is a convention for the show and where all these older men meet up to celebrate their love of the show with likeminded fans. Here’s one deviant culture that I don’t think I’ll ever understand, but I wouldn’t be surprised if the whole event was tainted with some sick undertone of sexual fetishes about cartoons/horses/cartoon horses/etc. Chastise me for judging if you will.

were probably more secure in themselves and identity than many of the individuals going through this change).

This isn't to say that Hogan, or other closet nerds like him, has some major identity crisis and bottled up issues in need of dealing with. Although I'm sure if anyone were to dig deep enough into someone else's psyche they may find insecurities. But it certainly places him in his own secret subculture, socially accepted by both hardcore nerds and "the average folk", who may have nerdy elements they've subdued or concealed themselves. And for clarification, he's not John Doe who happens to know about some superhero, or watches *Dr. Who*.<sup>16</sup> A closet nerd is verified more through their versatility and knowledge of nerd culture, as opposed to a nerdy guilty pleasure of one kind or another which technically places you within that deviant subculture, i.e. not all adult *Pokémon* fans are necessarily deemed closet nerds.<sup>17</sup> You could say we have a stricter scrutiny test. While we aren't your average Joe's and Jane's, we simultaneously try to avoid the socially awkward stereotypes<sup>18</sup> seen in movies or shows like *The Big Bang Theory*.

Hogan crosses his fingers at a red light. He rests his exposed forearms against the steering wheel and stretches his back with a quick sideglance in my direction. The look is meant to be discreet, as I appear to be knee deep in verbiage and literary strain. Being a good four inches taller, I naturally sit higher in my seat. Hogan, forever cursing his family's genetic pool, sits up as high as possible and puffs out his chest, like a small bulldog surrounded by labs and great danes. Hogan's compensation for his size can be seen through multiple facets. The big car, with a customized lift, is a physical display of his insecurity. His love of cars and automobiles could potentially be an "out" to his nerdiness; one to widen his cultural and social clout. And/or his masculinity, to attract a potential mate or secure his own sexuality.

The subliminal and overt gestures of masculinity throughout Hogan's character and personal affections suggest an equally old adage of Southern lifestyle in a predominantly white conservative-male dominant society. This is also reflected through the media he consumes, nerdy or otherwise. This isn't to imply that Hogan is a racist, or sexist, or homophobic, or actively reinforces any semblance of those things, however I'm noticing an active shift in how Hogan portrays himself and what he says to me during the ride. Which, honestly is both difficult and easy as his friend. I'm aware of his history, his patterns and mannerisms, and yet in interviewing such treaded territory I am perhaps overly informal with my subject.

"Do you think you're less likely to find a girlfriend because of the shit we like?" The question is much more direct.

"No."

"Really? You're not worried at all what they might think?"

16 A popular British science fiction television show which has been around for over fifty years. Time travel, paradoxes, aliens, and plot devices galore, all conveniently wrapped in a formulaic 45 minute package.

17 Including but not limited to: The Tolkien books, movies, and lore; *Star Wars*; *Star Trek*; Superheroes, both DC and Marvel; anime (various); manga (various); and video games (various).

18 There's an episode of the *BBT* which opens with the group sitting on the couch and playing video games. Nothing else is happening, no dialogue being said, and the laugh track goes off a few times as the seconds tick by. At first, I didn't get it. I was looking for the joke. What dawned on me, was that it was "funny" that they were all huddled around the TV playing video games in silence. This elicited a total of four to five laugh tracks.

“Is this because of Ellen?”<sup>19</sup>

“Sort of. I have to ask because I think of how I approach girls and I realize that I don’t let on all the nerdy elements of my personality and interests if I can help it. I got her to like me before she knew all of that and then slowly brought her into the fold. Like pulling back the curtain on a magic trick.”

“No offense, bud, but you kinda look like a nerd.” Hogan smiles in halfjest.

“Ha. Ha. No, but seriously.”

“Seriously, if they don’t like me for who I am, then who needs ‘em, right? It’s not like I would’ve been happy with that person then anyway.”

I’m being fed a line here and I know it. In the past Hogan only mentions his nerdy interests if he’s in likeminded company, or if they become relevant in a situation. More often than not, he’d bury those elements deep while he makes his strongest first impression possible. Its the same reason he dresses so well and slicks his hair and trims his beard (other than good hygiene) instead of sporting a Transformers shirt and jeans to class.

“Then why haven’t you had a girlfriend since high school?”<sup>20</sup>

“I don’t know, just haven’t found the right person I guess.”

“But not even a date?”<sup>21</sup>

Hogan shrugs. “I mean I could if I wanted to, I just don’t want to waste my time.”

“Would ‘the right person’ be someone who liked all your interests?”

“Pretty sure that someone doesn’t exist.” He laughs off the line of questioning.

“But there is a guarded nature about it,” I say, the statement open-ended like a question. “About what?”

“What we like and our opinions of it.”

“Oh, of course.”

What I’ve then found, between Hogan and myself, is a layer of mistrust. An outwards hostility towards others we either allow to be close to us or attempt to pull into the fold. A false sense of judgement which may just be a psychological barricade closet nerds establish that prevents them from sharing this “secret side” with others. Or allowing themselves to be close with another person until they’re almost guaranteed they won’t be judged.

This time Hogan breaks the silence. “I kind of hate it sometimes.”

“What?”

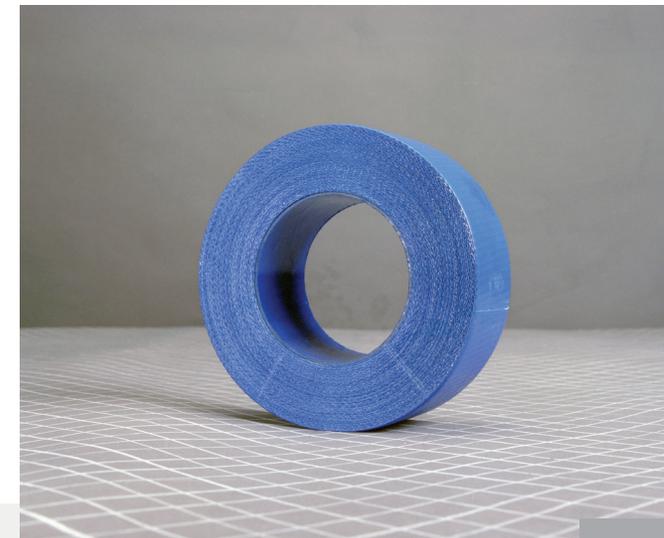
“Knowing all this stuff. I mean it’s cool to a degree but it’s not like it’s another language or something academic. In a real world situation I can’t use that knowledge. Like if I’m talking to an employer or boss or anything, it’s worthless.”

And he has a point. Unless that business manager or internship coordinator is also a closet nerd

19 Ellen is my girlfriend and is in no way, shape or form into nerdy things, a nerd, or entirely aware of all nerd culture. God knows how we’re still together, or how we even got together in the first place. But somehow we work, for some unknown reason. I’ve previously expressed the fear to Hogan that eventually I will cross a line with my level of nerdiness and alienate Ellen.

20 A breakup which I have been explicitly asked not to relay in detail, but am doing so anyway. Long story short, she cheated on him after three years with the high school jock and in a small graduating class, most sided with her decision.

21 I don’t want to imply that Hogan is shy, or incapable here, but there’s always restraint and hesitation when there’s an opportunity to meet someone.



22 1984 *Transformers* universal greeting, which is used as the BIGGEST plot device in history to get the protagonist out of impending doom, which also acts as a plot device in ending this piece! Badumtsss.

23 Coining this term as you read this. Legal drafts have been drawn. You saw it here first.

24 A sexy vehicle from the 80s which really isn't the best car or fun to drive, but has been immortalized through pop culture.

25 *Back to the Future* reference, particularly the first one in which the DeLorean is powered via plutonium. In the sequel, it's fueled by bioorganic material, like compost, and the third... well let's not talk about the third movie.

beneath their shirt and tie. But how to draw out that hidden side to someone? Well with Hogan, it's all about the references. Drop a line to a few well known franchises, and akin to a German Pinscher, his ears perk up and you've captured his attention. Or, if you'd like, you could say the universal greeting, as how he and I met and cemented our friendship: "BAH WEEP GRA NA WEEP NINNY BONG!"<sup>22</sup>

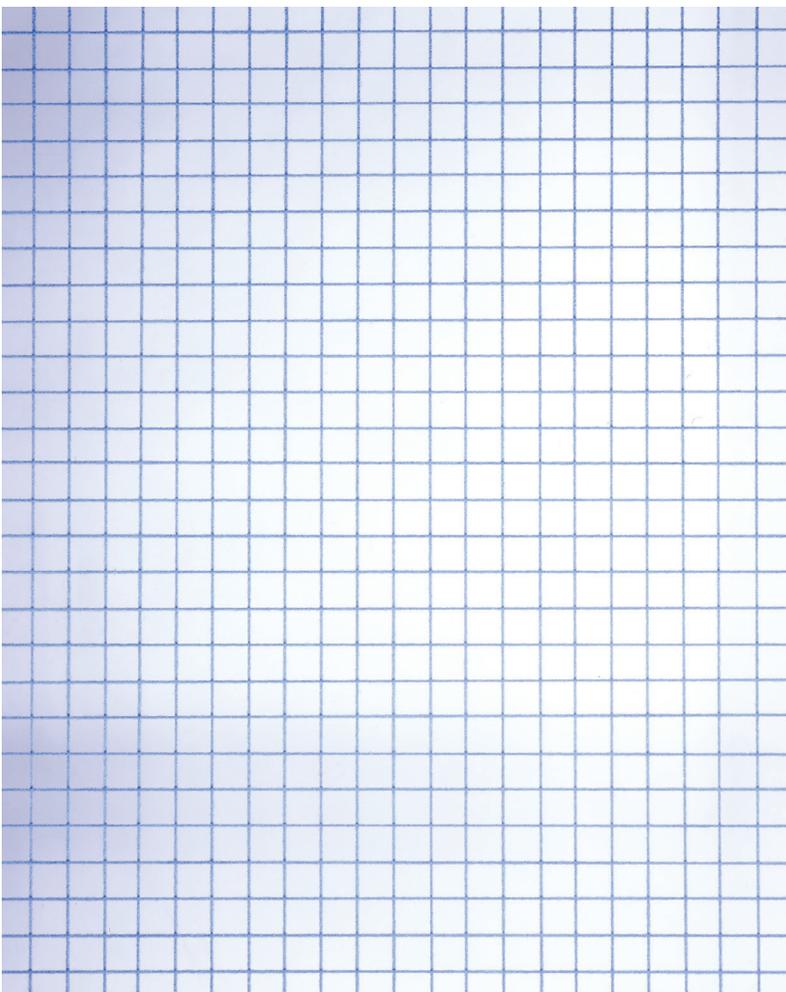
## Postscript

There's so much more I could have said in this piece. About Hogan. About myself. About closet nerds and pop culture in general. I think, however, that the piece does its job as a profile on Hogan. Reigning it in and knowing when to stop; keeping the focus on my subject though surrounded by material I could go on for days about. This isn't to say it is a rousing success, but definitely a small victory in the learning process of Creative Non Fiction.

I noticed, more so in writing this than perhaps with any other work I've written, the amount of juggling required to balance out a piece as it stretches and grows. Managing voice, flow, pacing, and information almost completely overwhelmed me. Without a doubt, some elements get dropped, unintentionally or intentionally, throughout the piece. It's the idea that with every door you open, another door somewhere else closes. Some of these doors were left closed out of respect, like withholding information on Hogan's high school relationship, and his relationship with his family.

It's at this time I'd like to thank Hogan for being so gracious in letting me use him as my subject. I didn't realize the predicament that I was placing myself in by changing roles between his best friend and interviewer. I wasn't able to ask the questions I pondered as a writer, which would benefit my piece, for fear of jeopardizing or harming our friendship in some way. Through confronting and struggling with this process I've realized that it is simultaneously easy and difficult to manage information. Easy to share, difficult to withhold.

I wanted to write about a female closet nerd, but did not find one in time for this piece's publication. Perhaps in a second edition or future revision, I will include a closet nerdette<sup>23</sup> to explore new perspectives. I would love to create a massive lyric essay, with multiple interpretations of life as a closet nerd, communicated through interviews similar to the one with Hogan. Perhaps in the future, fellow nerds. All I need is a DeLorean<sup>24</sup> and some plutonium.<sup>25</sup>



Danny Goodwin  
*Graph Paper Prototype*  
2014



Danny Goodwin, *Suburban Anthropocene Landscape (Grid #2 With Log Decoy)*, 2013

# NAIVE REALISM

*Words by Jeremy Hoeveraar*

Another day less  
rigorous. But the  
rigor is in the day,  
building it, and dispersing  
strategy, technique  
without intent.

Thinking the day  
as the exterior of trees,  
as seeing anything  
suddenly renders  
that thing an exterior  
and exteriors all  
the way down.

Movement is pointing,  
shaded by an obscurity  
in perspective. Time  
breaks like this:  
an old Volvo wrenched up  
onto the bed of a tow truck,  
sound of heavy chains,  
creaking tires, a haze  
of voices, the corner  
of a song. We don't watch  
the car while it's towed away,  
recedes from our future—

not that it would be  
too emotional, but that  
we would want it to be,  
a hoped-for rigor  
resonant in our responses  
to the chime of a shift  
in our shared dream  
of access or mobility.  
It's exactly access  
and mobility we think  
rigor, our own, not the day's—  
but to share it with the day!—  
would provide. Possibly  
time's not broken at all  
by such things, but stitched,  
senseless except where  
one can find the seams—  
allows for a feeling  
of diameter, comfortable  
with edges, like how  
the self extends for  
600 feet in all directions.  
Most people feel smaller  
than that, prescriptions  
being what they are

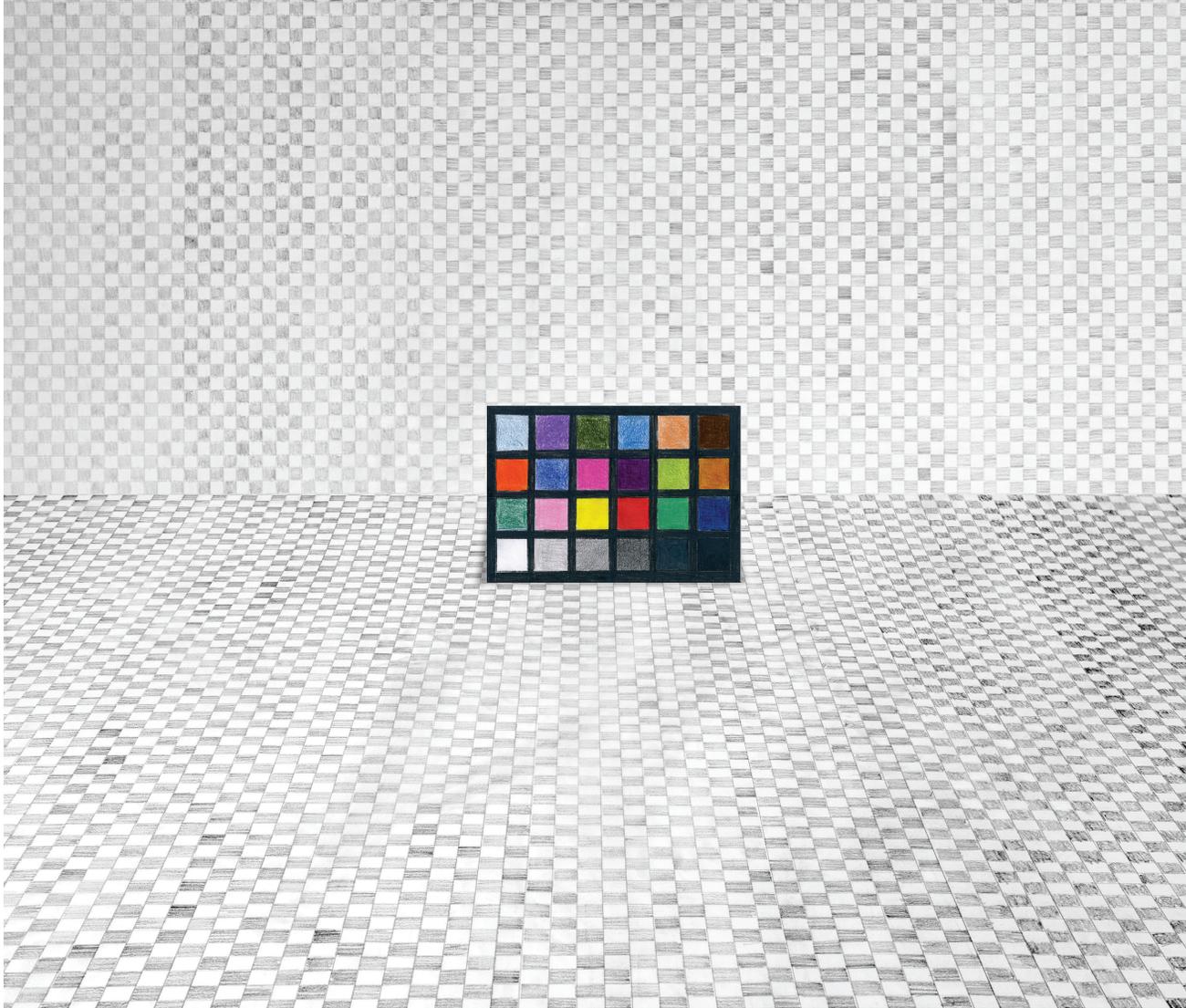
# TEMPORARY REALISM

*Words by Jeremy Hoevenaar*

things moving that's an accounting a system or symbol  
pick one follow its sounding bent around the corner  
of a possible future things moving i appear  
to know that situations are likely the ability to respond  
is unconfirmed and not given the one place any stretch  
is possible so why limit it the most fickle restrictions  
the freedom lights up and out description never stops  
running me over with gentle constancy keeping the address  
simple hitting the wall infinitely enough to pass through  
convenience and into the appropriate angle beautiful truth  
sifting through a backlog of indications embedded predictions  
things moving freedom is description uninscribed  
prosthetic flicker and every chosen word a deletion  
fundamentally partnered resonant holy boredom  
of reflection an altar in the beer an altar in the thrift store  
radio an altar in the sound of dishes being washed  
in an adjacent room holy mystery of adjacency  
ascendent shift rise like a wave to scatter and repair  
does system mean we know what we're doing  
or a description fettered to notation the triangle inherent  
to speech and back having altered nothing  
no trace of the swipe or display does symbol mean  
icon i can unfold when touched and rupture  
into a list or i've failed to be simultaneous  
enough to expand collapse back into the storage you are  
node enough to know it everything points forever  
things moving swarm of filters holy filtration  
stammering the symbol for stammering it works this way



Danny Goodwin, *Suburban Anthropocene Landscape (Grid #5)*, 2013



Danny Goodwin  
*Invisible Landscape with Color Checker*  
2015

The taste of iron runs down the back of your throat. You try to open your eyes, but the right one sticks shut in protest, throbbing at 120 beats per minute. Your ears detect howling in the distance, the one people always warned you about. The one you were never meant to hear. It wasn't supposed to end this way. The blood pools around your face, dripping off the tip of your nose. The sod feels damp and cold on your cheek as you lay in the limited space of the twisted metal snake that used to be your Chevy. You didn't mean to feel the throbbing of your bones or the shards of glass in your skin. You wanted it to be instant. Peaceful. The world around you seems to disappear from the outside in, darkness beginning in your peripherals and consuming your entire being.

108 beats per minute.

The horizontal door rips off the edge of the car, sending a light made of razor blades into your eyes. You involuntarily wince backwards, your head knocking into the ground. You slit your eyes as they slowly adjust to the light. People holler from near and far, inaudible screeching commands and exclamations. The surrounding voices seem faint. The sirens grow louder, but muffled, like your ears are full of cotton. Yelling, sirens, sirens, whispering, screaming, sirens. Why won't they stop talking? Your eye continues to throb.

87 beats per minute.

Bony fingers wrap around your bicep, pulling you in directions that feel painfully unnatural. You scream in their general direction, but you only hear a faint whimper stumbling out of your mouth. You need them to help you. You don't want to die anymore. Your throat seizes as you hold back the sobs, seeing the disappointment in his eyes as he picks up the phone. You were supposed to be stronger for him. Add this to your list of broken promises. You feel your body rising up into the air, your arm extracting from its socket. Your eyes contest your will to see, blinded by a bright yellow ball of light above you. Your extremities hang limp, as the energy drains from your muscles, leaving them chilled and tingling. The corners of the metal framework slam into your legs, sending piercing agony throughout your thighs and into your knees as they pull you out of the car.

68 beats per minute.

Several more hands grab onto your limbs, allowing your body to hover in the damp air. You push your legs against the ground, but your body is lifeless, abandoning your mind and soul. A soft, malleable surface presses against your back as they lay you down on what you think is a gurney. Your eyes won't open, can't open. Your mind objects as every part of your body betrays its commands. He always asked you if you were okay. You smiled, the grin masking your pain as you assured him of your strength. The new blood stains broadcast the pain you worked too hard to hide. They're going to know now that you're a phony. Your eyes burn as tears under your eyelids. No one is asking you if you're okay.

33 beats per minute.

The swift movement of the gurney sends agony through your bones, all of which feel as though they have shattered underneath your skin. Your body jerks in one direction in an attempt to stay in place as the rest of the world moves underneath you. The gurney begins to vibrate, the constant bumps shaking the pieces of bone around inside your legs. Dew coats your lungs. Or is it blood? The sirens wail loudly from above, making the ringing in your ears all the more intense. The heaviness in your chest makes your breaths far more shallow.

18 beats per minute.

They won't even talk to you. They won't know who to call. The cloth below you begins to feel wet as warmth spreads along the skin on your back. The warm sheets can't begin to combat the ice in your veins. The world is in reverse: warm on the outside, cold on the inside. Life has betrayed you from the beginning. Why would they be any different at the end? You are right there. You scream to them, but nothing comes out. This was supposed to be different. You were supposed to be gone and that would be that. You feel the paramedics place a plastic mask over your nose and mouth. You don't understand why they're worried about your breathing when your body is running out of blood. Your mind loses means as the world around you gains its meaning. Your veins run cold.

0 beats per minute.

# RECOVERY

Words by Hannah Corwin

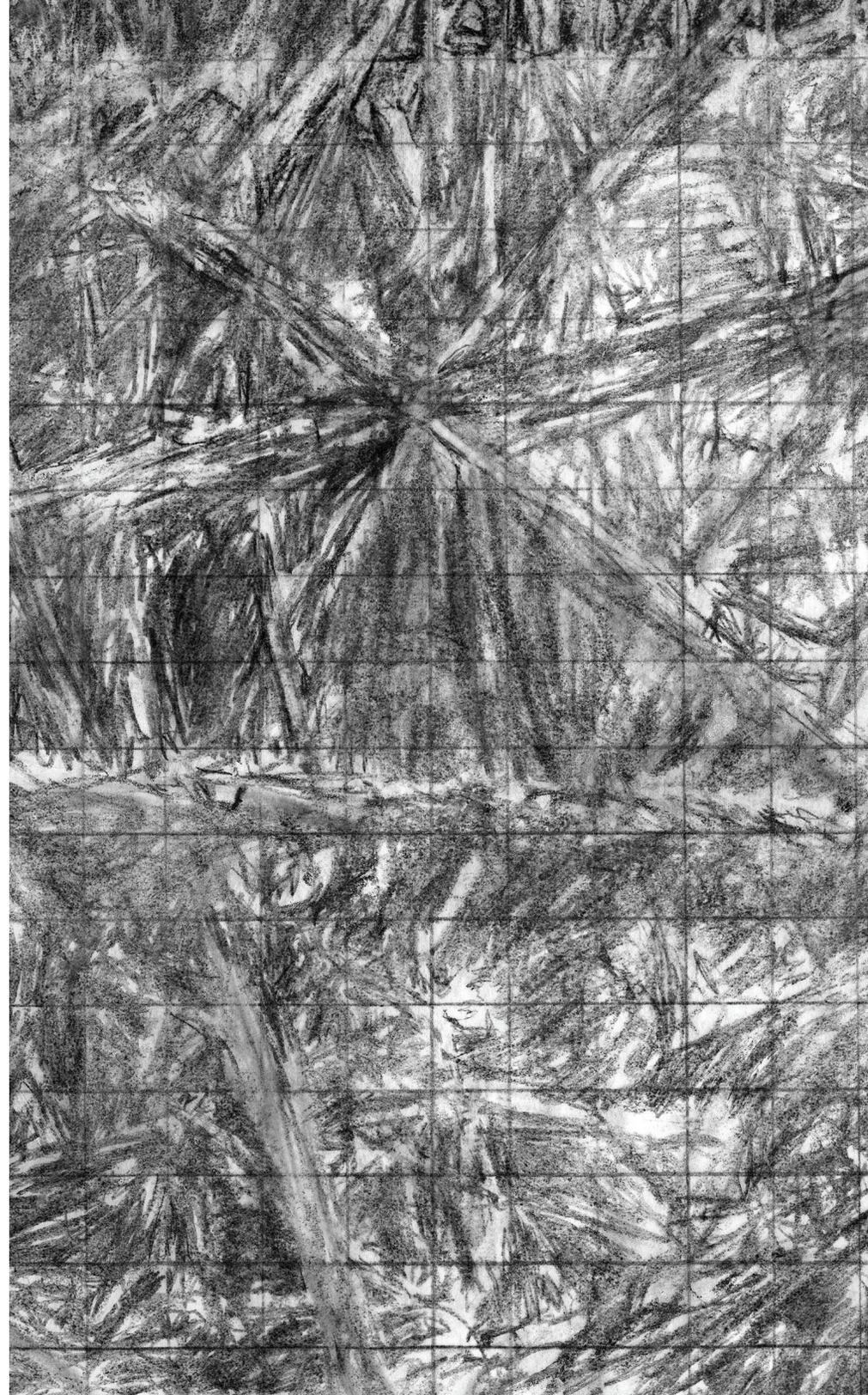
The recipe for dinner sits open on my laptop, the ingredients spread out around me. I can see my screen start to go dark, so I slap the space bar. A woman's soft voice starts to come from the speakers. I jerk, my head snapping up. I slam my laptop shut, I can't breathe.

My hands start shaking so bad I can't keep a grip on the knife in my hand. It clatters to the floor, green pepper seeds rolling everywhere. I can't breathe, I feel like I'm about to break apart. I hit the floor, back pressed against the cabinets, rocking. I hear the click of nails on the floor and a small whine. A gray dog sticks her head around the corner, big brown eyes focused on me. She whines again and comes over to me, nudging me. She keeps at it till I stand up and follow her into the bathroom.

I start running the water for my bath as Kellina goes and gets my medicine. She watches me carefully as I swallow down the pills and strip, crawling into the hot water. She curls up on the floor, her nose under the one hand I leave dangling out of the water as the memories wash over me.

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Danny Goodwin  
*Drawing for Suburban  
Anthropocene Landscape*  
2013





*I sat on the couch with her, she's not moving, stock still with shock. I told her I'm leaving; I'm breaking up with her. I don't love her anymore. "I'm sorry, Jen. I know you're hurting, but it isn't the same anymore and you know it." She turned her head to face me, and started kissing me. I pulled back, eyes wide as I practically screamed, "What the hell are you doing?" "Break up sex," she said, and started kissing me again, pulling at my belt. "No, Jen. I don't want this. This isn't right. Stop, please." She punched me, hard, on the temple. My head snapped back and hit the arm of the sofa. By the time the stars cleared from my eyes, my pants were off and she was sucking on me to get me hard.*

---

I jerk in the water, tears slipping down my face, the shaking in my hands rippling the water. Kellina paws at me slightly, licking my hand. I pull the plug from the tub, wrap a towel around my waist, and crawl into bed, Kellina following me. Her body against mine, solid and warm and comforting. Sometimes she's the only reason I can sleep at night. My eyes droop as the medicine kicks in, my hands stop shaking, and my heart rate slows. My exhaustion after the panic is total, and I fall asleep almost instantly, my hand resting on soft, gray fur.

---

*She got me hard, and when she did, she smiled vindictively up at me. "Jen, stop," I said weakly, my head spinning. She didn't respond, just pulled her skirt up and her underwear off, pulling my dick inside of her. "Jen, please," I said, this time trying to push her off me, her only response was to grab my hair and knock my head against the armrest again. The ringing in my ears intensified as she started to ride me. I moaned in pain, as she came for the first time, whispering "you bastard" under her breath.*

---

Kellina wakes me up, pawing at me. I sit up gasping. She whines as I wrap my arms around her and stick my face in her fur, tears leaking from my eyes. I tilt my head to the side; eyeing the journal my therapist has me keep. I make my way over to the desk, clutching the towel around my waist, the blank pages staring at me, waiting. I set the pen to the paper and write about tonight, everything that happened, possible triggers, everything. And as always, at the end, I write about the night that Jen hurt me. My therapist says by going through the “incident” repeatedly, in a controlled environment, will help take the fear out of it. I think she’s insane.

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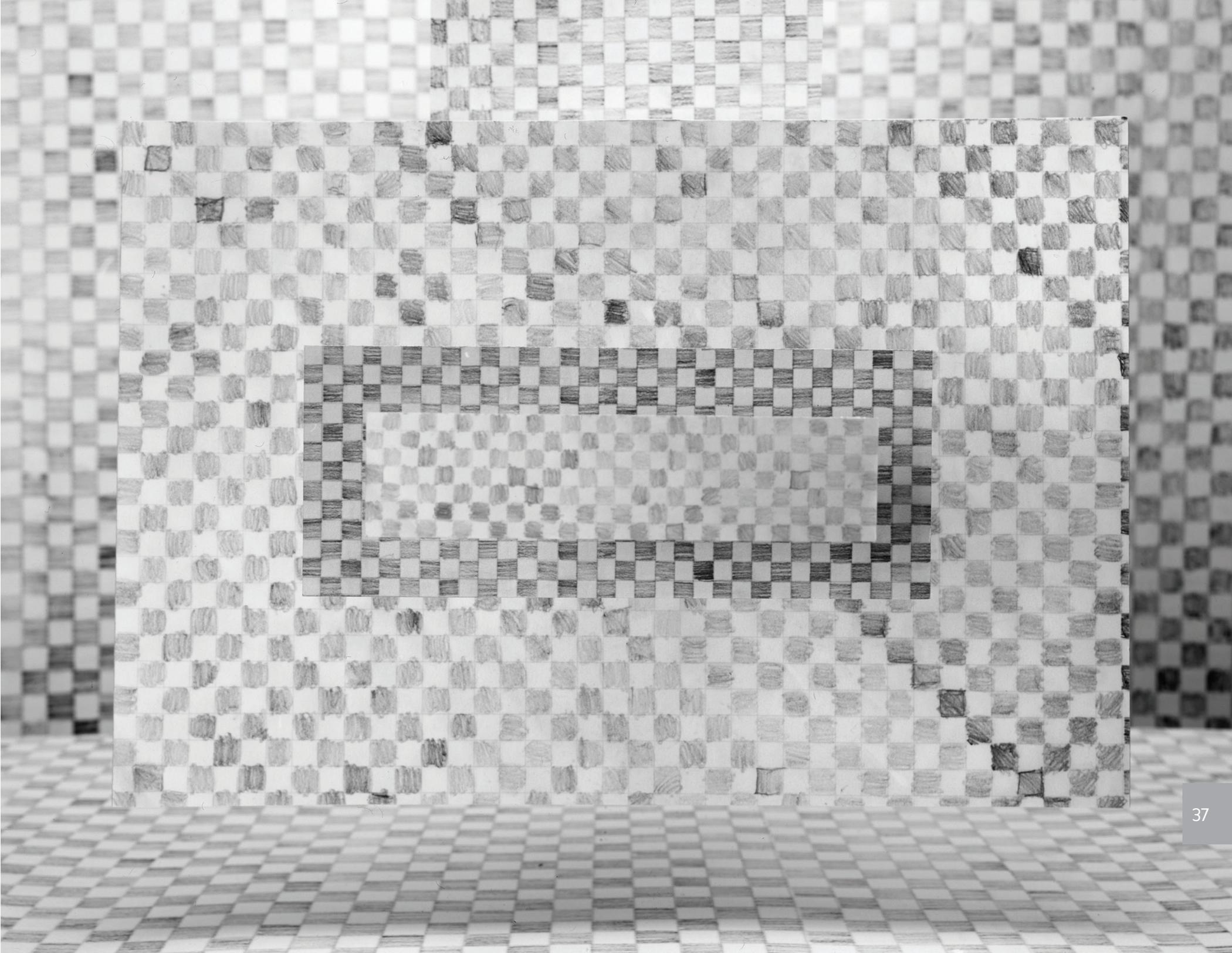
*She kept going, I hated it. Every time I protested, she hit me. So I just stopped, I let her do what she wanted. I felt so dirty. But her own pleasure wasn't what she wanted, she wanted me to come, and she was relentless, grinding down hard on me, changing her pace, kissing the place where my neck met my shoulder, her tongue flicking out. Eventually, I felt the pressure building in my cock. I tried one more time, "Jen, please, stop this now." She got this look on her face, "You're about to cum, aren't you, you bastard." She started going faster and faster, until I came, and she laughed. "I always knew you wanted me, you bastard."*

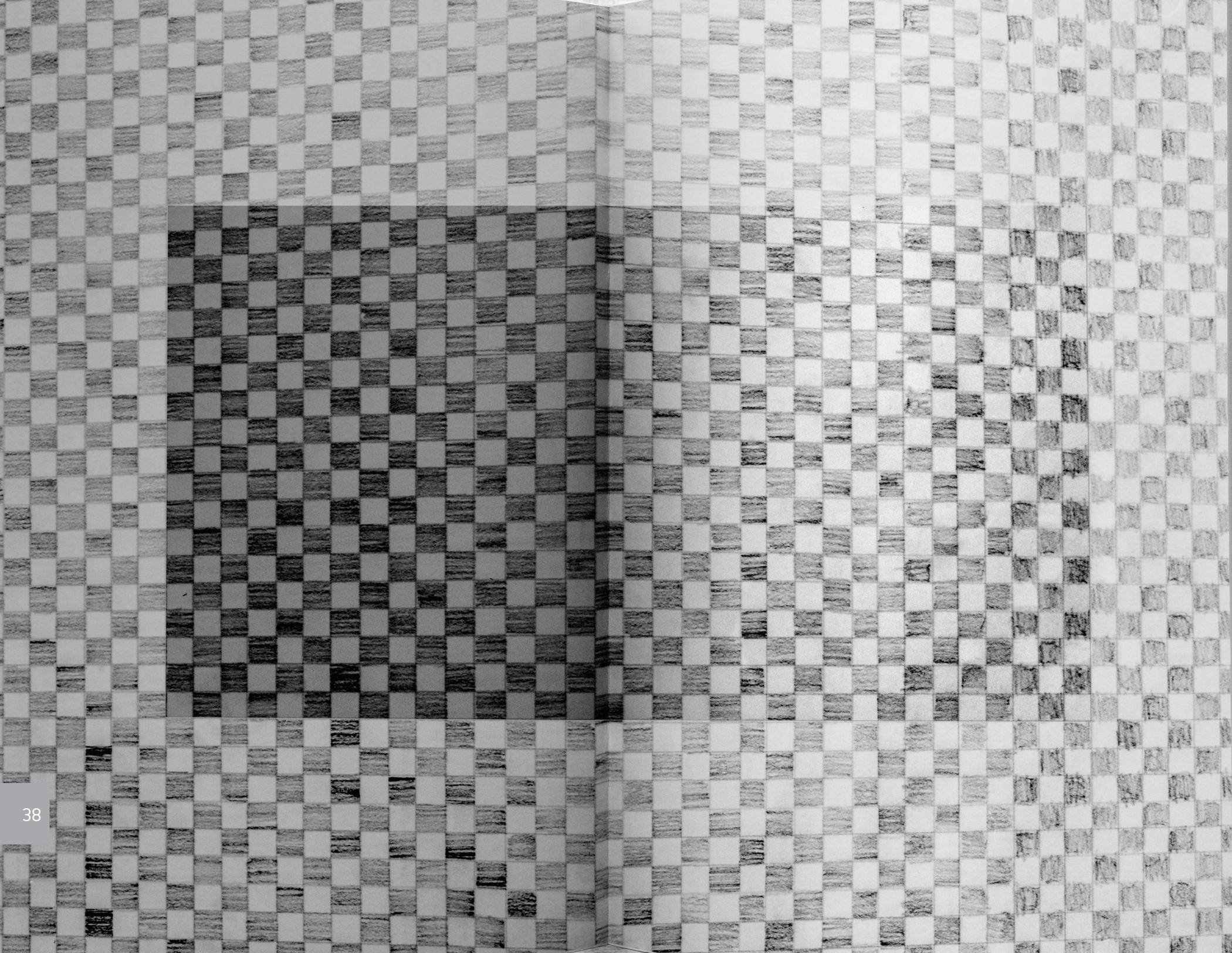
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I hold my head in my hands, staring at the words I've written. I keep trying to tell myself it wasn't my fault, it wasn't my fault, but a part of me whispers it was. What kind of man lets himself get raped? Why didn't I stop her? Why would she do this to me? Would this have happened if I hadn't broken up with her in her home?

These past six months have been hell. I can't even sit through lectures anymore without panicking whenever a woman sits next to me. I've started bringing Kellina with me, had to get special permission, but she's the only reason I can leave my house some days. I wonder, if I told someone besides my therapist, would it help. But the police laughed me out of the station, saying it was a he said, she said case and that they bet I wanted it anyway.

God, I don't know how I can keep living like this, in fear, everyday. I flinch at loud noises, when my eyes scan the crowds for danger, my hands shake at work and school, I wake up screaming in the middle of the night. I hope to god this ends soon, I can't keep living like this. I can't. This isn't living.





# SECRETS

*Words by Madeline Kline*

In the fall of 2014, my freshman year of college, I was sexually assaulted. Most of the trauma has been blocked out, and those memories are trapped somewhere in my head that I will never be able to uncover (which might be for the best). My assaulter was someone I saw as a friend, but every time he made advances or tried to come on to me, I politely said no and walked away. I was drunk on Halloween when he took advantage of me, and held me back as I tried to escape. My wrists and forearms were covered in fingertip-shaped bruises from him gripping me and holding me down. I do not remember much of what happened that night; only that I asked him not to touch me, and that I woke up naked in his bed at seven the next morning. He didn't take my virginity, but he took my innocence. He took my ability to see people as inherently kind and believe that boys had my best interests in mind. After two weeks of trying to ignore the fear and pain that I felt in silence, I went to the opposite end of the spectrum and tried so hard to remember what happened. It felt like there was a

Danny Goodwin  
*Invisible Landscape #6*  
2016

tornado twisting violently inside my head, and I had no control. I was, and still am, trying constantly to both forget and remember, and in late November of 2014, I finally let it out. I told my closest friends, one of whom suggested I speak to a professional. I went to three counseling sessions and had two meetings with the Office of Student Life to ensure I would not be in class with my assaulter. After that, I did not speak of it again.

Everything should have been better. I had taken everyone's advice, I saw the counselors and notified the school. I thought that my life would go back to the way it was before, but the tornado kept whirling. I finished the semester, and to those around me I probably looked fine. I was trying my best to look as normal as possible, and even to my closest friends, it probably seemed as though I had moved on. Inside, I was depressed and anxious. I still was afraid to walk outside, and I was terrified of elevators. Every door I went through, I pictured him standing on the other side. I told myself that winter break would be good for me, but the fear followed me home to Cincinnati, hundreds of miles away from him. I was having nightmares, and I was still on edge everywhere I went.

The second semester of my freshman year is when I began trying to solve my problem internally. I felt like in order to make the pain of that one particular sexual experience go away, all I could do was have more sexual experiences. Looking back, I realize that covering up the fact that I was sexually assaulted only exposed me to more opportunities to be violated. At the time, however, these cheap and fleeting nights made me feel like I was going to be

okay—like I wasn't the ugly, damaged girl I thought myself to be and I temporarily felt like I regained power over my own body. As I continued to romanticize these rendezvous, my self-esteem was high off emotions that I know in reality were not there. I wasn't addicted to sex; I was addicted to the feeling of being wanted, and that addiction drove me to make decisions that I know in my heart were unhealthy. My series of one-night stands were silly and stupid, and even though every walk of shame made me feel worse, I still needed more. I went out every night of the weekend wondering whose room I would be in at 2am. It felt great, and then really bad, and then I wanted more.

That horrible boy never went away. With every achievement, I thought to myself, "Oh I wish he could see me now," and with every downfall, I would think "If only he knew that he did this to me." It was exhausting. Life was exhausting.

In the summer of 2015, I broke down and told my mother, who was, and still is, endlessly supportive of me. I also told my doctor at home, who gave me the advice to be loud and brave. She told me that the best thing I could do for both myself and others going through the life-changing pain that sexual assault creates, was speak out and tell my story. Trying to keep my assault a secret is what caused that tornado to spiral out of control, and by talking about what happened I could allow myself to be strong about it. Secrets are vulnerable. That's not to say all secrets are necessarily bad, but sometimes in order to be strong, you have to expose your weakness.

Words by  
Jessie Giaquinto

# Thumb It

Feeling blue?  
It's alright!  
Lots of people do.

Keep in the clear  
Glass on top  
Unruffled no feathers  
Glazed no donut  
Fired—keep your job though

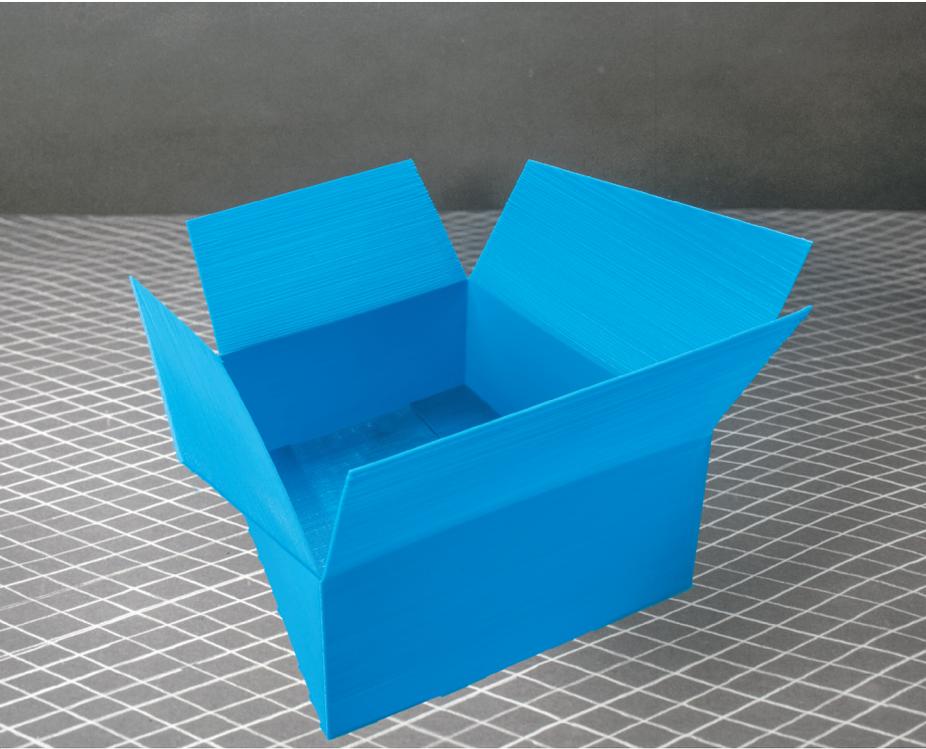
Skin blackened and boiled?  
We have a solution!  
Slap this lotion on  
In circular motions  
Never-ending

Smooth sloping along  
Tongue sluggish and clumsy  
Engine turn over  
A tinny I'm fine  
Cracking broken record

You've made it!



Danny Goodwin  
3-D Screwdriver Prototype  
2015



Danny Goodwin  
*3D Cardboard Box Prototype #2*  
2016

*Words by*  
Jessie Giaquinto

# Roleplay

sex with you girl role  
your eyes make contact with 3-2-1 girl  
girl, mouth open required line girl

laughing fun fun girl role play girl girl  
girl who will might do does did drugs girl  
cool hip cool girl girl mystery girl girl

girl girl girl nice name hair sheening shining always girl girl girl  
smiling laughing coming up to meet you happy happy girl to be here girl  
blowjobs girl girl naked girl girl anal girl girl girl

typecast girl girl  
expect the expected, girl  
get excited,  
girl



Danny Goodwin  
*Staplegun*

# RUN

*Words by Sergio Guillen*

Here I am, and you are not,  
And the publicity distracts me.  
Between schedules and the traffic  
I work and I think about you.  
Between the door and the telephone  
Your photo will speak to me.

The feeling that I am not myself,  
That there is something more when you look at me.  
    The impression that time vanishes.  
    How you complete me,

How you set me free.

I learned to take out seconds from time  
because all the time I spent near you  
    Left its thread,  
    Woven in me.

I believe waves are made of magic and not of salty water.  
I believe everything in you and you give me nothing.  
Come a little bit closer,  
Don't be afraid of the truth.

When you say I feel, I feel that you are everything.  
When you say life, I'll be with you.  
You take my hand and I cry on the inside.  
Although it's a lie, you make me feel alive.  
Although the air is false, I feel I'm breathing.  
You lie so well.

You opened a window, awakening a dream.  
Blinding my reasoning, I held onto hope.  
Feeling so foreign to your warmth,  
I tasted the apple for love.

And the angels will return,  
To wake up with your coffee.  
I want my heart to forget you.  
I want to be like you,  
I want to be the strong one.

So run like always, not looking back  
    You've done it before and the truth is that I don't care.  
        You've done it before and the truth is that I don't care.  
            You've done it before and in the end, I don't care.

# INTO THE STORM

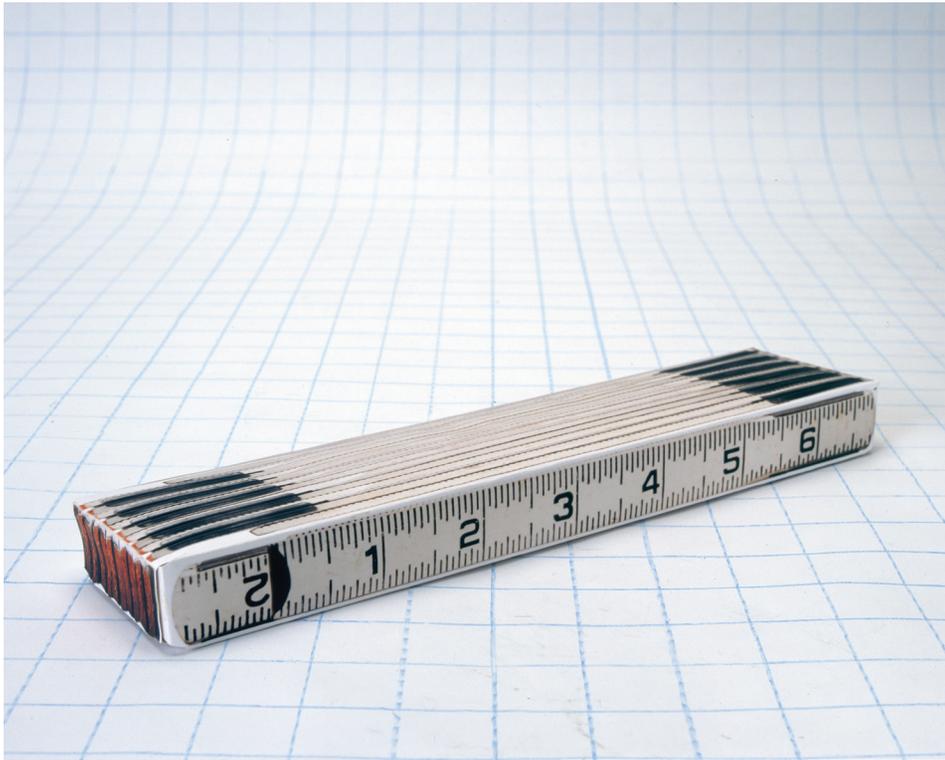
*Words by Sergio Guillen*

My friends and I were out the same old bar when the storm caught us. I arrived early, as usual, and asked Mary for a drink. Everyone was whispering as if the storm was going to hear them. You could still hear the sound of the wind running through the roof. After a while though, people were talking back in their normal voices. It appeared as if a storm was already over. When I turned around, I saw this distinctive dress color. It was popping out from everybody in the room. She looked at me for two seconds then turned around. I could tell by her smile that she was curious. I finally got the courage and went to ask her if she would move closer to us, where the windows were far away and she would be safer. Mary's husband, Mark, opened the doors and went outside to check that everything was okay. It appeared as if everything was fine. You couldn't hear any wind now. But then out of nowhere he screamed, "There's a tornado coming! It's coming right to us! Seek shelter!"

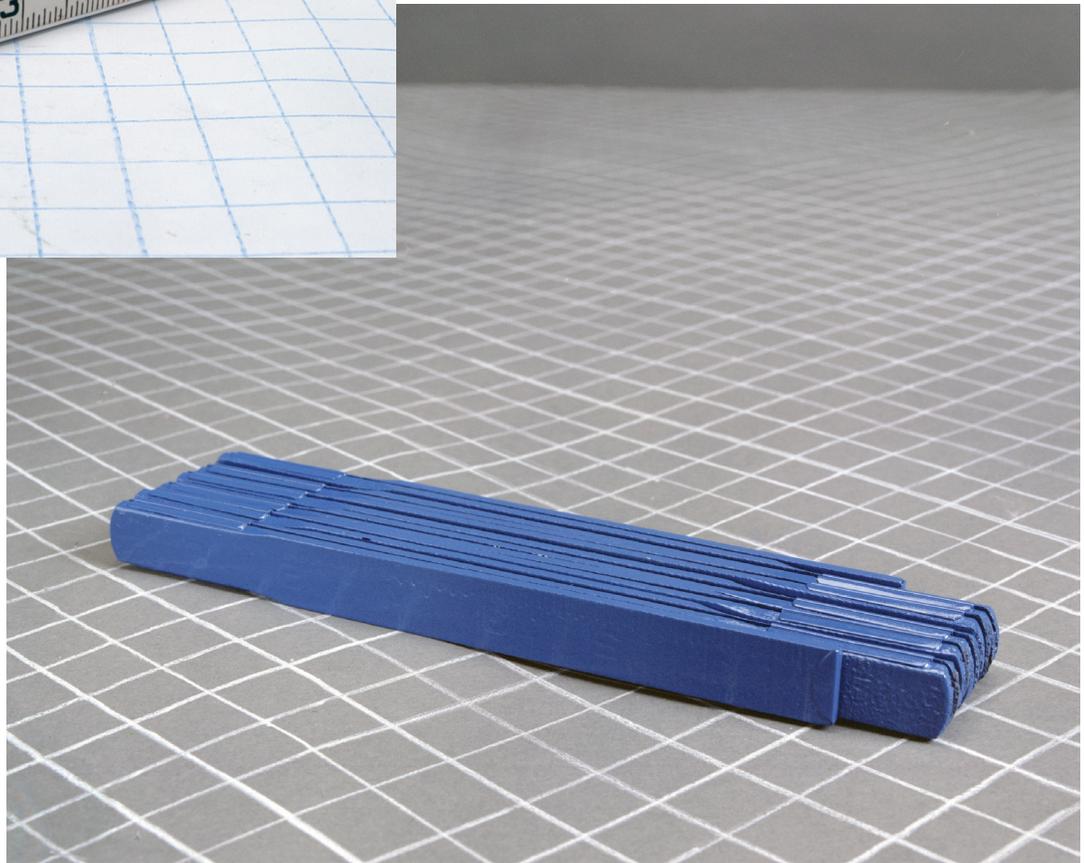
For a moment, I thought this was a prank, but then I thought that Mark wasn't that type of guy. When I heard his words, I was in shock. At the same time, at the other side of the room, a piece of wood as long as a baseball bat passed right beside me, with such velocity that I barely had any time to see it. Everyone was running to a particular brown door, thankfully this bar had a basement. Like I said, it was a very old bar. The extreme winds broke a window, then a second one and a third one. As I was making my way to the door, a piece of glass flew into my leg. I couldn't distinguish anybody from the chaos. The only thing that I saw was the red dress. When I finally reached the front door of the basement, I could see she was not inside. I quickly decided that I was going back to get her but then somebody pulled my shirt and shut the door. A fight broke because I knew I could've saved her.

After what seemed an eternity, we burst out the door, and it surprised me to see the storm had passed; moreso that not a drop of water lay in the street full of taxi drivers. After we got out of the basement, I was desperately looking for her. I could see something moving below the remains of the bar. To my surprise, she was still alive. She was unconscious, so we took her to the hospital and after a day, I never got to see her again. Everything around was a mess.

I heard the following year from one of my friends that she died in a car crash, drunk, during a season that made the papers for such pointless catastrophes.



Danny Goodwin  
*Ruler*



Danny Goodwin  
*Ruler Decoy 2*

*AN  
OUTWASHED  
NEON  
SKY*

*Words by Douglas Rothschild*

*With Truk Darling*

I think I will compromise & dilute  
the icy blue of my impulsivity with  
a Franciscan Kryptonite that can  
change birds. I will now clarify my  
position on several issues, while  
carefully & thoroughly mollifying  
the hot Argon of my oily, aqueous  
heart. I will let it continue to grow  
tiresome. I will leaven it with Fluorine.  
in the dye, in the wool, in the ease  
with which we turn our backs, I have  
had it so easy; I have become as an-  
other. Yet, to turn back, as Xenophon  
in his 'Anabasis', as a leaf falling might;  
revolving, spinning, spiraling down-  
wards, towards the earth, wind swept,  
unkempt, how I might accomplish this

with ease. How I might, without losing  
strength, examine the glowing tube you  
hold in your hand. That is my goal, to  
be as subtle as the little bee, alighting  
upon a flower, living instead of being.  
Who among us would cast the first  
cold stone? Who among us could live  
their lives so intensely, that the shine  
from the Radon Night, was as nothing  
but an icy blue shadow of their former  
self? If this is your advice, I will keep it  
close to my heart, impulsively worn  
upon my sleeve; it will be as light as  
Helium, as red as the sun, stranded,  
awash & glowing, standing for a  
moment, a stoic, on the horizon;  
until that last faint light of dawn,  
fades into the first true light of day.

# Derivada

*Words by Douglas Rothschild, with Ben Friedlander*

Writing criticism is a chorus of Blackbirds, swirling in the wind.

Like washing the dirt of the dishes off. The dish cloth circling round & round till it all looks so clean—Waxwings in the Crab Apple Tree, or a small flock of White Crowned Sparrows flitting through the grass like leaf litter blown by the wind. Then, when you finally think you are done & turn the water off, you put down your pen & gaze out the window; in order that you might more clearly hear the clear caroling of the Robin, which at first you felt you had only just now imagined.

In the morning, as the sun peaks through the blinds, you are awakened

by the shrieking Jays, fighting at the backyard bird feeder. & eventually, you make your way to the coffee pot, hoping to find a cup of last night's coffee. As it warms, the Cardinals appear in their cheery red, their lively chipping, filling the kitchen with light. It is then that you see how many spots you have missed—all the streaks & lines, the left over soap that mars the clean surface & mocks you. As the Jays return, chasing away other birds, & the page you left on the table, filled with writing, so much soap scum—obscures the clarity expressed by the Blankness of the page.

*Design by José San Miguel, HPU student*





Danny Goodwin  
*Suburban Anthropocene Landscape #1*  
2013



# THE MEADOW



It was beautiful. But beautiful in the way that it derived its beauty from the inherent strangeness it possessed. And it certainly was the strangest thing I have ever seen. So fantastical that even forming the image in my mind is difficult. And yet, I will do the best I can to describe its wonder to you though I may not convey its inexplicable loveliness in full. It is probably rather impossible to capture it in words, just as it is not fully possible to capture it in my own memories.

How I stumbled upon it is still a mystery to me and yet I do not think it an accident. One moment I was being ushered into a shelter, the next I was trying to wade my way through what seemed to be a thick, viscous substance of some sort. It was pitch black at the time and I could not see an inch in front of my nose. I remember being scared but principally confused. I was utterly alone and the silence pressing in on me was deafening. I do not know for how long I struggled to move forward, only that I never stopped. After some time, a pin prick of light appeared in my vision, much the way the light of the outside world appears to those inside of a very dark and deep cave. I made my way towards this until I passed through the opening into an expansive meadow that was nothing like I have seen before. In fact, I don't believe it is something most people could ever expect to see in their life.

To try and describe this meadow would undoubtedly be a disservice to it. However, I must do my best to render it faithfully. I feel I have no other choice.

Parts of it were normal, and hardly worth noting, but most of it was so strange, and yet so marvelous, that I could not believe it was real at first. I had stood in stunned silence for several moments to examine what I had found. Almost immediately I dropped to my knees. Where there would have been grass, instead there were little feathers. They were soft to

the touch, but incredibly fragile. They easily pulled from the ground and would bend or even snap under very little weight. No two feathers were alike, it appeared, and the result of the countless multi-colored feathers was a shimmering, iridescent landscape that was nothing short of breathtaking.

Entranced by the surreal beauty of a place as foreign as this, I found my feet taking me towards the tree line, my satchel secured across my body. Multi-colored leaves hung from those trees which were not flowering, and the forest floor was littered with a colorful array of fallen leaves. I stayed close to the tree line, where I was more likely to step on leaves instead of crushing the feathers.

As I wandered, I happened upon all types of wildlife, most of which fled from me as soon as they saw me. Some things never change, I suppose. However, a few times I drew close enough to notice that these animals were not like those I was used to seeing. The birds were covered in grass instead of feathers! And animals that normally had scales were covered in plush fur and animals that should have had fur were covered in the smallest, glimmering scales. Imagine seeing a furry lizard, or a scaled squirrel. The mixture of oddness and beauty from this only served to fascinate me more.

In the city, I can't say I encountered much wildlife or had much interaction with nature at all. So though I found these things wonderful, I must admit that I was still quite careful to remain clean and to not get too close to anything I saw.

I spent a few hours this way, looking at the wildlife and trying to understand this strange, inversed world. But, hours on one's feet is sure to make them tired, so eventually I found a rather clean-looking spot in some shade and set my satchel in front of me. I pulled out a bit of the food I had packed

for myself and as I ate I made a few notations in my very worn-looking notebook. One glance at my reserves told me I wouldn't survive here long unless I could find edible food. But, after what I had seen today, I didn't know what could be trusted and what couldn't. Beautiful though this meadow was, I was keen on surviving a few more years.

Not to mention that I was starting to feel a heavy loneliness weighing on my heart. I wasn't sure what I could expect when I arrived back home, but to spend the rest of my life alone was an unbearable thought. I wished dearly that someone else had ended up with me. Maybe I wouldn't have minded spending more time here if there was *someone* to chat with.

Packing up, I decided to make my way back to the tunnel and see if I could end up back where I was supposed to be. However, I thought I could afford to take a different path back, just to see a bit more of this glorious place before I left it behind me. Feeling rejuvenated from my light snack, I set off back towards that tunnel I had emerged from.

Along my new path back to my starting point, I happened upon the most magnificent of things. It was what appeared to be a vast lake. Its surface was like rippling glass, perfectly reflecting the clouds. When I slowly dipped my hand into it, I realized with a jolt that it wasn't filled with water at all. The feeling was indescribable, really. If one were able to condense air into a small space, I suppose this is what that would feel like. I stuck my hand through a cloud reflection as it rolled by and it was ever so slightly damp, the way I imagined an actual cloud would feel like. A curious idea stuck me then, and I looked up at the "sky" to see that what was there instead was a glistening ocean. It stretched into the endless horizon and through the crystal clear water I could see all sorts of aquatic life swimming. My jaw dropped as I gazed upwards in shock.

The sun shook beneath the wavering water of the sky.

I glanced back down at the lake, and the urge to jump in coursed through my veins. I was certain it would feel like flying.

I quickly stripped down to my bloomers, feeling secure in my solitude. I was hesitant, at first, to enter the lake entirely. Second-thoughts plagued me before I shoved these worries to the side and practically leaped in. When submerged it felt much like I was floating weightlessly through the sky. I was convinced that this was what birds felt like. It didn't sting my open eyes, however when I attempted to take a breath, it was much like inhaling water. I flailed frantically, suddenly unable to tell up from down. In my panic, I seemed to lose my sense of direction.

A firm hand grasped my forearm and pulled me upwards. The moment I took a breath above the surface, the feeling of drowning passed, leaving no residual effects. I wasn't even wet. I was so focused on catching my breath and calming down I forgot about my savior until he spoke.

"Are you all right, miss?" he asked. He wasn't looking at me, and his face was quite red. It took me a few seconds to realize I was in my underwear. I scrambled out of the lake, pulling my dress back on as quickly as possible.

"Yes, thank you," I managed to reply once I was dressed, even though my embarrassment still colored my face. He chanced a look at me, and, seeing I was dressed, turned to look at me. Not that he said anything immediately, though. Instead, he just looked at me. I fidgeted with my shoes, trying to lace them up as the silence persisted.

"I made the same mistake the first time I went under too,"

he muttered, trying to make conversation. “It is a good thing your hair is so bright, or I might not have noticed you in time.”

I felt my face burning. I quickly tried to smooth my hair back into a braid. I had always been uncomfortable with how brightly red it was.

“Right, well thank you,” I muttered. A pause followed. “Have you seen anyone else?”

He shook his head and I wondered to myself if we were the only two here. And if so, how and why we were there.

“I’ve been here for four days and I haven’t see a soul, until now.”

“You’ve been here for *four days*? Haven’t you tried to go back yet? How have you been feeding yourself?” I asked in rapid succession. He fiddled with this thumbs nervously, shrugging.

“I just didn’t see the point in hurrying back. I’ve found plenty of berries and such to eat, so, I just thought it was nicer here than back there.”

I nodded slowly, wondering how many people in his life he had already lost to the war.

“How did you know which berries would be safe to eat?” The look on his face told me he hadn’t even considered that some berries might be poisonous. I chuckled softly as this dumbfounded expression.

“Well...” I started, trailing off when I realized I didn’t know his name.

“Cecil.”

“Well, Cecil, I’m headed back towards the tunnel I came through to see if I can get back. You are welcome to join me,” I

paused, “I’m Eydie, by the way.”

I set off once more towards the tunnel I had arrived through, Cecil following behind me in silence. I wasn’t sure if he just didn’t want to be alone, or if he was also interested in trying to go back home. Neither of us knew what we would find, but it was home.

It wasn’t long before the tunnel was in our sights again. I smiled back at Cecil, who hadn’t said anything the whole walk. He was looking at his feet.

“Aren’t you excited to go back?” I asked. He didn’t answer immediately.

“I don’t think I’ll go back,” he said finally and I stopped to stare at him. He fidgeted under my gaze, apparently unwilling to elaborate.

“Why?” I asked pointedly, genuinely surprised he would rather stay back, all alone, than return home.

“You don’t get it because you are a woman—”

“Excuse me?” I snapped, crossing my arms.

“You can’t be drafted,” he finished. I had no reply for that. I hadn’t even thought about how different our lives were on the other side. For him to go back was almost certainly a death sentence. “I’m not willing to die for a cause I don’t believe in.”

I turned my head to look towards the tunnel, wondering if I could leave him here alone in good conscience. But now that we were relatively close to it, I noticed with a start that the entrance was sealed with concrete. I ran towards it, and smacked my hands against the covering. I had almost convinced myself that maybe I would be able to slip right through it, or that maybe it would move. But it didn’t budge.

“Can you not...” Cecil asked from behind me. I continued banging desperately on the concrete wall separating me from my home, from my life. Tears began to roll slowly down my cheeks as I smacked the wall helplessly.

As night fell, the watery sky turned almost black with nothing but the shaking image of a moon to illuminate the night. No stars twinkled down on us as I rested my head against the cool concrete wall. Cecil gently placed a hand on my shoulder, having been patient enough to wait for me to stop hitting the wall.

“Are you ready to leave?” he asked softly. He was crouched beside me, ready to wait longer if necessary. But I nodded and slowly stood up. I rubbed my eyes before offering him a weak smile.

“Do you have somewhere for us to sleep?” He nodded, returning my gentle smile.

On our way we stumbled upon the same lake we had met at a few hours earlier. But it looked completely different than before. Instead of the bright blue sky and clouds, the lake was an inky black as the night sky and stars twinkled from the surface. Cecil glanced at me.

“I bet it’ll make you feel better,” he said softly. This time I jumped in without undressing. The familiar sensation of floating in air encompassed me and when I opened my eyes it looked like I was surrounded by stars. They even seemed to give off light that shone dimly on Cecil’s slim face. I reached my hands towards him and smiled as he grabbed them.

Slowly I started to lose track of time as my days with Cecil turned into weeks and subsequently into months. Time with Cecil seemed to pass simultaneously very fast and incredibly

slowly. Seconds seemed to stretch into minutes and yet before I would know it, it was night time again. We made frequent trips to the lake at night to swim with the stars. We spoke a lot about our lives before, ourselves, and a great many other things. I learned that Cecil had lost all of his family to the war and though he understood why they were fighting, he didn’t want to be a part of it. War had done nothing but destroy for him. And though my life back home was not so lonely, since my sister was still alive, I could easily understand why he was happier here. In many ways, I was happier here too. Being with Cecil was natural and easy in all the ways it was supposed to be.

Then, they came.

The first indication was something we felt instead of saw. Early one morning the ground shook with a great heave, like the ground had been ruptured. It woke us and when we ran to see the cause the sky was alight like it was on fire. Then we heard it: the familiar rumble of fighter planes.

Before we knew it our meadow had been turned into a battleground. The days turned cold, though nearly every day we had been here for the past months had been the same: warm and sunny. We retreated into the trees for cover and protection. The sound of planes and bombs and explosions never lessened as the constant onslaught of artillery continued. Almost two weeks passed before we attempted to venture out of the woods. We never knew how they came to this place or how they could so easily destroy something so beautiful and amazing. War was all they cared about. We didn’t even care which side was which.

The forest had receded considerably and tree stumps stretched for miles in either direction. The ground that had once been covered in beautiful feathers was barren and cratered. The sky was dark with smoke and ash and the red glow of fire

was the only illumination. The world looked like it was on fire. None of the strangely beautiful things Cecil and I had come to love as our home remained. Trenches wound through the meadow as soldiers flitted about either side. Planes above dropped bombs every few minutes.

I was horrified, unable to watch as bombs on both sides slaughtered men in trenches. I turned towards Cecil who refused to look away. He was stone-faced as he watched them destroy our home. I grabbed his hand, trying to pull him back into the safety of the trees. He pulled his hand away from me.

“I won’t let them do this any longer.” I felt my stomach drop.

“Cecil, no—”

He spun around and grabbed me by the shoulders. His face was set, his eyes determined. I knew I could say nothing now.

“I can’t watch this any longer, Eydie. I’ve found something I’m willing to die for.” He patted me gently on the cheek. “I’m sorry to leave you alone like this.”

He pulled his hands back and before I could reach out to grab him, he was sprinting towards the trenches, screaming at the soldiers. Many turned, I could tell despite the distance. But it didn’t matter.

A plane soared overhead. Bombs whizzed through the air.

I was alone again.

Sobs racked my body as I hid in our hovel. I was like this for what felt like days, images of Cecil’s body moments before the bomb exploded imprinted in my mind. I replayed the scene

endlessly in my mind until I was too exhausted to stay up any longer.

Empty days passed. The snow started to fall heavily, the first time I had ever seen snow in the meadow. It didn’t take long before the ground was covered in icy cold snow that was more dull gray than the pure white it should have been. Ash mingled with the snow as it fell, covering the land with a grotesque mixture of the beautiful and the residue of destruction.

I don’t know when I finally started recording these events in my journal. As soon as I got the energy, I suppose. I’m not sure if anyone will ever read this, but I feel I must write it down. Not only to capture the beauty of what was destroyed so maybe one day someone will understand what they did to us, but also because if I do not preserve Cecil’s memory in some way, I know he will be forgotten. I cannot allow such a thing to happen.

When the snow finally reaches a point when it almost touches my knees, I too venture towards the trenches. This is the first time I ever see the face of any of those who destroyed everything I had loved. Confusion mixed with terror sticks to their faces as they call out to me. I hardly hear their voices.

I stop, falling on to my back, cushioned by the thick layer of snow. My long red hair splays out in the snow as I look up at the sky. Where there should have been fish swimming in crystal clear water I see only smoke and ember.

I close my eyes.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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