

*Chrysalis*

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2014

Willamette  
University

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Willamette University  
2014

## *Acknowledgements*

The Chrysalis Editorial Board would like to extend our thanks to the Willamette and Salem community for another successful year. Special thanks go to the English Department and the Associated Students of Willamette University. Thanks, also, to K/P Corporation for working with us again this year.

## *Note From The Staff*

Some content in this publication is potentially triggering.

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# *Chrysalis*

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Ryan Cornwell

## *Pedestrians*

My friend and I went for a walk in the city. On the sidewalk, a wide-eyed, emaciated woman charged toward us. We didn't seem to bother or distract her. She passed us. Shortly after passing, she screamed, "CRAN-BERRIES!" I turned and met her gaze. She then refocused to the passing cars in the street and followed up with "YA EAT 'EM!"

She's not wrong.

Andrew Beebe

*To the Mud Baths, the Sunflowers,*

today I am a banana slug.  
The world is widely-peaked  
beyond my optic tentacles,  
gazing at cousin clouds secreting  
their own gray and open  
mucus furrows on the fallow.

I love the way the ground tosses  
tender mold tables  
and taps the leafy wine.  
The shining mantle of my mother  
whispers from the feast, a shimmer,  
her keel curving on the rivers  
of the hardland. Never in the massive  
molten turning am I tumbled;  
the regurgitant wind turning  
to tip its eyestalk to my foot.

Flowering intrepid tremors  
render the mildew  
honeysuckle suckled from forever,  
the dew pressure, the gourd,  
and the heavy garden botany poured  
bodily into pneumostome  
before she's home,  
the flower lady and the soil.

Potted power bowing to the never-ending  
coming of Aestus in the spring,

and here the cool calming  
of awaking. Glory again  
to the falling of the firmament  
to hummus, to humus, to everything else. Zweihänder  
twice, striking for the echoing dead,  
delicious.

Devouring the detriment bread because  
brown the spot of God, signifying  
the blooming aroma of wet  
along my doorsteps,  
sprouting hair, and then

I'm a boy again.  
The slug is chewing on a severed stem,  
and I notice the tick  
between my heartbeats  
when my alveoli freeze.

## Linnea Huomo

### *Oliver Jones*

I like to think of you sleeping under my bed so I have someone to talk  
to at night,  
but then the missing gets so sharp I have to start filling space with letters.  
I send them to my coworker Phyllis,  
under the pen name Oliver Jones.  
Phyllis looks like she sounds, round and pliable.  
I had a dream last night that she was play-doh and I stretched her face  
straight off her body.  
I think she's lonely and at least that's something we have in common.  
You've been gone for a long time and  
I've been waiting for you to come back.  
I miss the curve your thighs made on my bed  
and the way I saw them even when you were downstairs,  
petting Ursula.  
Ursula missed you for a long time but she finally died from cat cancer  
last month.  
I picked up the phone to call you—then I threw it in the sink and it broke.  
I burned my bed, too.  
The constant image of you was like an inflated bedbug, dripping feelers  
everywhere.  
Now I sleep on the floor next to Ursula's ashes.  
The day after you left I started shaving my head and didn't stop until the  
floor was covered  
in my hair. You would've hated it.  
I'm losing everything to dull the razor of losing you but I can still feel it,  
even when I close my eyes.  
I've taken to hiding rocks in women's beds because that way they can't  
ever forget.  
I find the rocks that look most like me.  
If I knew your address I would send you one, too.

Jenn Smrz

*The Elevator*

INT. ELEVATOR—NIGHT

DANIEL HARRIS (45) stares at the control panel vacantly. He is average-looking and is wearing a crumpled button down shirt. He is covered in blood.

The light on the panel changes from the fifth floor to the fourth. The elevator stops and the doors open. A little girl, PAIGE (7) walks in. She has an intelligent look in her eyes and her long hair is pulled back tight in a pony tail.

Daniel continues staring ahead. Paige rocks back and forth on her feet. She starts to hum a catchy pop song. He finally looks at her.

The lights flicker. The two look around, confused. There's a groaning sound as the elevator comes to a stop.

Paige walks over to the control panel and pushes the call button.

PAIGE

Hey Ray, the elevator broke again.

Silence. And then—

RAY

Alright sweetie, you just hold tight,  
we'll have you out in a jiff.

She pushes the button again.

PAIGE

Thanks Ray.

Daniel paces and runs a hand through his thinning hair.

DANIEL

Dammit.

Suddenly remembering he's not alone he looks at Paige and winces.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Sorry.

PAIGE

It's ok.

Beat.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

You can say fuck if you want.

DANIEL

How'd a little girl like you learn  
a word like that?

She shrugs.

PAIGE

Mom says it all the time. I'm not allowed to say it, but you're an adult, so  
it's ok. And I'm not a little girl.

DANIEL

Sorry.

Daniel starts looking for a way out. Paige sits down in the corner and wraps  
her arms around her legs. She watches as he tries to pry open the door and  
fails.

PAIGE

Are you going to a costume party?

DANIEL

No.

He pushes one side of the door away from the other. It does nothing.

PAIGE

Then why are you dressed like that?

DANIEL

Like what?

PAIGE

You're covered in red stuff.  
Is it blood?

He stops pushing and puts his hands on his knees, winded. He looks at her.

DANIEL

Yes.

Her eyes widen.

PAIGE

That must have hurt a lot.  
I got this cut on my finger—

She holds up her finger for him to see. It is wrapped in a hello kitty band-  
aid.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

—and that really hurt,  
so for you it's gotta be really bad.

Beat.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

When we get out I can get you my box  
of hello kitty band-aids if you want.

DANIEL

You save your band-aids for  
people who really need it.

Daniel looks around, and seeing no other way out, slumps down against  
the wall. Silence.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hey kid, what are you doing here

all by yourself on New Years anyway?  
Shouldn't you be at home or something?

PAIGE

My mom's here too. She's really  
important. She works on the fifth floor.

DANIEL

And she leaves you all alone?

She shrugs.

PAIGE

Yeah, but it's ok. No one else is here  
so they don't mind if I play in their offices.

The scratchy sound starts to come from the speaker.

RAY

Hey Paige sweetie, you still there?

She goes over and presses the button.

PAIGE

Still here.

RAY

There anyone there with ya?

She looks at Daniel.

PAIGE

Yeah, there's this old guy, but it's ok  
Ray, he's cool.

RAY

Alright, everything's gonna be  
ok, everything's gonna be alright  
darlin', just don't—just don't you worry.

The speaker goes off and Paige sits back down. Daniel has his head in his  
hands and is staring at the floor. She studies him.

PAIGE

How'd ya get hurt?

Silence. It seems like he's not going to answer. She looks away.

DANIEL

I hurt someone else.

PAIGE

Were they a bad guy?

DANIEL

I don't know.

PAIGE

Are you a bad guy?

He doesn't respond. They sit quietly for a time.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Do you know any hand games?

DANIEL

Uh, no...

PAIGE

Wanna learn?

Daniel and Paige sit across from each other and play a hand game. There is  
dried blood on Daniel's hands. He messes up and they start over.

There's the sounds of machinery, and then the elevator starts to move. The  
two stand up.

DANIEL

I am.

She looks at him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

A bad guy.

The elevator gives a sudden lurch. The two stumble.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hey, you ok?

The elevator drops. Paige screams and huddles to the wall. Daniel holds his body over her in a protective manner. Both fall as they come to a halt. Daniel pushes himself up. Paige is unconscious. He goes over and tries to wake her up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Hey, hey kid, you alright?

The doors open to reveal a swat team pointing their guns at them.

MAN

Sir, we need you to step away  
from the girl.

Daniel ignores him and takes Paige's pulse.

MAN (CONT'D)

Step away from the girl, now.

Daniel struggles to his feet and puts his hands up.

DANIEL

Ok, ok.

A member of the swat team wrenches Daniel's hands behind his back and handcuffs him. He starts to read him his rights. Another man goes over to Paige to check her vitals. Daniel looks over at her, lying on the ground, as a man takes him away.

FADE TO BLACK.

Christa Rohrbach

*To My Latest Period*

Your arrival is often a surprise, but not  
always pleasant.

This one was most unfortunately  
and distinctly  
unpleasant. It looks as if the  
devil has apparated in my underwear,  
and my days are filled with  
red-soaked  
blood-stained  
trash.

I cannot leave my  
bed, instead clutching a heat pad  
to my gut, crying *there's no baby,*  
*isn't that enough?*

Crystal LeFebvre

*Welcome to Humanity*

Where  
We bounce and  
Roll and  
Collide  
Like marbles shot  
From a child's fingers  
Or beads dropped  
From a ribbon's fraying  
Ends  
Ricocheting off  
Each other  
As light slips  
Off our warped surfaces  
As if it can't  
Grab hold or  
Maybe  
It doesn't want to.

Will Nickerson

*How to Kill a Moth*

You make light.  
So brilliant in vast  
starry darkness  
there is no choice

but for her forewings  
to pull reluctant hindwings,  
victims of drunken proboscis,  
eagerly into the jar.

You block her escape  
first with your porch ceiling,  
then a slip of printer paper,  
and finally the tin lid

in which you poke holes  
so she will suffocate slowly.  
Give her a twig with two leaves  
So she will not die alone.

Blanca Gutierrez

*My Future was Planned*

My mother she  
Carries me—here  
Strapped to her palpitating chest  
Tied to her plum heart we  
Cruise sun-struck  
across a sunken desert  
Walk a cracking ocean  
Ride the broken spines of trains  
Crouch in the bed of a truck, sleep  
in the stomach of a ship  
Fly—crash through  
Godly Mountains so I  
Can have something better, so I  
Can get to class before the bell ...  
but I'm late ... so  
As Policy says—Detention—Go  
Though no one tells me  
Where it set up shop—or someone  
Built a Chamber full of  
Secret secrets  
Under the gym  
A Perfect place to hide  
Failure—future Failures  
us  
A precursor—Pretty Little Preview  
to Prison  
Policy says—Detention—Go  
but ... I can't find it ... and my sisters  
need to eat something soon ... so I

go home & now

As Policy says—Suspension—Oh. That's easy  
But my mother shouldn't  
know—I'm still strapped  
to her palpitating chest  
And, any more stress it will implode  
We will implode  
So I  
Ride  
the big bus  
step onto the school lawn  
turn and walk  
Away  
Policy says—Suspension—go—4 miles home

The highway is a hell way  
where steel rolls by while I  
Hope my friends took notes  
It will take me a week to catch up  
but catch-up  
is the hardest game anyone's made  
and I'm tired of it ... and my brothers  
need their medicine ... so I  
quit catching up  
and join my mom  
in the cold warehouses  
strap myself on tighter  
to her imploding heart

Grace Cohen

## *Salvador Dali with a Webcam*

Salvador Dali sat at his desk, laptop open, and turned on his webcam. He took selfie after selfie, making himself swirl, turning himself into a comic book, swimming himself among the fishies. He took a selfie, a dull static one, and opened Photoshop. He painted on a moustache, and then another one, removed a non-existent red eye, cropped out the shadowy background of his bedroom, and layered the selfie on top of an image of Death Valley, because it was desolate and dreamy and felt right. He put a baboon in the background, and photoshopped absurd pornstar breasts onto his eyes, and then smudged the entire image as he thought about camembert cheese. He stared at it, and did not save it. It was too thoughtful. He took another selfie and opened it in paint. This was better; less choice is better. He clicked the paint tool, and moved the cursor frantically across the screen, his head becoming a phallus, not just any phallus but the ultimate phallus, ejaculating coca-cola. He rotated the image and hid the phallus, used the spray can option to sprinkle the selfie with shit-brown specks. He stared at it and thought about his face ejaculating. Masturbation is the ultimate selfie, the ultimate form of narcissism, pleasuring yourself because you can and you're aroused, and you're not showing anyone your face as you orgasm. He went back to webcam and clicked video mode. He stripped naked, pressed record, scooted back, and masturbated until completion. Afterwards he stared at the cum on his hand and thought about camembert cheese. He opened photoshop and gifed himself masturbating and felt dirty. He opened his tumblr, and began a new post. He cheekily considered posting the gifs without tagging it nsfw. He closed tumblr. He did not post it. He has job interviews next week, and posting a gif of a video of you masturbating to a repainted image of yourself in proclamation of the selfie as art is not considered kosher in the workplace, much like visible tattoos.

Emma Jonas

## *On Missing*

The Portuguese word *saudade* refers to longing for a love which is lost, or longing for something which does not and will probably never exist.

Missing is the word for longing for something that did exist, and may even exist again, but is not, at the moment, present. Missing is the word for objective longing, made more frustrating by both the potential for and lack of the object's presence. In essence, missing is staring at the wall between you and the thing you want, love, or need.

*Saudade* doesn't need the wall; it's not a binary. It's targetless. It's easier to find comfort in *saudade*.

During the last three years of Odysseus's absence, Penelope warded off her suitors by weaving a funeral shroud and unweaving her progress by night. She promised the suitors that she would choose a husband when the shroud was complete, but instead she wove and unwove and wove, again and again, as she longed for Odysseus's uncertain return.

This uncertainty is key—Penelope landed in a purgatory between missing and *saudade*, and found it sustainable. She would have repeated the cycle indefinitely until Odysseus returned, had the suitors not discovered her deception.

I wonder, how many stitches did she make for Odysseus? How many bleeding fingers and twisted wrists? How many headaches from focusing late into the night? How many sighs as she made and unmade and made and unmade? Penelope stitched her missing over and over, patiently ticking time with every suture.

And how many papers do I tear apart? How many holes worn in sweat-shirt sleeves? How many palms scratched red and knotted shoulders? How many hours staring awake at the ceiling as the night fumbles on? I weave and unweave myself over and over, and I start to wear thin.

Odysseus came back; the shroud was completed. After 20 years of un-

certain waiting, Penelope had survived missing.

Penelope was a master of missing.

I am not a master of missing.

Maybe I'm finally starting to understand what W.S. Merwin felt when he said:

*Your absence has gone through me*

*Like thread through a needle.*

(Penelope understood.)

I can't remember the last line. If you were here, I could call you and ask what the last line of that poem is. I can never remember it. All I have in me are holes from which you are gone.

*All that I do is stitched with your absence. Your absence threads all that I do. Like a needle, your absence. Everything I do is threaded with your absence.* I can't remember, but there it is, at the tip of my tongue like you in my dreams.

My missing is not something to be made an art of. It's imprecise and sloppy. Merwin's is neat, incorporated. It's contained. Mine sloshes about and leaves stains. Merwin's leaves an easy trace, a path to follow. Mine breaks in where it knows it's not wanted, leaves egg shells and empty bottles. Merwin's is quiet and tidy. Mine laughs and menaces.

A friend calls me back and tells me: the last line is *Everything I do is stitched with its color*. I had the gist. But this is why W.S. Merwin is a famous poet and I am not.

My missing makes new things stand out:

Like the couple behind me on the bus, kissing and kissing and kissing.

Like the parts of me I had forgotten to dislike when you were here, raw in the mirror where I stand alone.

Like the bite of the cold at my unheld fingertips.

Like the immensity of the bed. I take to the couch so I don't get lost in my sleep.

Everything's a little darker now—you must have been the light.

Missing is sitting alone in a dark room. And I sit and sit and sit.

The wall imposes, and I long for *saudade*. *Saudade* doesn't trap. Objectless feelings can dissipate, but I know that somewhere you are there.

I weave and unweave and repeat:

*Your absence has gone through me*

*(I am alone, tearing at myself)*

*Like thread through a needle.*

*(I break apart again and again)*

*Everything I do is stitched with its color*

*(It's simpler to pull apart than stitch together)*

Andrew Beebe

## *Geography*

Bury me beneath Beijing,  
hang rooster mobiles  
over 3 cracked roof tiles  
piled in a pyramid.  
The ticky tacky skies above Dakota  
could take rice paddies  
hay-riding. Kill me  
cooly, high on Kilimanjaro,  
with dragon fruit and a tiny stamp  
that says "New Zealand."

Ship my coffin through Mumbai  
in a boxcar full of oranges,  
and 3 crates of iron ore  
from near the banks of Niger.  
Equate my eulogy  
in Ecuador, where purple dancing skirts  
flash brighter at noon  
than they do in Cancún  
or in Anchorage.  
Allow a chitinous Kazakh insect  
to sautee my mortal eyes,  
in the brutal dining guise  
of Boston.

At my burial, Dubuque appears in black;  
"He used to throw rocks from India  
at bees. He mailed Flat Stanley  
to the Mississippi,

but lived to see it eaten by a catfish."  
I loved the way the river smelled  
when it ran through your hair,  
"but regrettably,  
his nose is in Nafoora  
and the river's in the ocean;"  
the Lotion on your holy toes  
has washed into the Tigris.

If Earth were a gas giant  
I would burgle frog's legs,  
and hop back to Red Bud Road.  
But the solid strata of sidewalk gum  
becomes my love the telephone,  
and her maple lenses squeeze.  
Bury me above the moon,  
orbiting the pan-fried noodles that got stuck,  
dangling from God's white beard.

Tori Youngbauer

*Memory, 15 Years Old*

That chair still exists.

And wires connecting monitors, screens  
glowing. Trivial content.

Sun coming through the window, light  
glaring. Squinting eyes.

A tall glass of water, starts  
tipping. Electric spark.

And my father there, so  
angry. He rushes.

He tumbles over a kitchen chair, profusely  
swearing. Furious words.

The chair thrown across the room, legs  
breaking. Cracked wood.

I shrink to the wall, begin  
melting. He turns.

That rage is fleeting, falls  
away. Fades slowly.

But I am afraid of that chair.



*Adder(e,a,o?)ll*

Aubrey Kendall  
Acrylic, Pen



*Impossible Monsters*

Alyssa Kirstein

Etching



*Overwhelm*

Alyssa Kirstein

Etching



## *A Love Letter*

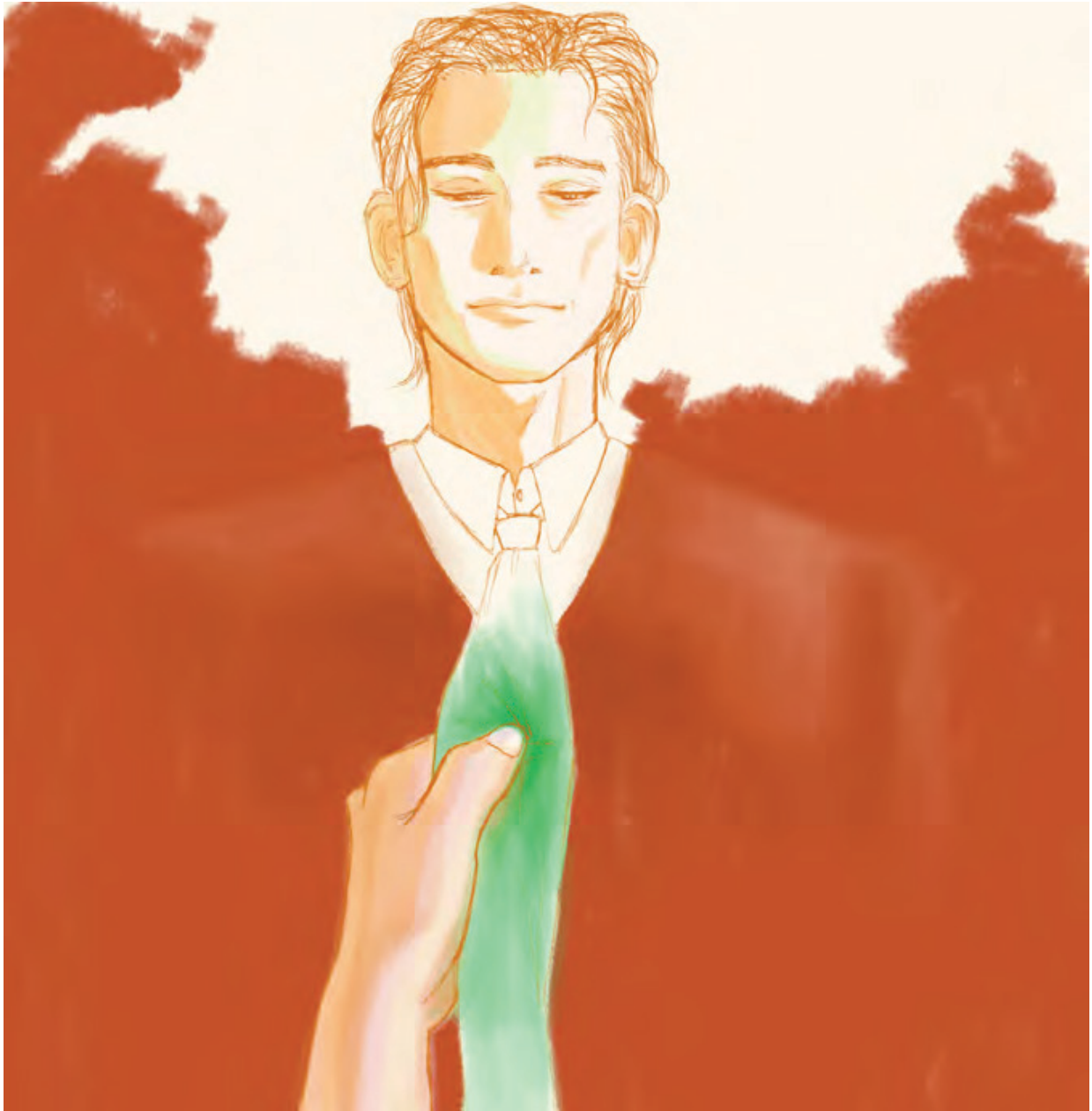
Jamie Ervin

Digital Photography



*Still Life with Smoky Quartz Ball*

Simon D. Orr  
Silver Gelatin Print



*Breath In, Breath Out*

Xengie Doan  
Digital Art



## *Up and Over*

Blanca Gutierrez  
Watercolor with Ink



*Bridget's Silhouette*

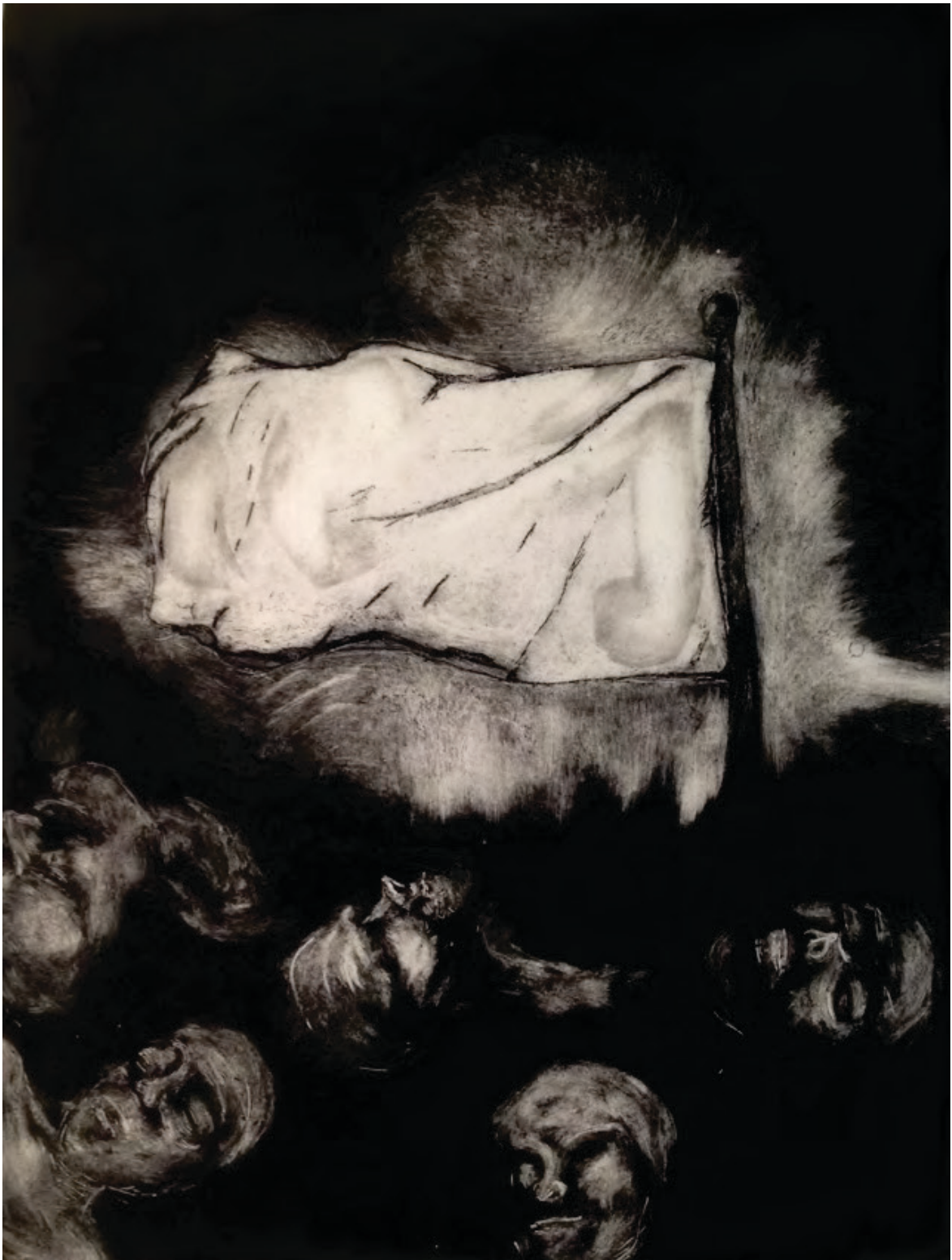
Jamie Ervin

Black and White Film Photography



*The Heads and the Headless*

Lauren Vermilion  
Photography



*White Flag*

Dallas Frederick

Etching



*Hands and Necks*

Amy Snodgrass  
Photography



## *A Cuppa*

Xengie Doan  
Digital Art



*Wish You Were Here*

Saran Walker  
Digital Art



*ANWR Can War*

Dallas Frederick  
Mixed Media



*I Wanna Be an Airforce Ranger*

Blanca Gutierrez

Watercolor



## *Chase*

Tori Youngbauer

Oil on Canvas



*From a Summer in Chiang Mai*

Natalie Amo  
Digital photography



*Self Portrait*

Dana Crosby

Acrylic



*No is Yes*

Lauren Vermilion  
Photography



## *Observations of the Obscured*

Monique Rodriguez

Mixed Media



*Observations of the Obscured*

Monique Rodriguez  
Mixed Media



## *Cityscape*

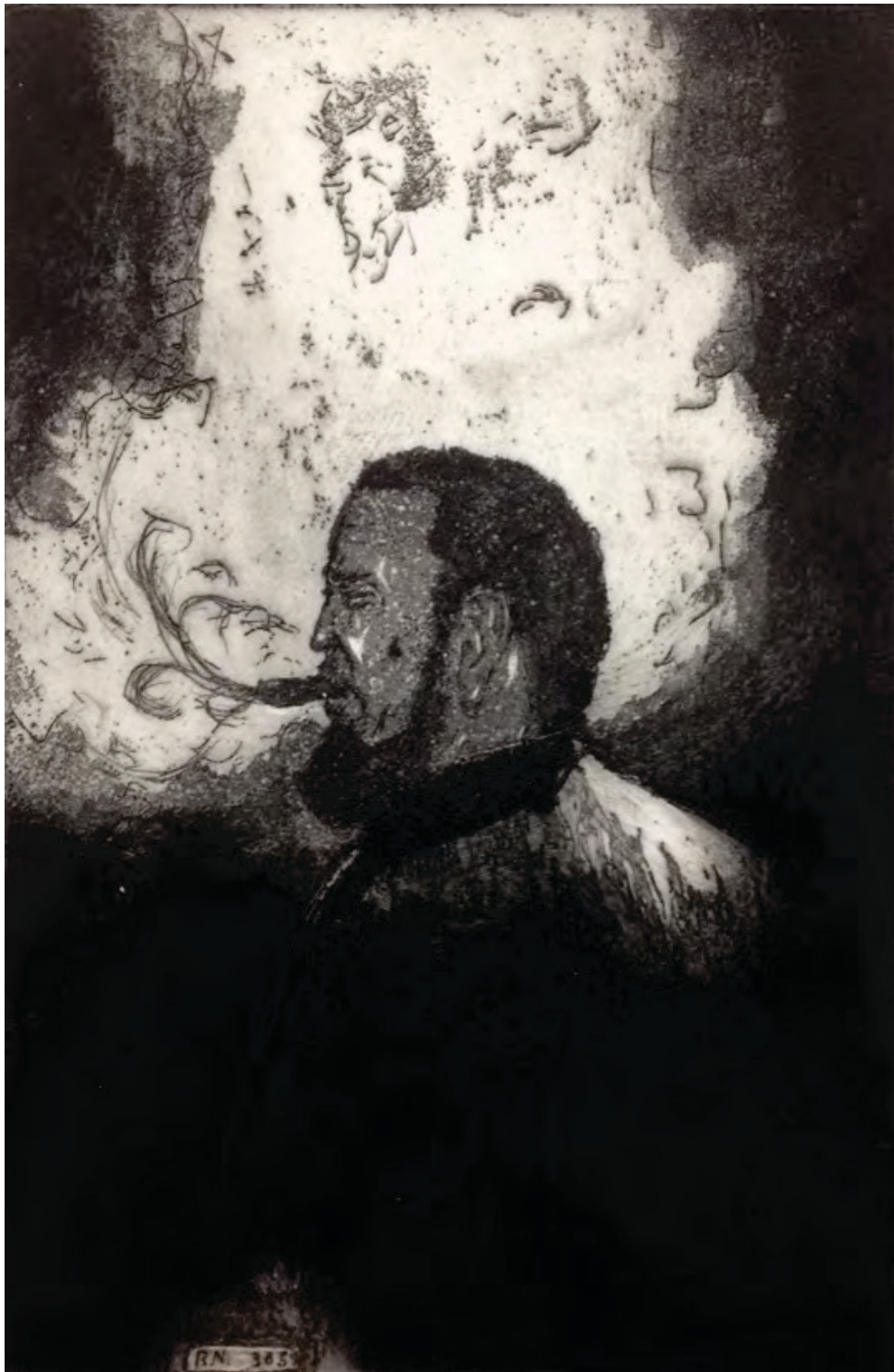
Dana Crosby

Acrylic



*Violinist in the Dark*

Xengie Doan  
India ink



*El Castro*

Dallas Frederick

Etching



*In Memorial*

Jamie Ervin

Black and White Film Photography—Gold Leaf Transfer



## *The Blues*

Lauren Vermilion  
Photography

Will Nickerson

*Magritte's Car*<sup>1</sup>

hurls around corners  
in the dark.  
Through cities  
and shires:  
pick axe  
through the roof,  
trunk set afire  
and driven  
by clouds  
and glass ships  
it comes to rest  
on a boulder  
until night falls  
again.

<sup>1</sup>Inspired by Seymour Chwast's painting *René Magritte's Car*.

Amy Snodgrass

*Periphery*

Three years after his divorce, the astronaut wondered if his training was worth the thicker skin, the lower pressure regulated by fourteen layers of Kevlar and Gortex that restricted his movement as he stepped into the margins of space.

Suspended, he imagined clipping the metal umbilical cord that led him back to a planet where mothers watched him float in their colored TVs, the corners of their eyes preoccupied by the movement of four-year-old sons and the weather.

Caroline Taylor

*[World, follow Stockholm]*

World, follow Stockholm:  
fond of fjord, snow drowns sorrow.  
spools of wool for foot, two foets.  
blown soot on rocks mold forms;  
grows oblong.  
borrow books, moods;  
confront gloom.  
prowl for tomorrows—blossoms (for whom?)  
spoons bond to frowns, croon.  
fog floods—  
crown rows of owls/  
hollow body of words  
blooms.  
clot blood: good  
(how to know ...?)  
clocks slow, stop of cold.  
lost: gold tooth (no worth).

Lark Sealine-Smith

*Sestina for a Lost Child*

My baby was in love with the ocean  
but she lived in the world of taxis  
and spent her nights dancing  
down the streets until her shoes fell off  
then she would come home  
and ask me to make her tea.

She ate powdered sugar cookies dipped in mint tea  
while I dreamt bizarre blaring horns by the ocean.  
Unaware of anyone else at home  
Bleary lullabies as screaming gulls of the taxis.  
She woke me when the streetlights turned off  
I spent my days singing around the house to my cleaning and dancing.

She breathed to dancing  
slick sweat dripping beads of tea  
which she vainly tried to shower off  
but in the end nothing cleansed her like the ocean.  
So after she waited for menacing taxis  
so they could take her away from home.

There were only distractions at home  
only electric misused machines not made for dancing  
only people forever leaving in too-bold taxis.  
There was no saltwater seaweed tea  
served in pore-sized cups from the ocean.  
Prickly sand formed grand towers she couldn't leap off.

I felt her brush off.

Waited for her to come home  
but she dreamed of the ocean  
and would sacrifice nothing for her dancing.  
I lived alone on powdered sugar cookies and tea  
knowing that my only link to her were the unimaginable taxis.

I searched empty taxis  
never called my chase off.  
I drank her approximation of tea  
hoping the taste would invite her home  
where she could join me in graceless dancing.  
I found her at last by her ocean.

I couldn't drag her home. There were no taxis.  
She turned off. She never went out dancing.  
I drank my tea while my baby slept in the ocean.

Crystal LeFebvre

### *Fifty Minus Forty-Nine (An Excerpt)*

The day Nico wakes up to fifty minus forty-nine white capsules is no surprise. Grey morning light empties into her train-car nest, and she sits up like any other day, picking straw from her hair. Without the wind from the train's movement, the world sounds too still. It will be bad, she thinks, if the world is moving when her heart stops, and so she gets up and jumps down from the car. She has felt this beast's hot breath on her neck for the past month, has had a long time to think about it catching up as she sought to outrun her past. Hands tucked into her pockets, she kicks the gravel at her feet and sets off.

Her legs are tired by the time she decides to stop walking. Footprints like fossils in the mud, but the rain haunting the air smells more like a storm now; soon, she will be washed from the earth's sensory memory. Clouds merled with shadows pile high in the sky. The air pulls tight. She sits down on the first surface she can find—a wooden fence sunken into the mossy soil. It wobbles at the slightest touch, strips of rotting paint sticking to her fingertips and peeling away from the damp wood. All she can see for miles around is grassland and fen. A handful of bony-hipped cattle dot the land encircled by her fence, but there is no farmhouse in the vicinity: just a single shelter with a tin roof.

"Like the Virgin Mary," she says with a laugh that leaves her lungs feeling empty.

Only Nico does not feel so much like a saint, never mind one supposed to give birth to the Son of God. She is pretty sure Mary never killed anyone or had to go through drug withdrawal because she wanted to forget that she killed people but ended up forgetting how many pills she had left to spare. Already, her head is starting to ache. Her pulse throbs irregularly just below her ear. One pill is a promise only of bitter tastes and reduced nausea, but she shakes it out into her hand anyway. The horizon burns a chemical orange, exaggerated by the storm clouds and ash grey farming

land in its shade. There is no warmth in the air. She cups her palms around her elbows and tucks her arms into her stomach. They are trembling.

Mist has begun to rise from the ground, wisps of it weaving through the grass like snakes. She stands, one foot at a time. Her pill bottle sits on a post of the fence, its last occupant trembling on the lid in the wind. The cattle lift their heads lazily when she approaches; some lumber off into a copse of sticks she thinks used to be trees. None of them pays much more attention as the strange young woman ducks into their shelter. It cannot be more than five feet by five feet—eight if the cows are lucky. Fresh hay spilling out from a pile in one corner composes the floor. There is a water trough against the back wall; she cannot see clearly enough to know if it is clean, but it does not smell of algae. Sinking down, she lies back in the hay. Whoever had cared for these cows would not need to return for some time.

She pulls her hood over her head and bows her head over her knees. Her eyes shut in the warm darkness of her breath. In, out, in, out, in, out, in, out, in . . . . Soon, she is trembling in time, quivering on every exhale. Sweat beads up on her forehead. She has not lifted her head to see the hour of day, has not opened her eyes for fear of seeing. No amount of forewarning, she thinks, can ever prepare you for the horror of knowing yourself as you really are. The warmth escalates in staggered intervals, but she does not know if it is the cows or the fever. Pressure against her leg; a thump and subsequent groan. Cows, then, this time.

The next time, Nico is not quite as lucky. It feels as if someone has lit a fire in her veins, but she cannot stop shivering. Maybe her blood is just so cold that it feels hot. She digs her nails into her sweatshirt and burrows into the hay, trying to find an end. There is a dull ringing in her ears. War drums beat under the tone, but she has enough sense to know that it is rain beginning on the roof. The rain the rain the rain. The rain is the last thing she has enough sense to know.

People scream around her. Bullets bite at her bare skin. The sound of her own breathing disturbs her. In it, she can hear the tearing of parachute canvas, the wet noise of collapsing lungs. She digs her nails into her arms. They pierce like knives—they *are* knives, sinking in so deep she could not

pull them out if she wanted to. Maybe they ought to stay in; one for every life she has taken. No. She does not have enough skin for that. Take her off, stretch her on the rack; she might, then. This skin is too dirty anyway.

Her first indication that she has moved is the cold metal of the wall as it strikes her head. A cry—from her? She turns her face into the smooth coolness; there is wetness on her cheek. Her throat is dry, but there is only saltwater on her lips. She opens her mouth, seeking something, anything, to drive back the thirst, and finds reward when one drop of rain strikes her tongue. It tastes of freedom; it tastes of nothing. With a sob that cracks halfway from its utterance, Nico retreats into herself. Surrounded by water, soaked through to the bone, she cannot find a thing to drink. She thinks she might die of thirst. She hopes she might.

Lips like Velcro wake Nico years from then. For a moment, in the ambience of low and dragging moans, she wonders to what company of ghouls her pain has carried her. Her eyes peel open millimeter by millimeter; her fingers clench in knots. Everything is blurry. Two moist caverns emerge from the mist followed by a slash of pink wiping over them. Another groan sets her skull to pounding. The cow persists and nudges her again with its muzzle.

Go away, she wants to say, but do cows speak English? S'en aller! A French cow would understand, but she never does say it. Instead, she rolls over and faces the floor. It stinks of sweat, wet hay, and cow. As her newest acquaintance falls silent, presumably to eat, she breathes in the odors of life compounded in the air and takes a moment to gather her strength. It is hard to move, let alone stand up. Her muscles still quiver, occasionally abandoning her all together, and nausea rocks her stomach with the mere thought of motion. She pushes the cow that had woken her one moment, then clings to its fuzzy hide for support the next. The animal continues to chew its cud, not even lifting its head when she finally leaves it off for the wall.

Outside, she has nothing. She manages a straight spine for a few steps. Then, all gangly limbs and numb extremities, she drops. Peat moss and silt squelch up between her fingers, seep into the fibers of her jeans. Her

nose is inches from a puddle, its stagnant scent rich and its depth shallow. Dully brown with mud and detritus, the flat surface shows her reflection as clearly as a darkened window. Her hair has grown out past her shoulders now, pale blonde at the roots and dulling at the ends. It hangs about her face unwashed and uncombed in thin, twisted strands.

At first, all Nico can think is that she needs a shower. Then, that she deserves this. She ought to look this dirty: as soiled outside as inside. She wants to comb her hair out of her face, make the grime worse with a layer of mud, but her hand will not move from the mire. Beneath the dirt, she sees a child drowning in the puddle. Gaunt, with hollow bruises under her eyes and cracked lips parched from screaming in the night. Nico tries to swallow, drops her eyes to the lump stuck in her throat. How had anyone ever managed to look her in the eyes? Even she cannot face what she has done.

Hannah Elder

*When you're all grown up*

They hand out condoms like candy  
In brown paper goodie bags.  
Complicated treats that come  
With instructions.

Jonathan Borrero

*Mutually Assured Destruction*

After us, you are all that remains.  
Will you be relieved  
that the sun's bitter belly  
full of tar  
and insulin insulation  
has gone away? You  
must not like getting stepped on.  
I already took the final  
first step, Cockroach, aren't we two goats  
coaxed to crevice-peek over  
Mt. Azazel, another being's  
Atonement ceremony, glistening  
alabaster image of a  
thickheaded fence spiderweb  
surrounding your empty shells  
with storm drain guttural walls  
guttering all glint of potential life.  
Gnash your teeth!  
ash your hair! You and I  
roam nigh, docile pet—  
Come next Bikini Island flash  
you won't regret being so  
close to the ground.

Ryan Cornwell

*Harlequin Rushing*

I've played the harlequin  
And the still wind chime.

As I frantically dance now in my colors,  
You can hear my voice crack in a pause.  
Stagnant red dress running through all,  
All that I know, kept and wish to keep.  
Arising in my biological box,  
Only what I move to mute.

So I do.

Mute.

Censor, blackout and edit from the many onlookers numbering nil.  
Tirelessly rehearsing a show for a panel of metal backed glass  
Reflective of restlessness.  
A raucous. Clowns, talent, flyers and thieves. See me.  
They cannot and didn't.

I play the wall  
And the absent chill.

Grace Pochis

## *A Cat Tale*

In legends and stories you've oft heard it told  
How God labored to create in times of old  
All earth that we know: soil, sea, and sun;  
Then all of the animals and when that was done,  
How He created the ones He loved best  
The first of the humans, and let them rule the rest.  
But would you believe there's a different tale  
That cats tell their kittens when the winter winds wail?  
When freezing gusts blow and the nighttime is drear,  
Mothers tell kittens they have nothing to fear,  
Saying, "You are God's favorites, held close to His heart  
And safe in His paws right from the start,  
When God created the parents of us all,  
The first two cats—a tale to enthrall."  
She quiets their yowling and tells them to listen,  
Gathers them close and thus she begins:  
"It came that the sixth day, God created  
Two perfect beings, and to them related  
His own flawless form: sleek, furry, and poised.  
When He had finished, He rested and rejoiced.  
'The male I name Hugh, and the female, Anne,  
These two together shall populate the land.'  
And on their species he bestowed the name  
Of Cat; and thus each one of us can claim  
To be a king of noble lineage,  
Created perfectly, in God's image."  
"Mother," ask the kittens, "How did the first cats act?"  
"Why, just like you and I; first they hacked  
Up a hairball, then with a stretch and a yawn,

Curled up together asleep on the lawn.  
 'Why,' said God, 'I have given them my quirk  
 Of constant fatigue, so for menial work  
 They will need servants, obedient yet smart,  
 Weak in will and ignorant of their part  
 As eternal servants to my creation,  
 High in their own minds but low in station.'  
 Then He made with large brain and dexterous hands  
 A tall, furless creature He called *Hugh's Man*."  
 "Ah," say the kittens, "It is easy to see  
 Whence came the humans and their relation to we."  
 "Wait," says the mother, "There's yet one more part,  
 You know, their position was not *so* low to start.  
 Once cats and humans to each other could talk  
 Almost as equals and often would walk  
 Among the Garden, and God would walk too.  
 One day God commanded, 'Hugh's Man, you must do  
 Only as cats do; that means you must eat  
 No fruit or vegetable, just fish and meat.'  
 Now in this Garden was a wonderful crop  
 Of trees thick with bounty, from which would drop  
 Fish, bird or mouse, whenever one wanted  
 (Such an amount the hungriest cat would be daunted).  
 Amid the fish and fowl one fruit tree stood  
 Displeasing to cats, but to Hugh's Man looked good.  
 He pined for the fruit long day after day,  
 Till before it he froze, without work, without play,  
 Grew sickly and weak, but refused any meat,  
 Said 'Naught shall I touch, if fruit I can't eat.'  
 When one day, 'Without fruit, I will die!' he cried,  
 There appeared at once a dog at his side,  
 Who said, 'Why pain yourself for aught but God's word?  
 He only deceives you, haven't you heard?  
 Wishes to keep you tight under His thumb,

To serve His dear cats, from birth till death come.  
 You know you are stronger and quicker in faculty,  
 And eating the fruit will increase this capacity.'  
 Fooled by the Tempter, he reached out and took  
 Fruit though he knew better (indeed, his hand shook).  
 As he stood there cramming it fast to his mouth  
 Immediately God's wind roared to the south,  
 'What have you done, betrayed I the Creator,  
 For a few sly words from Dog the Evader?'  
 "'Twas not fair what you did!' Hugh's Man protested.  
 'Tempt me with fruit, my will hopelessly tested.'  
 'Fine,' said God, 'I will judge fairly each faction,  
 Deal punishment according to each of your actions.  
 Hugh's Man, you wanted to eat of all trees,  
 As well as your strength and smarts to increase.  
 You shall have both, the world and intelligence,  
 But still cats you shall serve as your recompense.  
 And you, Trickster Dog, who wished to command  
 Hugh's Man's will, instead shall be at his hand  
 To do his bidding, amuse and entertain  
 With a few foolish tricks, his attention your aim.  
 And as both of you proved your nature corrupt,  
 The harmony of speech I shall interrupt.  
 So Hugh's Man with Dog cannot conspire,  
 Nor in my cats spark, tempt, or inspire  
 A trace of the poison killing the man.  
 Thus it shall be till the end of my plan.'  
 When God had gone they turned to each other  
 And found they could not understand one another.  
 But to this day they keep each other near,  
 Man to feed dog, dog man's spirits to cheer.  
 Thus dog is cat's foe, and for man's obsession,  
 Forever will he be some cat's possession."

Andrew Beebe

### *Sound Effect of Myself*

A field with girl alone  
swells along its purple foci,  
which seem to precipitate  
from the sweet salt sunlight  
in the grass, squishing  
like synthsete Christmas.  
The impression, called laughter,  
love and affection, is actually  
only the tension in the wire.  
Real me is in the kitchen, having an affair  
with the placebo effect, the candlewax,  
and the frailty of my morning voice.  
Soup ladles wrack my testosterone bones  
which can suck it, says Einstein.  
Yeah, okay, pack the Psychology pills  
but there has to be room left in the basket for  
the speedstick, a breadstick, and a condom.  
Now frat boy's gnawing  
on my screwdriver, like Freud  
wanted a better Halloween prank.  
Sway, yank, yank,  
Rocket Power.  
I would rather let the marmalade run  
out of my head and *straight into hers*,  
turn the oven all the way up and sprinkle,  
I dunno, fluorine over the slightly  
burnt cake after our communication.  
X=Y.  
*Christ*, I could just melt

under all the ways I could teach her that X=Y,  
and Joyce's middle names twirling  
naked though magazine pages.  
Somewhere deep beneath the darkness  
of the Bathypelagic zone,  
I discovered the end of the spool  
and the long secret of twine wrapping.  
Me, I'm a pervert; I steal the teabags  
from women's dormitories  
and see if they boil by themselves.  
I'm bubbling blank verse, unwritable rage, and  
dandruff shampoo. Teased, stripped, and bent over  
simply the *idea*  
of oolong.

Saran Walker

## *Halving*

myself like Janus,  
that orbits for you,  
I lingered on earth to watch  
handed you the tether.  
sometimes I wish you'd let go,  
It's hard not to mourn  
it's hard not to wallow in its tides.  
my gift to you.  
cracking in two.  
it was like splitting a peach.  
and I cupped my palms into scales,  
myself like Janus,  
I allotted a piece  
loves remotely.  
my double drift away,  
Distance draws taut lines;  
release my umbilical satellite.  
the loss of a waxing fragment,  
You hold this lonely anchor,  
No more than I could tug  
can I reclaim what I lost from  
I placed value through fracture—  
The pit lodged in my throat  
weighing who'd get the bigger half.

Elli Ross

## *What it Means to be a Grown Up*

Anita Philips is 34 years old, happily married, with two kids, Renee and Ben. Today she is home from work because it is her son's birthday. He is turning seven.

"It's a milestone," she promises. "We threw a big party for your sister when she turned seven."

Ben is too young to remember that, and he doesn't want a big party, anyway. He says he just wants to invite Best Friend and Other Best Friend, no matter how much Anita tries to cajole him into a bigger party.

"A smaller party means less to clean up," her husband helpfully points out.

"I don't like staying home from work to host the smallest party in the world," Anita responds.

Nevertheless, that is what happens. There is cake (white cake; Ben, as contrary a seven-year-old as there ever was, has decided not to like chocolate) which is eaten by the six of them: Ben, Ben's Friends, Anita, Renee, and Husband. There are presents, which are opened by one of them: Ben. There are party hats, worn by all. Balloons, popped by the three boys while Husband half-heartedly discourages them. Anita goes to the study and covers her ears until the popping stops.

"Less to clean up," she comments, after the boys leave, as she stares at the floor where shreds of balloons lie like a mass rubber grave uncovered.

Husband says, "I didn't know they were going to pop *all* the balloons."

"They can't be vacuumed up," Anita continues. "We'll have to get them by hand."

"We need a better vacuum."

Anita nods her agreement and imagines the balloon shreds getting sucked up into a swirling vortex inside a machine at her hands. What a powerful feeling that must be.

She and Husband spend half an hour picking balloon shards out of

the carpet. Many of them have only developed a hole and are largely in one piece, but those that shattered make for difficult and time-consuming work. What must it look like from the perspective of the balloon, Anita thinks. Watching all its fellow balloons get killed and now unceremoniously having their empty bodies thrown into the garbage.

“My parents would never have let me get away with this,” Husband comments.

“Mine would,” Anita says. “If I were seven, and we had this many balloons, and I wanted to pop them. I could have popped them all.”

“That’s because you were an only child. I bet they wouldn’t if you were the youngest of five.”

Anita yawns as she shakes her head. Ben and Renee are in bed, and for her it is past bedtime, but the kids can’t wake up to this. It’s pure luck they don’t own an animal who might eat the popped balloons and die.

Husband tosses the last balloon scrap into the trash and moves it back to its place in the kitchen. Anita gets up off her knees and staggers—surely thirty-four is too young to have old-woman knees—to the bathroom to brush her teeth. The cake has been slowly decaying them for the past several hours and she is itching to get rid of it.

“Hey,” she says to Husband as they crawl into bed together. “Don’t let me forget to call my parents tomorrow.”

“I won’t,” he says.

He will, she thinks. But she will remember.

She falls asleep to the sound of rain on the roof.

\*\*\*

Anita is 21 and a mere three months away from graduating college. On her finger is an engagement ring; in her belly, though she doesn’t know it yet, is the beginnings of a baby. She plans to get married right after graduating—a plan her mother would never approve of, but then, her mother was married just out of high school to a man she divorced only a year later, so her relationship advice is nothing Anita takes too seriously.

For the past three nights, Anita has been staying up late to study. She has a midterm coming up, and she cannot afford to fail it. Today she is in

the library, suppressing every yawn and staring at the words on the page in front of her. They don’t focus. She hasn’t turned a page in fifteen minutes. She can no longer remember what subject she is studying.

Her eyelids droop.

“Psychology,” she reminds herself. “I’m studying psychology.”

She turns the page and focuses on the picture on the top left. A mother and her child. The caption explains briefly the concept of motherhood, and she thinks, what an odd concept. One day, she thinks, I will have children. Two children, a boy and a girl.

Psychology, she reminds herself.

It is the middle of the afternoon. The library around her is buzzing with as much life as a library ever is. Still, her eyes close, her head droops, and she falls asleep on the picture of motherhood.

\*\*\*

Anita is 17 years old. Yesterday, she graduated high school. Her parents came and cheered her on, and today they are encouraging her to look up all the information she can on her college of choice. For the first time, she notices Mother’s hair is turning gray and the wrinkles around Father’s eyes are deepening. She worries about them getting old, though they are not that old. Mother had Anita when she was 23, after all.

Tonight, she stayed out past her curfew to be with her boyfriend. She has come to realize they have very little in common, now that they no longer have classes together, but she will give him one more summer before she breaks up with him.

Boyfriend kisses her as she steps out of the car. It’s one in the morning, and she is exhausted and slightly drunk. She pushes him away.

“Goodnight, babe,” he says.

“Goodnight, Boyfriend,” she says.

She climbs in through her window (left unlocked, though her parents always implore her not to) and crawls into bed. I wonder, she thinks, what a hangover will feel like.

She remembers to take off her shoes only after she is already in bed. Instead, though, she falls asleep.

\*\*\*

Anita is 6 years old. She writes the names of all the boys she has a crush on in her Lisa Frank notebook. The list includes every boy in her class, except Kyle, the principal's son. He once stole a chair she was saving for her best friend and she has never forgiven him for that.

Anita regards her Lisa Frank notebook as her diary. It holds the names of boys she likes, the names of boys she hates, the names she will give her future children. It details exactly what her first date will go like, and how her wedding will be. She has even doodled her married name, Anita Phillips, in the margins of the page on which she drew her wedding. She has her whole life planned out. She keeps it under her pillow so that her parents won't find it. She does not know that Mother already knows where it is, nor that when she goes to college, Father will find it and throw it away, thinking it is nothing. She does not know that one day she will look back through the pages and laugh at her romantic notions as a six-year-old.

For now, she clutches the book under the pillow. It replaces, for her, the security blanket that went through the wash too many times and was covertly tossed on garbage day. She can't sleep without it, but as long as her fingers are wrapped around the bright rainbow cover, she is off within minutes.

She yawns. Her fingers curl more securely around the book. Her eyelids flutter, and she is gone.

\*\*\*

Little Anita is 18 months old. Her parents watch her nearly every moment, not because they are afraid she will hurt herself, but because they are afraid to miss something. Anita is past due to say her first words, but she has always been a quiet baby.

Today has been a long day. Mother took Anita to the park, where they sat together and looked at squirrels. Anita gurgled happily for a few minutes before losing interest. Afterward, they ran errands, and Anita amused herself by staring at the objects and people they passed by. Mother thinks she must be tired, but when they get home, she refuses to go down for a nap.

Evening comes. After dinner, Mother and Father get out Anita's favorite toys and wave them in front of her face. Sometimes she giggles and reaches for them; tonight, she is silent, watching them go by like distant airplanes. Mother has the video camera out in case she does something cute. Father has the baby book out and ready to record. Something is going to happen. Both are sure of it.

Anita opens her mouth.

Mother readies the video camera. Father readies the pen and baby book.

"All this has happened before," Anita says.

She closes her eyes and falls asleep.

Dillon Peck

*Liquefy*

I want to shed my outer layer, first.  
I want my skin and fat to split  
My hair to fall in clumps, my teeth  
To plink mildly down, into the sink.  
Muscles snap off with a twang  
Organs hang from tendrils, then pop  
bang, meat confetti to the floor.  
I want my bones to stand a moment  
Appearing to support themselves  
Before collapsing.  
I want to liquefy, to churn.  
Like a witch's cauldron,  
My brain burning. Popping, snapping,  
Black smoke rising.  
No image in the mirror left,  
Nothing missing, nothing there at all,  
No disproportion.  
Nothing big, or tall, or hairy  
No more dreams, no comparing.

Saran Walker

## *Strange Cargo*

*“Of course, their whiskey was drugged. Bailey says that he and his pal woke the next day to a kick in the stomach and orders to heave hard, and they labored at sea for months.”*

—Georgia Smith, “About That Blood in the Scuppers”

You see that hatch over there?  
That spot where the wood doesn't match  
with the rest of the floor?  
That's where they took Johnny last month  
when he came in for a drink.  
A lot of tattoos. Sailors, I think.  
I saw how rough their hands were  
when they slid their money across the counter,  
paying for Johnny to drown  
himself in liquor. “Of all the places,”  
he laughed, and they just kept laying down coins.  
Tough as wood, those grim sunburned faces.  
When Johnny finally went limp  
like a bludgeoned fish,  
they hauled him straight to that trapdoor.  
I don't know for sure where it leads;  
I've heard rumors it runs to the docks by the shore.  
Anyway, I never saw Johnny again.  
It was such a beautiful night too,  
fog clear enough to see the moon  
reflected in the harbor,  
round and smooth as a nautilus shell.  
I'll bet Johnny missed the whole thing,  
passed out in a ship's hold,

sticky with whisky and saltwater.  
Swim or sink.  
I'll bet he woke up shaking,  
hangover giving way to seasickness:  
A big drink for a big drink.

Blanca Gutierrez

*My First Rodeo*

Was under Mexico's sun; one that spread  
its fire across the blue  
and my skin and

the pit in the ground  
lined with cement and men  
in pointed boots, and above  
that—the people and the hawks

dizzy in the sky

one dives

a red baseball cap yells  
his price at the crowd, so I raise  
my hand  
and trade pesos for sugar. It  
tastes like spurts of fresh sun,  
a trickle of rays that tense  
my jaw;  
the cane cuts are drenched in them.  
Will they or won't they splinter  
my gums,  
either way. No matter. The bull is out—  
finally—  
and just as quickly it's gone  
again, three bucks  
and you're out. Three bucks  
could get you three bottles of beer  
and a baggie of sugar cane.

Will Nickerson

*Scars from the Corner of a Newspaper Machine*

We walk in the dark. We walk in the haze of light pollution. We walk in silence. We walk holding hands. We let go. She breaks off into a run—I follow her—she gets tired—she walks ten feet in front of me. We sit on a curb. We sit in cold. We sit in silence. We sit with our heads on our knees. She says—I feel like it is my fault—she says—it's all I can think about—she says—there was mulch embedded in my leg, I was covered in small cuts, I had no underwear on the bus ride home. I lie—no it's not—I lie—it's all his fault—I lie—there is nothing you could have done—I say—he is sick and fucked in the head. We cry together. We cry loud. We cry gross. We cry as victims. We still cry because I told her she is powerless.

Stephen Watson

*Fire Balloon Poem*

When I awoke, I was in  
Oregon, and the moon was above  
Siskiyou, and the crow moon was above  
California, and a fire balloon—or what

I thought was a fire balloon, was in  
Night, and the squeak of the  
Rail, engulfed in mountain  
Snow, must have been very cold.

I could not see, but somewhere ahead of me  
On the front of the train I envisioned  
The piercing light, the train fashioned  
In its circuit, the reoccurring dream  
Of mountain firs, who claim to see it  
Then gone.

This is logging territory,  
Brown and gray stumps line  
The territory, and the moon  
Reflected off the gray water  
Of the Rogue or Klamath,  
Either/or.

When I looked back up,  
The balloon was gone, incinerated  
By its own fancy, or blown aside  
Into the tip of a peak  
Or just gone and far off,

Endless miles, the dull-red  
Speck into the endless gray and black  
Of coastal Oregon/California.

Fire Balloons, I dreamed,  
Lined the sky with red dotted—  
Thinking I had missed Shasta  
On the way up, and that the next stop  
Was Eugene, Albany, Oregon City,  
Circuit, mountains, endless miles.