

This river is the color red;  
it flows into the sea.  
Two lives become one thought—  
it is the restless mind.

这是一条红色的河  
它流入大海  
两个人的生命成为一个思绪  
为不安的心灵

# FILIBUSTER

阻挠议事

2011



# Writings whose words

# vividly paint pictures

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## Context

—— 上下文 ——

Kali Piro

I’m sitting on a loud yellow school bus next to my friends, who are a year older than me. Our crazed bus driver bangs a large stick against the yellow metal as if it is going to work and control us to silence—it does for the most part. The stiff brown-leathered seats can only fit two people comfortably, but my seat holds three. I’m squished in the middle with no room to move, no room to escape. To my right, my friend, Natalie, sits. She’s a skinny brunette who loves to smoke and flip her large bangs under so that they’re perfectly rounded to the top of her eyebrows. To my left, my friend, Julie, sits, and she’s very different from Natalie. Julie has long blonde hair that looks like it’s never been brushed. She’s athletic, and like me, she comes from a military background.


These two girls are my best friends even though they are in the sixth grade, and I am the only one in the fifth. Our little group isn’t the nicest group on the bus, but I try to be nice, especially to Martha who is the girl that everyone makes fun of and laughs at. I feel sorry for her but can’t show it. As I sit on the school bus, Julie and Natalie start making fun of Martha, but Martha truly believes that they’re her best friends. I remain squished and silent.

My silence doesn’t go unnoticed because the joking turns on me. I’m the “goody-goody,” “teacher’s pet,” and “overachiever”—all names I’m used to hearing. I remain silent and avert my eyes to the window, but that doesn’t stop the name-calling, even Martha’s saying the names; the need to be accepted is a chain effect. I give a giggle and try to change the subject.

“Have you ever said a curse word?” Natalie asks.

I shake my head as my two friends agree loudly that I AM a goody-goody, but on this particular day, they want to change all of that for me. They start chanting loudly for me to cuss. When that doesn’t work, then they start taunting me.

“C’mon, just say it. It won’t hurt you, and your mom won’t find



“Have you ever said  
a curse word?”



out. Just say it—say it,” says Julie.

I take in a deep breath, give a final look out the window, and say “damn” very low. The girls start laughing like hyenas and want me to say it again. I do: “Damn.”

Once I say the curse word again, I don’t feel the same; I’m a new person, not the old me—I am a person who is no longer “clean.” It was the first time that I was ever coerced into demoralizing myself with one simple word—“damn.”

Later at home, I develop this urge to say the word again as if I joined a secret society of curse-word speakers and that one word was the password. My mother is in the kitchen cooking supper for my sister and me while we do our homework. My head is swirling with my friends’ chanting, taunting urges for me to curse again, and I do: “Damn.” My mother’s supersonic hearing picks up the despicable word, and she asks me to repeat the word to make sure she’d heard everything correctly the first time. I look at her with shame and guilt, but I won’t come clean. I blatantly lie to my mother. It’s a chain effect.

Later, at age thirteen, I will learn how to create a grammatical sentence using a curse word for almost every part of speech. The words are again to me without meaning, just the thrill. I feel grown and invincible, but most of all, angry at the word. I’m still controlled by these curse words because it’s a part of the cursing chain effect.

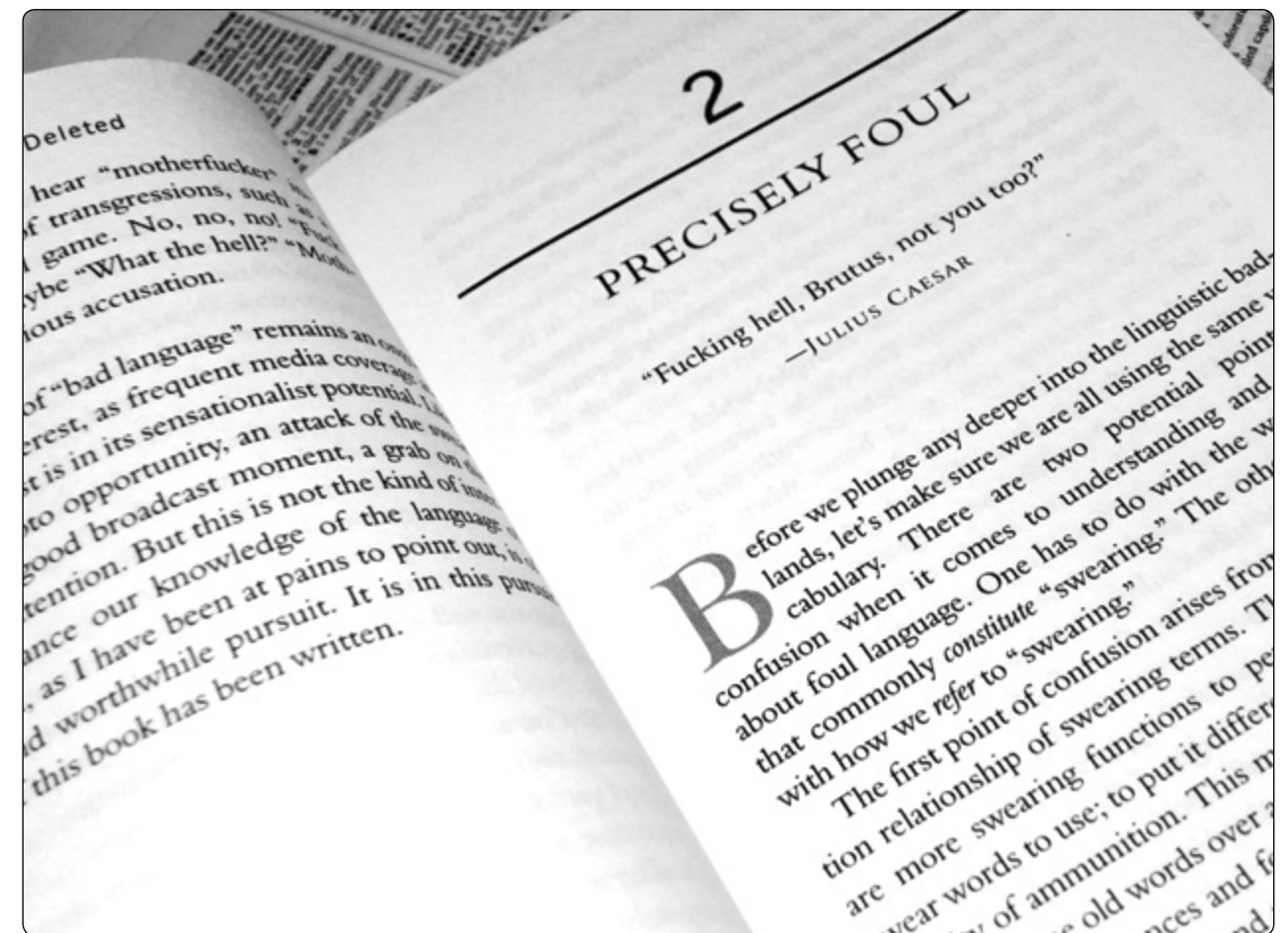
Later still, in college, I will learn the curse words are only blank words with terrible meanings put behind them. I will believe that I’m clever with this notion and will spread my philosophy. I will start saying, “F’n” or “GD” as a way to prove that it’s the tone and context, not necessarily the words. My mind and personal philosophies are centered, no, controlled, by this logic. It’s the chain effect.

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**I**t was the first time that I was ever coerced into demoralizing myself with one simple word—“damn.”

And later even still, I will learn that the curse words are only excuses and failed attempts to show emotions. The curse words are empty, and I will break into the control tower to take over the remote to my mouth and logic. I will learn how to express myself with “grown-up words.” I will try to be cleaned, at least for my children’s sake, because that’s what adults do. I will learn that self-control will be more important than establishing my ignorant philosophies. But when all words fail, I will be able to look beyond the taunting urge.

But on this day and on this school bus, with jeering taunts and the need to be accepted, I’m controlled by the moment and forced to say the word. I can’t look beyond Natalie to see out the window. My eyes stopped short; my mouth opens for the cursing chain effect. “Damn”: innocence; “Fuck”: emotions; “Shit”: mistakes; “God Damn”: people.



“Et Tu, Brute?”

我不知道这是什么——题目翻译者

## Porphyria's Song: "To My Rustic Lover"

——给我在乡村的爱人——

Stephen Paul Bray

How can a lover plan her escape  
when wine bottles, though dry,  
are not enough to make a father take  
    a second look at daughter's cry?  
Still Love's made up my mind.

Regal ties would soon be severed.  
    Even so, Love cannot wait  
for prideful men who say "Never!"  
    yet leave unguarded Freedom's gate.  
And Love she does not hesitate.

Through the rain, and with much haste  
    I dash to his front door.  
Entering, I gaze upon my fate  
by the fire, on the floor.  
And I want him all the more.

Yet to him the former minutes  
    with my case before the judge  
has hours seemed. And his temperament  
    shows he would hold a grudge.  
What does anger know of love?

Once a man is full of passion  
    it only takes a little while  
for jealousy's distraction  
    to render a woman's smile  
as powerless as a child.

Reassurance attempts in vain,  
    even through the form of kisses,  
to properly explain  
to him that mister has his mistress.  
Yet my love is still distressed.  
"Put your hand in mine  
    my love, I will your portion be."  
But even through a woman's touch divine,  
    he fails still to see:  
It is I with him and he with me.

His ears they have not heard a word  
    of my good news tonight.  
Finally, he grasps my hair, I'm scared,  
    I know not what is on his mind.  
I sigh, "Lover, please be kind."



"Forbidden Fruit"  
by Audra Hagel



# Little Bird

—— 小鸟 ——

Rachel Meeks

A sleepy little bird woke to find her cage door open. The formerly cluttered workshop where she lived was empty. She chirped at the empty room, but there was no reply. Shyly, she bobbed to the door of her cage and looked down. She had only left her cage to sit on the shoulder of her master while he worked, so she felt a bit mischievous leaving without his permission, but she didn't know what else to do. The splintered floorboards did not look like a kind place to land, but she leaned out into space anyway. She spread her wings and glided on the dusty air to the floor. She fluttered back and forth around the room to find that nothing was left behind except for one long strand of red thread. "Now why would my master leave this behind?" the little bird wondered. Her master was a weaver and only used red thread for his most special creations. Though he worked out of a musty old shop, he was very popular. People in town were constantly visiting him and buying his tapestries. Each of his works had its own story, and the meaning was found out by which character was woven with red thread. Whoever had red on him was special and had a job to do. The little bird had never seen the customers because her master would cover her cage while they were in the shop, but she could hear them talking and musing over the stories and the beautiful red thread. Her master told her that he had adopted her when he found her fallen from her mother's nest and had kept her with him in the shop from that point on, until this morning that is. She carefully picked up the precious thread in her beak. "I will look for my master," she told herself, "and when I find him I will return his thread, and then he will forgive me for whatever I did to make him want to leave me behind."

So, the little bird set out. She flew around the town looking in shops, houses, barns, even the old dingy jailhouse, but couldn't find her master. She had never flown around the town before and was enjoying exploring, but everywhere people were looking at the little bird with

amazed and excited looks on their faces. "They can't believe that my master left his red thread," she told herself. Everyone in the town knew how important the thread was, and everyone wanted his own tapestry with red in it.

"How beautiful," one old man said with a smile as the little bird rested on the bench he was sitting on. "If only I could have a little piece," he sighed. The little bird thought to herself and reckoned that one little piece wouldn't matter that much, after all she had a very long piece of thread. Her master would still have all the thread he needed. So, she cut a small piece off the end of the thread and gave it to the man. Before she flew away, he smiled and thanked the little bird as he admired his red thread.

The little bird continued her search for her master, but only flew a short distance before she came upon someone else who wanted a piece of thread. This time it was a young girl wearing dirty clothes and picking a newspaper out of a garbage can. As the little bird was resting in a nearby tree, the little girl crept over cautiously. "May I have just a small piece?" the girl asked the little bird. "I've never had anything red before," she whispered as she stood on tippy-toes to talk to the bird. "Certainly if the old man could have a piece, this little girl could have one too" the little bird told herself. Gladly, the little bird snipped off a piece and let the little girl take it from her beak. The girl looked up at the bird and smiled, and put the thread safely away in her pocket.

Time and time again, the little bird met people in the town who wanted the red thread, and she kept giving away pieces of it until all she had left was a piece barely as long as herself. "Now, I can't give anymore away if I plan on returning any to my master; certainly he wants his thread back," she said to herself, though secretly she wanted a small piece for herself. She had often admired the thread from her cage or her master's shoulder, but she was never given any for her own. As the sun was nearing the horizon, the little bird started looking for a roost to settle in for the night. She had just found the perfect spot, when all of a sudden she heard bells ringing from the church in the center of town. The little bird flew over to see what people were doing at the church on a weekday. She saw a line of people wearing black following four men carrying a tiny white casket towards the cemetery beside the church. The little bird flew down and perched on a light pole that had yet been

lit for the coming night. Everyone was very quiet and looked at his feet. Women wearing big hats dabbed their eyes with their husbands' handkerchiefs as the sun set on the little casket. The only person making any noise at all was a woman at the end of the line. She was sobbing as her husband held her up as he reached for the hand rail with a shaky, white hand to navigate his wife down the front steps of the church. The little bird wanted a closer look, so she glided down to a head stone and watched the party. The little coffin was put into the earth, and everyone began to leave except for that last couple. The woman sank to her knees and gripped a handful of cold, damp earth in front of the headstone.

Night fell as she sobbed for what seemed like hours to the little bird as her husband held her shoulders and let big tear drops wet his face. The little bird flew towards the newly upturned dirt and landed in front of the woman. The woman looked at the bird and the thread she was carrying in her beak and stopped crying. The bird bounced forward and laid the remainder of the thread on top of the damp earth in the woman's hand. The man kneeled down with his wife to examine the

**The woman sank to her knees  
and gripped a handful  
of cold, damp earth  
in front of the headstone.**



gift of red thread that would have been the little bird's only chance to earn her master's forgiveness. Together they held the thread and

finally looked down at the bird and smiled with teary eyes. As the couple left, the little bird fluttered away to a nearby pine tree to spend the night in. She knew the couple needed a piece of thread, but now she had none at all to return to her master, and certainly none to keep for herself. There was no way he would take her back now. She hid her face in her wing and wept small tears onto her slick feathers.

Morning light awakened the little bird, and to her surprise, looking up at her from the ground was her master. She chirped with delight at his presence until she remembered that she had given away all his thread. She bobbed her head nervously as her master coaxed her out of the tree. Finally she lit on his shoulder the way she always had in the shop, and together they entered a small building on the other side of town. She hung her head when she saw all the weaving equipment and different colored thread spread throughout the shop. What was he to do

when he found out he had no red thread? Finally, her master took her from his shoulder and held her in his hands.

"I left some thread for you to carry, did you find it?" he master asked with his low gruff voice.

She chirped sadly as she rocked back and forth in his hands.

"So you did find it, but you don't have it now, do you?" he prodded, slightly frowning.

The little bird shook her head from side to side and stared at her clawed feet.

"Did you lose it?" he asked.

The little bird shook her head "No" without looking at his face.

"You gave it away, to people in the town?" he asked.

The little bird chirped yes and tried to explain to him how she didn't mean for it to happen, but when she looked up at his face, she realized he was smiling.

"It's okay," he said soothingly, "I have more than enough red thread for everyone in the town. I wanted you to give away the thread I left."

Immediately, the little bird quieted down and looked up at her master. She cocked her head to one side and chirped questioningly.

He began, "Not everyone comes to receive a tapestry with red thread from me. Some people don't know how precious the red thread is, or they do know but feel like they aren't good enough for it, or they might want it but don't know how to ask. I thought that if some of those people were given a piece of thread by you then they might seek me out for the rest of the creation."

The little bird nodded her head slowly, feeling honored that her master would use her to help those people, but eventually she looked back down at her feet.

Her master smiled, "Ah, you wanted to keep some for yourself, didn't you?"

The little bird didn't chirp or move at all. She stood as still as she could, waiting for what he would say next. But instead of speaking, he carried her over to a mirror.

"Once you're mine you don't need any thread," he said, and in the mirror stood a little red bird in the hands of her master.



## Origins, Pt. 1

—— 源头 第一篇章 ——

Joseph S. Brannon

Rudework mechanisms fold all mini-matter into cinder  
 Cannons, bold Bronze Age formations, magnificent eons  
 Sculptured in rocky amoral faces, a deliberate roughness  
 Etched by time, an ambiguous yet fine tuned chipping away  
 Of what should not be real, like the great cascading knives of  
 A brilliant new world, an explosion sectioned by the formal  
 Functions of the horizon, where man first lost its earthly host.  
 If they are not careful, they'll once again fall into the deep  
 Spiretooth crags of the Origin Maw.

## Heart's Raining Reign

—— 雨心 ——

Kali Piro

Tears trickle from time to time.  
 Their cold, salty presence defines  
 the hurting wound burning as if from a lime,  
 a pain of no one else but mine.

Their cold, salty presence defines  
 the bitterness of past loves,  
 a pain of no one else but mine,  
 which is a constant pest my heart shoves.

The bitterness of past loves  
 shows the curse on my family's women,  
 which is a constant pest my heart shoves,  
 refusing to face the light of past sin.

Showing the curse on my family's women,  
 the hurting wound burning as if from a lime,  
 refusing to face the light of past sin,  
 tears trickle from time to time.

## “like an old vinyl record...”

“像一张黑胶老唱片...”

Meggy-Kate Gutermuth

Bring the flower map and the colors;  
I'll bring my beads and paisleys and we'll run off like the hippies we once were.  
Go get Jimi and I'll pick up Janis on the way;  
Time is running out for us to say the things we need to say;

Everyone's talking us down;  
We hear their words,  
Blind to their intentions;  
We're a world away  
As we stand here taking it all.

Every time before when signs would sway,  
We'd take the message and be gone in a day;  
Devilish fairies love to bite,  
But we have no patience to stay and fight.

Janis always understood our hearts in turmoil;  
She'd chuckle and tell us a story or two.  
Remember what it was like when freedom was just another word  
for nothing left to lose?  
In my journal are our conversations;  
In my heart are the songs.

I still remember Jimi,  
His smirk and all the girls around,  
They didn't phase us -- he would embrace us.  
Lucky were we to be the girls he loved,  
But we've been down to hell, and up above.

Whatever became of poets, of men like him?

Miles we've walked,  
All our shoes have learned how to talk,  
Gritty, sweaty and rebellious,  
That was the way Dad raised us.

21 years of age;  
Where is he now? Don't know—  
I could judge, but gypsy is in our blood.  
Oh how I miss being wild,  
Owing nothing to no one.

Poetic in its simplicity,  
Photographic memories.

Mmm... the good old days  
When the Gutermuth girls ran the highways;  
Maybe we'll return  
One of these days!



# Beagle Serenade

比格犬的小夜曲

Kevin Lee Garner

I.

Mezzo-piano, andante, softly:

vigilant whimpers by the back glass sliding door  
at a ripe 6 a.m.—

Master will be gone from the world again.

II.

Forte: a casual passer-by receives a volley

of indignant barks from the beagle

atop a hitched, dirt-covered boat beside the swing set—

a backyard mob boss

with a Chicago typewriter

that he calls his “bark bark bark!”

III.

Piano, allegro: a steady yipping into lunchtime

while I study Data Communications

with boiling blood

in the apartment

adjacent

to his demesne.

IV.

Pianissimo, softly: at a walking pace

he paces the soft grass

in confusion.

“buh... buh... bark...”

Did ever he have a master  
who loved and for him cared  
so?

V.

A rumbling truck engine crescendos,  
and I cringe. The first bark escapes him  
like the air from a punched clown,  
and then, Fortississimo!

A flood of the existential pain  
of a trapped dog released like  
belabored vigils unto God from Job  
in boils, in the storms, in the sea of death,  
alive and terrified of his own existence!

“BAOOOOOOO! BAOOOOOOO! RARARAOOOO!”

the beagle screams with wagging tail and wet snout  
as though for the first time,  
forcing from his throat sounds most dogs  
don't know,

yet the timbre is always the same,

a love song to the master

who, from the mouth of oblivion,

rematerialized to bestow sacraments

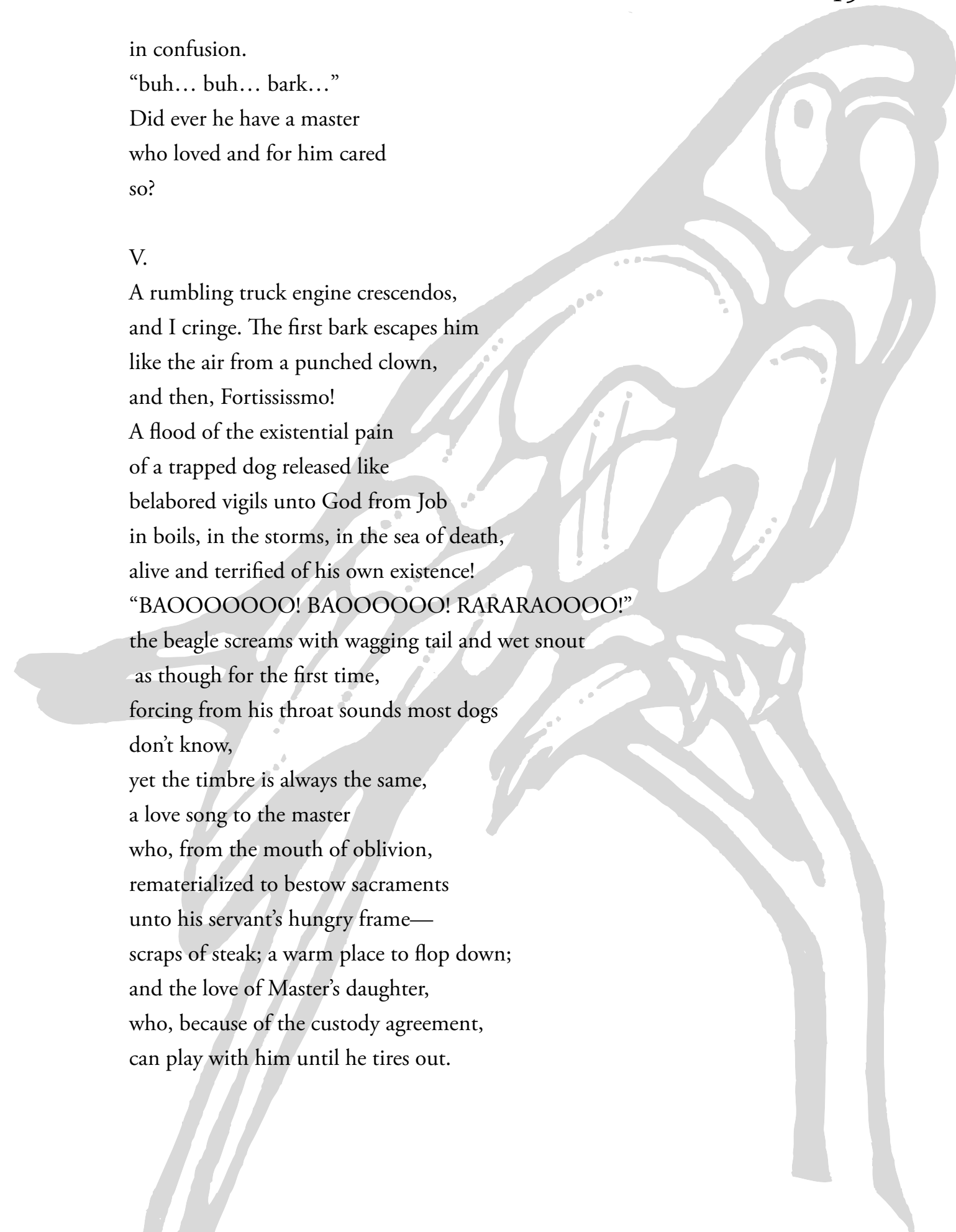
unto his servant's hungry frame—

scraps of steak; a warm place to flop down;

and the love of Master's daughter,

who, because of the custody agreement,

can play with him until he tires out.



# The Old Place

老地方

Kali Piro

I return to a stack of rubble,  
splintered and nailed,

standing upright amidst lively trees,  
swaying  
with  
the  
pine's  
groove.

Tall weeds climb high—  
Jolly Green Giant's spawn.

Basking in pale light,  
crowded by woods and emptiness;

to this place  
I return. I remember

tales of snakes, songs  
answered prayers—generations heard.

I see the pots, the fields—  
gravestones belonging to the bone—

dust of shared DNA,  
tracking device, made me

come to this land of  
a land known in my home, nowhere,

where an oil-canvassed portrait  
hangs in my memory:

the chickens, well, and hard work  
stained to the land,

the space often referred  
to "The Old Place."

My future inheritance—  
a place not accepted

by my Nature, I will  
see this place, face-to-face.

There I'll find rustic,  
hiding greenweeds,

a splintered past  
nailed to my genes.

And by our laws,  
I will return, again,

in this wooded,

barren space.

## Swans Trained

—— 天鹅培训 ——

E. D. Woodworth



Swans, trained like children,  
swarm to figures on the bridge  
who possess food

## The Fog Puncher

—— 打雾的人 ——

Arvilla Fee

Brother, the fog wrapped around you like a wet, velvety cloak,  
choking out the child you once were with her sinister, silvery fingers,  
blocking out the light of the sun until you could no longer find your way.  
And you floundered unevenly, sucking bitter nicotine deep into your lungs,  
grinding the useless stubs beneath your boots, while that cup containing  
eight ounces of black, sluggish coffee slowly became part of your hand.

Then came the drugs, brother, a dazzling myriad of shapes, sizes and colors.  
And you shot them, snorted them, inhaled them, swallowed them—let them  
assault your weakened body like a fierce rain of hot volcanic ash—let them burn  
through your organs and turn your brain cells to mush. Where have you gone,  
brother? I know so little about your life, your location, your state of mind. The  
Christmas presents I bought for you two years ago still sit in the corner... waiting.

Are the rumors true, brother... you live in your car? Are you too far down the  
rabbit hole to even know you are lost and that the Mad Hatter has tricked you  
into thinking there is no time to reflect, to change, to heal? Can you find a vine and  
pull yourself up from the inky depths or will you remain knee-deep in the marshes  
of mysterious substances, overpowered by the stench of hopelessness, uncertainty  
and fear? Will you let go of your pride and try to recover some of the forgotten child?

Or do you continue to throw your fists against the fog... punching and punching...  
but never finding the sun?



# Alone

—— 孤单 ——

Audra Hagel

Alone. She walked alone down a dusty road. Depressed, she sat down on a bench beneath the sagging limbs of a tree. The last of the withered leaves clung to the branches with pathetic truancy. Dead leaves gathered around her ankles as the weary wind blew them despondently, desolately towards her. Her tired neck leaned against the rough trunk of the tree. Together with the wind, she released a sigh. Alone.

“Callahan”  
by Alicia Fry (opposite)





# The Graveyard Tale

墓地的故事

Lacey Young

You're lonely in your small apartment; you wonder when your friend will come pick you up to take you to that weird new gay bar on 45th where everybody dresses like space cowboys. For two hours, you've been wandering back and forth between your kitchen (where you are slowly eating a gallon box of chocolate ice cream) and your bedroom (where, like always, you have nothing to wear).

A recent cleaning binge has left your wardrobe looking scanty: everything that reminds you of your recent ex you have burned in your neighbor's trashcan while he was at the gym. Your own trashcan was stolen by the kids four doors down when they went trashcan riding last Friday.

Depressed and left with only two things that aren't your chicken costume from your high school job or far too ratty for anybody to ever see...ever...you wear:

- A. Your short polka dotted white dress from Macy's or
- B. Your yellow and fusia leopard print poncho and jeans.

If you chose

Option A: Continue Onward

Option B: Your narrator kills you because your fashion choice disgusts her.

Your friend, always late, arrives at your door. She compliments your fashion choice—she is wearing a striped dress that contrasts your dress well. You know it does this because she told you, and you say, “Fantastic,” but you're thinking, “Go to hell.”

“I need to borrow some shoes,” she says, slipping into your bedroom like the rat she is. You follow, a bit too depressed to hate her company yet just depressed enough to allow your irritating acquaintance to actually borrow your heels. The last shoes she borrowed never found you again.

When you enter your room, that slut is going through your entire (meager) closet and throwing your favorite items on the old carpet. Every now and again, she inserts an indignant noise like she can't possibly believe you own whatever she has in her hands. Upon entering your room, she sneers at that poncho laid out on your bed and tells you the only thing it's good for is dumping bodies. You:

A. Nod vaguely in agreement since you weren't really listening and leave for the bar.

B. Feel that she's right, and that she's the right size, so you attack her with your stiletto.

If you chose

Option A: You have a boring night at the gay bar while your friend gets extremely drunk and declares that she'll “space your cowboy.”

Option B: Continue Onward

Great. Now you have a body to dump; at least it's not your own. Time to put that hideous poncho your mom bought to work. You carefully wrap your friend's unstylishly bloody remains in the poncho and drag her to your Honda.

“Trunk'll fit two bodies,” the salesman had joked at the dealership, but you had just smiled.

You begin to drive to a drop sight. You:

- A. Drive to Lake Waddlewheel and dump her in the water.
- B. Go to the old graveyard near the power plant.

If you chose

Option A: What the hell is wrong with you? You're going to dump a body in the lake? Clearly, your inexperience with dumping victims is the reason for your foolishness; no one could really be that stupid. The cops catch you within a few days, and you wind up in prison married to a woman named Donna who has six snake tattoos.

Option B: Continue Onward

The graveyard comes into sight as you drive with your lights off down the dirt road. You'd probably better turn your lights on, actually, because you look pretty fucking suspicious right now.

So, you turn your lights on. Now the graveyard really comes into

sight; you can see the dull headstones perching like vultures in the soft grass. The world out there looks peaceful—like the constant wear and stress of daily life melt away into this timeless sliver of hollowed ground which wraps its gentle, earthy embrace around the passed beloved members of a precious number of families. Then you remember you have a dead chick in your trunk. Time to cleave out a fresh grave for a cold bitch! You:

Option A: Realize that you could never dig a deep enough grave by yourself before dawn, so you call your friend Mitch to help you.

Option B: Use all your internalized childhood anger to ferociously dig with a hoe you found near the entrance.

If you chose

Option A: You called Mitch? You know he's, like, the biggest girly gossip ever, right? Tsk-tsk. Mitch blabs to his brother forty-eight hours after he swore to you he'd never tell a soul, and you both go to prison for the rest of your days. Once you die, the friend you killed meets you in death to laugh at your incompetence. She asks if it was worth it, and you respond by punching her in the face, which is really unsatisfying since she's totally ectoplasmic and intangible. Plus, you killed her when she was so young that her ghost looks young and pretty while you rotted in prison for fifty years so you're all wrinkly. Barf.

Option B: Continue Onward

All those repressed memories are really helping you here! Your desperate emotions ravage your adrenaline levels, and you dig a nice, rectangularish six-foot grave by four AM. The irony of digging with a hoe to dump a ho is not lost on you, so you've been cackling like a tickled hyena almost the entire time. After dumping the body inside—poncho and all—and having one last ironic chuckle, you just shove all the loose dirt back in on her.

That looks kind of messy, though. It's obvious that someone inexperienced dug a grave here to hide the body of an annoying frenemy, so, exhausted but surprisingly well-spirited for a grave digger, you cut up some sod from the edge of the graveyard and pat it down nicely over your dirt mound. Great! That looks perfect, Susie Gravemaker. Time to make a headstone!

Just kidding. You're wa-ay too tired for that. You just steal the

headstone next to you, Sergeant Master Importantface or somebody, and stick it at the front of your fresh grave. Hopefully it's facing the right way because you're so tired, you pass out in the grass and sleep the rest of the night.

Warm, lovely sunlight wakes you up about an hour before noon. To your right, you can hear a family visiting someone dear to them, and they move with a revering softness around a grave seven or eight stones down from you. You can't see them because you're belly down in the grass and holding your

head in what looks like a contemplative manner but what is really an oh-shit position. You lay like this because you have



**Then you remember  
you have a dead chick  
in your trunk**

gravedirt all over your face and the front of your dress, and you look like you've been doing nothing else on this earth but digging a grave to cover up a murder. You:

Option A: Jump up and attempt to get away before anyone notices your dirty secret.

Option B: Just keep laying there and looking like you're grieving.

If you chose

Option A: Well, they see you, of course. They may be sad, but they're not blind. They also quickly notice that you're dragging a dirt-caked hoe with you, so a chase ensues. Unfortunately, since the family spent last night watching an episode of *Spongebob Squarepants* and going to bed at nine-thirty while you used every last ounce of pent up anger in your body to dig a believable grave until dawn, your energy runs out before you reach your awkwardly parked Honda. That snotty-looking mother was calling the cops while the polo-wearing father chased you down, so it's not long before you are hauled off to a life of uncomfortable cots, bologna sandwiches, and snake-arms Donna. And you didn't even get to drag Mitch down with you!

Option B: Continue Onward

Like any sane person, you're not going to try and flee the scene with a group of witnesses right there. So, you sit and wait for a while.



They'll have to get home eventually. Don't families like that always have some group activity to do before dinner?

While you wait there, attempting to look so sad that no one will approach you instead of looking amused that your life has come to this, you contemplate your actions. Last night, you were lonely, waiting on that trashy friend to save you from your misery and willing to sacrifice some good clothing to her for her company. After a mildly traumatic knife-heeled shoe assault, you managed to dispatch petty what's-her-face and that awful poncho thing your mother gave you. What a relief to have that poncho gone!

For someone who has never dumped a body in real life, you seemed fairly skilled. You didn't do something moronic like include another person to blab later or let anyone know you were hanging out with her last night. No major panic attacks took over, and even your frustration and anger worked to your advantage. Actually, last night was a really good night! You smile and think, "It's the little things in life."

That cheery family is walking back to their car, so you can make your escape in a minute. Just don't run. Only guilty people run in graveyards. Well, guilty or scared people, and scared people are just guilty people who haven't been caught yet.

After hunching over your shoulders and making a stifled sobbing sound, you stagger up to your feet and walk carefully with your back to all visitors. You expected to be sore, but apparently the grass here is really springy and soft, so you're moving almost naturally. Finally, you slide into your car and drive away.

Don't forget to send that car salesman a thank-you note.

The irony of digging  
with a hoe  
to dump a ho  
is not lost on you



## A Wandering Soul

思想的心灵

Jacob Lambert

The trenches of sorrow claim a depth that no man can number; and likewise, what causes that sorrow, sometimes, cannot be named, for it is like endless hallways, hallways which are everlasting and confusing in their ever-present, laughing shadows.

Crying without a purpose seems lost; however, to not cry, we are lost without purpose. What is one man's curse is another's delight. But like many, so periled by the absence of truth, one can never escape the eclipse inside us. Therefore, to ignore the dark would be to deny the true form of our being. That is to say, there is no light without utter, blinding darkness.

Love, hate, sorrow, and pain can be attributed to one word: flesh. Without the coffin of the flesh, one is truly liberated. Its constant stench, its hulky mass, and its maddening confines leave the soul wanting, searching for release. But sometimes, in the struggle between the two voiceless machines, the two are separated, either leaving the flesh to gather flies or the soul to wander the the fabrics of cohesion. Yet, if the two come to an impasse, there in lies immortality.

The only truth is that there is none...

# Unforgiveness

无法被原谅的

Kevin Lee Garner

*Dedicated to my brother*

Cold, it's hard against  
 the tender flesh beneath the chin,  
 a bullet in the chamber  
 and no safety;  
 the mouth of the barrel stays forever agape  
 screaming a silent sound  
 before it blows the brains out:  
 something for everyone,  
 a wordless cloud  
 precipitating hostile mist  
 with a 99.99% chance  
 of thunderclap  
 echoes through the night, sharp reports of suicide,  
 and in the space between the pulling  
 of his index finger against the trigger  
 and the drunken reveries  
 of myriad smiles around  
 this soon extinguished flame,  
 the barrel offers as prelude  
 one word that runs  
 his frantic hands  
 to the bottom of bottles of beer:  
 "unforgiveness."

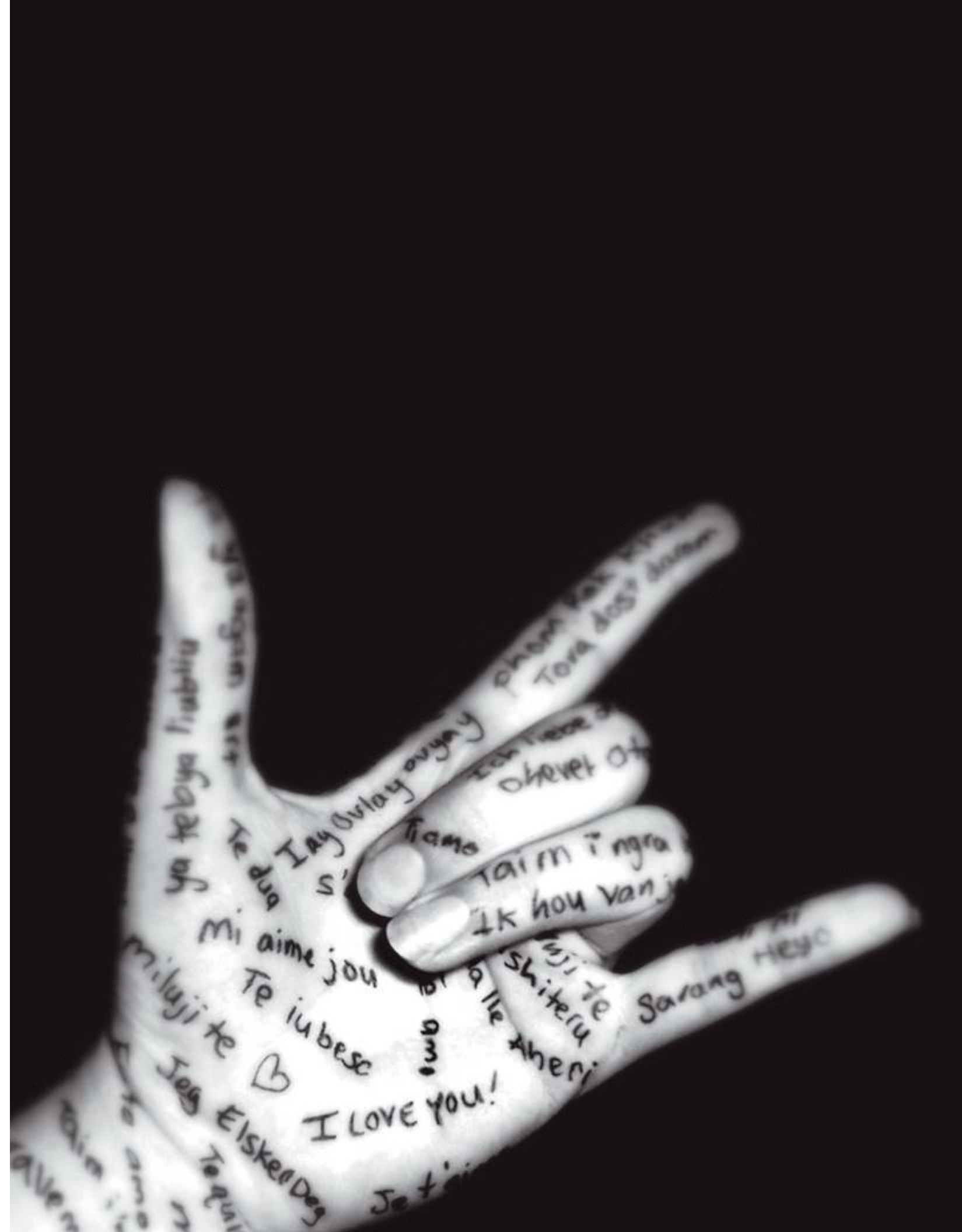
In every synapse  
 sending satanic free radicals of regret  
 into the bloodstream of his soul  
 to age, to buffet, to wear down  
 his spirit,  
 eye for an eye,  
 rage, transcendent of chemical process,  
 there vomits up the bile of his crime,  
 unpunished, unforgotten,  
 like sludge along the crevices  
 of his inebriated brain,  
 the pain of reverberations  
 echoing, "Justice! Blood for blood!"  
 Sought hungrily  
 by a magnetic hammerfall of death's subtle courtship—  
 the heaviness that drives men  
 to claw at the earth with daggers—  
 he is my brother,  
 and I love him;  
 in his heart there is weight  
 that oppresses his callused mind,  
 summoning bedeviling night shadows  
 to scuttle from dark places  
 and slip in their fingers  
 like tree roots to tear the concrete of his spirit man;  
 torn he laughs with medicated mirth  
 and cries from places so deep.  
 What can I give him?

He pulls the trigger  
and silently waits for sleep,  
outer darkness,  
eternity with his murderous crime,  
but the glock clicks,  
and nothing—  
the hum of Friday night traffic,  
vomit on the door of his truck,  
a gentle breeze.  
He goes home.

“To Him who loved us  
and washed us from our sins  
in His own blood,  
and made us kings and priests  
to His God and Father...  
to Him be the glory  
and dominion  
for ever  
and ever.  
Amen.” (Revelations 1:5-6)

God is not done with you, yet.

“The Greatest of These”  
by Sarah Fredericks (opposite)



# Scientific Analysis of Academic Mold

学者型的科学分析

Sarah Fredericks

Asexual, apathetic spores pullulate on festering,  
 Moistened carbohydrates enclosed in a dim necropolis.  
 Tepid temperatures regulate the rate of decay.  
 Less than three days and an entire loaf of bread  
 Is thick with black and green and white fur.  
 Opportunistic infection of humans.

Filamentous green *Algae*: thirty-thousand species.  
 Chaotic putrescence in the systematic consumption of energy;  
 Efficiency in the instant gratification of symbiosis.  
 Promises of Darwinian promulgation as the host organism sustains transient existence.  
 Stagnant water becomes glossed with undulating sheets of  
 Thick, brown and green slime.  
 Digestion of death and decay prolongs the imitation of life.

Sacred petri dish, dedicated to the replication of knowledge: *Akademia*.

Found behind a desk, behind a book, behind the thanatoid walls of education,  
 Brilliant minds rot in hibernation as tepid intellectuality slowly promotes entropy.  
 Devouring intelligence and defecating convention, the guardians of the dead  
 Feed the rotting, regurgitated carrion of ancient thinkers to new progeny.  
 Ideas fester in stagnant brains, steeped with the liturgy of tradition.

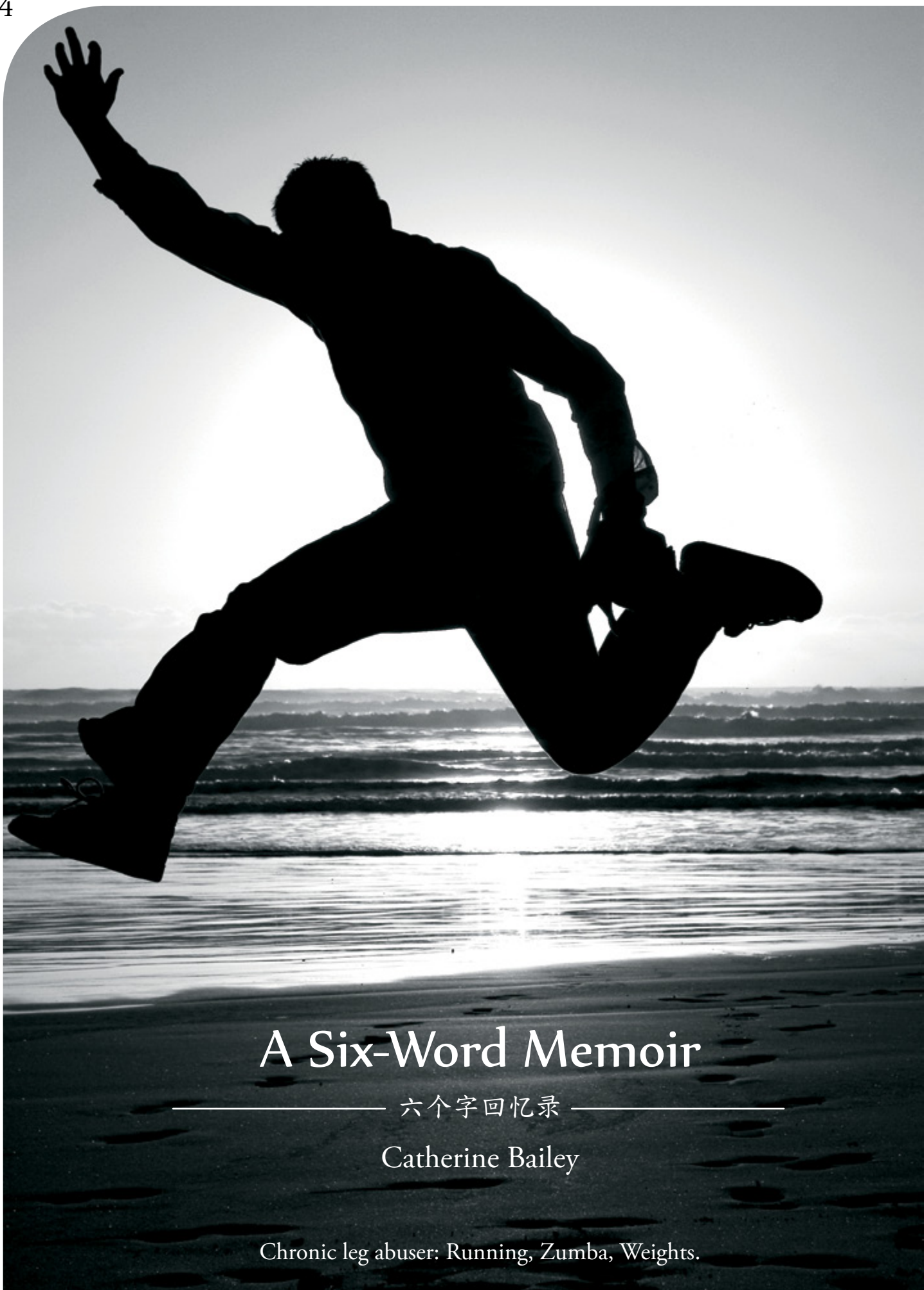
Mold grows on the intellect, and  
 Algae floats on the pools of the mind.

And Academia thrives.



“Exposed” by Sheldon Curry





## A Six-Word Memoir

—— 六个字回忆录 ——

Catherine Bailey

Chronic leg abuser: Running, Zumba, Weights.

## Letting Go

—— 放手 ——

Rachel Meeks

Once again that sick pounding in her chest reverberated through her body. He was in her house, coming for her. She coaxed herself not to freeze, but to move—she had to get as far from him as she could before finding a place to hide. She shot up out of bed and swiftly made for her window. The hardwood floor was cold on her bare feet, creating natural chill bumps to add to her unnatural ones. She unlatched the lock and slipped out of her room, softly landing onto the coarse sand. *Run!* she demanded her legs, but they felt as if they were weighted down with lead. The crashing waves in the background became a metronome for her labored strides. Finally, in the shadows of her neighbor's yard, she turned around to see her front door closing behind the shadow of the man. He knew she was outside. She threw her weight against her neighbor's back door, feeling the wood feebly tremble against her body. Again and again she pounded away but to no avail—there was no answer, no movement in the house. Dread coursed through her body as she saw his shadow stretching out across the uneven dunes as he looked for her. Paralyzed, she waited until the black orbs where his eyes should have been rested on her panting form—he found her.

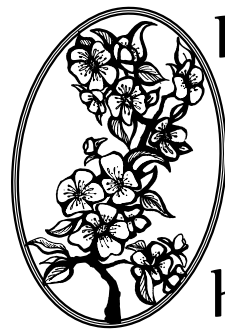
She screamed and opened her eyes. She was looking up at a dark ceiling. Faintly blinking lights and awkwardly placed wires reminded her where she was. “It was a dream, just another dream,” she whispered into the darkness. But it was a nightmare from which she would never escape; she knew there would come a time when she would not wake up, and she would be trapped with him.

For the past two years she had been desperate for words like “remission” or “cured,” but all in vain. She quickly realized that forty-five years was too short a time to prepare for dying. She was losing motor function, speech, and, by some cruel design, she started having these unexplainable dreams. The doctors shook their heads and added another

drug to her cocktail, but the new shift of nurses who read her EKG every morning knew that she was not simply having random misfires in her brain from a growing tumor. They were the ones who had to rush in and wake her from a sweat-bathed hysteria or replace her sheets and gown as mortified tears ran down her face. They knew that this was more than a symptom.

Little relief was given by anyone or anything in her conscious world, including those she loved. Her family and friends came to her less and less it seemed. Their blood-drained faces promised a return just as soon as they took care of some errand or engagement—the annoying things that she so badly wished she still had. She saw the quick glances they gave each other and the question of “how long, now?” on their faces. She wondered the same thing every night when she tried to ward off sleep. Doctors with clipboards and x-rays tried to sound hopeful, but like someone boarding up a house on the coast in the middle of Opal, the doctors were too late in preventing the inevitable.

She could feel herself slipping into that vortex that took her from one hell to another. She clung onto her family, the pain—anything that would keep her from being sucked into his realm again. But slowly her resistance ebbed away. Hopelessness was more debilitating than the disease, and she slipped into her final nightmare.



**Hopelessness was more  
debilitating than the disease,  
and she slipped into  
her final nightmare**

She knew this dream was different because she had no idea where she was. All her other nightmares were set in her childhood home on the coast, but this was different and much worse. The only comparison that came to mind was a picture of Death Valley which she had written a paper on in college. She could make out mountains in the background with the seemingly infinite sea of desert between her and them. She felt a strange crumbly texture from the salt beneath her feet as she slowly turned, examining her surroundings. He brought her to a place where

she would have no place to hide. The pounding in her chest echoed louder and louder as she scanned the seemingly empty desert. An unnatural dimness cloaked the edges of the horizon, but finally she saw him. He had no true form, only negative space against the sky, but he was tangible enough to send a burst of coldness into her belly. He darted forward unexpectedly with an unnatural, jerky gait until he was a mere twenty paces from her. She could hear the *crunch, crunch, crunch* of her reversing footsteps, knowing there was no place to run. He cocked his head slowly to one side and ran for her.

Her heart hammered away as she ran from the shadow man. *Wake up, wake up!* she begged her mind, but she knew that there was no waking from this terror. She would be trapped in this limbo until he caught her. The mountains and the sun remained transfixed, giving her no sense of time or direction. After what could have been hours or days, the monotony began to erode her fear. *What will make him stop?* she wondered. An idea crossed her mind in reply, and she slowed to a halt. *I'll just let him kill me,* she reasoned. Her heart continued to race as she waited, rigid in determination, for the expected blow, but it never came. She finally turned around, and to her amazement, he was gone. “Now what?” she asked herself.

She turned back around and realized she was standing before a precipice. She stood transfixed in awe at this gaping chasm until she realized that she was not alone. Only in dreams could one accept the invention of such things, but there beside her, cigarette in hand, was her long-deceased great-aunt Lynn, peering out over the abyss with her.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

In her sandpapery smoker’s voice she replied, “Well, you asked a question, I’m here to answer it.”

“So, you know what I’m supposed to do?” she ventured.

Lynn puffed away and answered, “Yes, ma’am. You, my dear, are supposed to jump.”

She looked down at the oblivion in front of her, then back at her deceased aunt and asked, “Did you jump?”

“A lady doesn’t kiss and tell,” Lynne croaked as she spit black decay from her lungs into the abyss, “You need to focus on yourself and what it is that’s kept you from this so long.” Aunt Lynn snuffed out her cigarette with the toe of her dirty slipper and started to hobble off into



the distance.

“Please don’t go, I don’t want it to end this way,” she begged.

Aunt Lynn turned back and through her hacking, choked out, “Have you ever thought that maybe death is just another part of life? Everybody dies, you got to let go of the fear of it to keep on living.” And with that she was gone.

Alone and on the verge of death, she thought back to her former dreams. Until now, they had brought her to that small house on the coast, with the reflection of the moon on the water and sea grass dancing in the breeze. There could be peace there without the shadow man. She took a deep breath as she stared out over the black gulf and jumped.

There was darkness with the occasional flash of light, and for a moment there was ringing in her ears, but all eventually faded away to the sound of the ocean. Something had changed, she could tell from a fading inkling in the back of her mind, but she no longer cared. All that mattered was the smell of sea salt and the feel of warm wind in her hair. She finally looked out from under the shade of a tattered sun hat into the vastness of the gleaming azure. She smiled at her friend and set out to explore its end. The moist sand marked her journey as she marched parallel to her companion, letting go of her former life and embracing this new one.



## To a Leaf; upon watching it fall to the ground

看着叶子飘落

Stephen Paul Bray

The wind was blowing hard today

With no one else around.

Did you notice I was staring,

As you journeyed to the ground?

Was it for exile that you left

Your place up in the tree?

Or did you notice I was watching

And so you came down to me?

Perhaps you wanted to explore

The ground so far below.

Or maybe you were wishing

That another breeze would blow,

And carry you off further

Closer to another tree,

Closer to your true love,

Or to your destiny.



# The Life of a Chevy Nova

雪佛兰的生活

Matthew Johnson

## S.S.

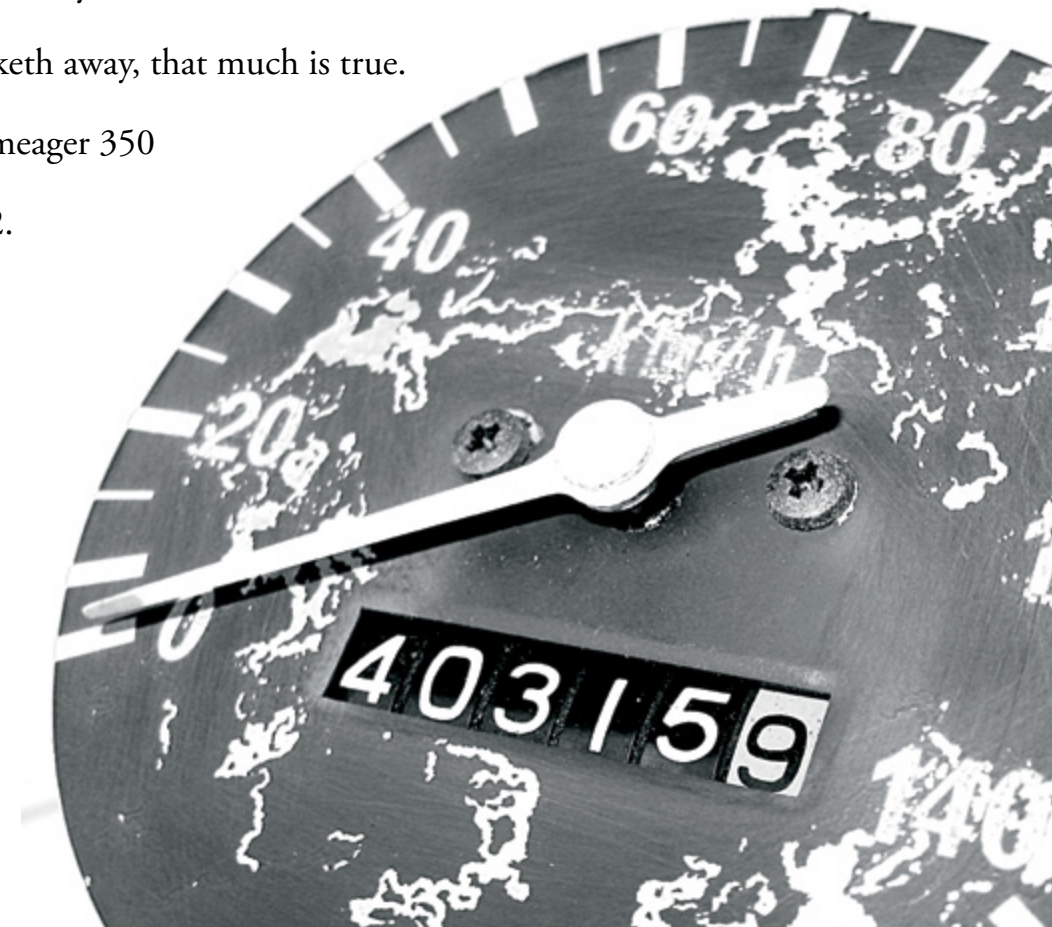
My badge is sitting on the shelf;  
 How I long to feel its embrace.  
 My creator is also beside himself.  
 The dream, it brightens his face.  
 I will earn it when I am ready.  
 When? Only my creator can tell.  
 Until then I will sit here steady;  
 There it is, the dinner bell.  
 Now I sit through another night  
 In this place where I am being created.  
 Tomorrow's sun will be so bright  
 That I cannot help but feel elated.  
 Work will renew, and I will be close  
 To earning that badge that I cherish the most.

## Broken

My badge was placed on long ago;  
 It was my ticket to every shore.  
 I have been many miles, ergo  
 I know more than I did before.  
 With this knowledge comes remorse.  
 You see, the world is a dangerous place.  
 When I break I must be fixed, of course;  
 My creator has a worried face.  
 He wonders if his skill can surpass  
 The imperfections I have accrued.  
 If not, he can always ask  
 His father what he should do.  
 But, with each break that I sustain,  
 The less his father is asked again.

## Renovation

What's this? He is removing my hood.  
 Surely he will not tear me apart?  
 I have been bare metal. This doesn't look good.  
 Off comes my grill. This is just the start.  
 You! Creator! You cannot deny the joy we shared.  
 I am not broken. Yet, you remove each part.  
 After your tinkering, how long will I be impaired?  
 Will you make a mistake? Will you have to restart?  
 That's it; there is no going back.  
 The source of my locomotion has disappeared.  
 Oh! I fear I am under attack!  
 My resting place has surely been cleared!  
 He giveth and he taketh away, that much is true.  
 He will replace my meager 350  
 with a big block 402.



## The Secret Page

秘密的一页

Kali Piro

In his mother's closet, Peter; his father, William; and his mother, Lacey, are going through old scrapbooks from various ballroom dancing competitions and looking at gaudy costumes cluttered with diamonds, sequins, laces, ribbons, and beads, which were designed with Roy G. Biv in mind.

Lacey looks at the old photographs and gowns with awe and nostalgia while William reminisces about the beautiful woman who used to wear the enchanting gowns. Peter finds a beautiful ballroom gown that was used for the waltz. The gown was made with soft lavender silks lined with white feathers and embroidered with tiny diamonds around the deep V neckline. Peter's dark eyes lighten at the sight of the gown, and his breathing halts for a few seconds.

"Look at this gown, Mom."

Lacey looks at the gown her son is holding and smiles. She stands up from her king-sized bed, walks toward Peter, and takes the lavender silk gown.

"This gown... ah! I remember the first time I saw this gown; it was hanging from Mrs. O'Mara's dress shop window. This just told me that I was going to be a beautiful ballroom dancer, and when I put this dress on, it made me feel like one."

"Sure, Lace," William laughs. "Peter, don't listen to your mother. That gown didn't tell her anything. I told her—like I do everyday!"

Lacey objects to her husband's absurd accusations, but Peter isn't listening to the light banter between his parents, for he gazes at the gown's design in his mother's hands. Peter had grown to be a very clean-cut, lanky twenty-year-old with black hair and eyes to match. Unlike most twenty-year-olds, Peter has an undying obsession with ballroom gowns.

Peter's mother and father believe that Lacey's ballroom dancing career created the obsession. She was an extremely talented ballroom

dancer, and she taught Peter from a very early age about the competition. William and Lacey loved the combination of the strict regulations of dancing and the rhythmic flow of the music; they are ballroom traditionalists. Lacey retired from the ballroom dancing realm when Peter was fifteen, and she went out on top. Peter, however, knew that Lacey's career wasn't the reason for his obsession.

As Peter continues to stare at the gown's long and intricate design, he remembers his very first time attending a ballroom dancing competition.



On a visit to the annual ballroom competition in Dulles, Virginia, with his mother and father when he is ten years old, Peter finds himself pushing through a large, chaotic crowd of flamboyant dresses with ruffles or sequences and stylish penguin suits topped with top hats. His father is in front of him, some other men and women behind—it's a wonder how people are attracted to these competitions, fighting their way through deep valleys and vast mountains of winding Virginia roads—until at last they pushed through a thick velvet red curtain, which opens to a cleared area with dressing tables and tall mirrors surrounded by bright, burning bulbs. The men and women, who were either putting on too much make up, covering their teeth with globs of Vaseline, or checking their costumes, had just cleared out of the area to prepare for their dancing debut, and only a few remaining contestants remained behind, preparing and waiting for the professional part of the competition.

"What's a woman," his father tells him, and another man wearing black-and-gold says that there is no other to match her beauty.

"It's the effect of the angle where we are standing," a woman scorns.

"There's where a true, beautiful creation of God is sitting in the midst of her frivolous skirts and dangling jewels," Peter's father says, paying no attention to them. "There you are my dear boy"—he turns to Peter—"and God grant the day that you'll find a woman with beauty to match your mother's, and I will myself, if I live, will see it, too."

Peter has an idea that there's something wrong with what his father is saying, but he isn't acquainted with his body to know that he won't be interested in dating women, or maybe his mind is playing a trick on him.





Peter's eager gaze remains transfixed on his mother's lavender gown as he reminisces until Lacy breaks it by taking the dress and hanging it back in her closet with the rest of her costumes. Peter stands planted in the middle of the tan room, which is stapled with golden frames containing cats and various potted plants, as if he continued to gawk at the gown. Then, his father's boisterous voice breaks his trance.

"So, Peter-boy, did you decide on a partner for the ballroom dancing contest in Alexandria? You only have two months."

"Ugh, no... no, I don't know. Sorry, Dad."

"Well, you'll need to find someone soon. You can't compete by yourself, you know."

Peter does know this, but he has a secret and isn't prepared to release it. William shakes his head at Peter and walks away with Lacey by his side. After they leave the room, Peter runs to the closet and swings open the doors. There it hangs—the lavender silk gown.

Peter rips it off the hanger and sneaks it out of his mother's room. The dark hallway hides his eagerness, and the old, wooden floors creak with his anticipation to get to his room, which is four doors down from his parents' room. He can hear their loving whispers above his own creaking footsteps.

Peter arrives at his room and rushes in, but he doesn't slam the door—he closes it with ease. "This gown will be the answer to everything. I think I'm ready," Peter thinks to himself.

"Peter... Peee-ter!" William yells for his son from the bottom of the oak stairs. "Hey, Peter, will you please come down here. Your mother and I've found you a partner."

Peter stores the gown under his bed in one of his crimson bedsheets. He hears his father calling from downstairs, and he knows that he better answer before his father becomes suspicious. Peter sticks his head out from his oak door and yells back, "I'm coming... hold your horses."

Peter leaves his room and gives a longing glance back at his door, but continues toward his father's summoning. Peter reaches the bottom of the oak steps and meets his father's exuberant smile and beaming eyes. Peter knows that this isn't going to be good, but there isn't anything he can do—the time is *not* right.

"So, Dad, you found me a partner for the competition, huh?"

"Yes, Peter-my-boy," William exclaims, "I've got you a keeper. Her name's Samantha, and she's a looker! I think she might be your Lacey."

Lacey stares from her rose leather sofa while voicing a light chuckle to her husband's loving hopes for their son and retorts, "William, leave him alone. He is still young, and people don't get married this young these days. Let him just have fun at the competition. If there's no fun, then he won't dance, and I'll see to that."

"Well, the boy can at least meet the girl, Lace," snaps William.

"Th-thanks, Mom. Umm... I was waiting to tell you both this, but I've already found a partner. I just didn't want you to inspect our style of dancing.

I want it to be a surprise. Is that O.K.?" Peter lies because he had to intervene; he



**the old, wooden floors creak  
with his anticipation  
to get to his room**

can't dance with Samantha. That is out of the question. Peter looks at his parents to see their reaction to what he has just told them, and they were struck with either dumbness or awe, because neither his father nor his mother say anything to him.

Peter turns to walk away from his parents, but he doesn't go far before his father responds, "Peter-boy, if that's your wish, fine. You know we're here to support you, right? I'll call Samantha and cancel."

Peter is in shock by his father's response, glad, too. Maybe he'll understand.



The weeks of preparing for the competition are coming to an end. Peter has been dancing with his mystery partner every night for the past three weeks, and he's ready for tomorrow's competition in Alexandria, Virginia.

"Peter, are we going to get to meet Ms. Mystery tonight or tomorrow before the competition? We want to meet her, you know," his mother inquires.

"Well, mom, I think you'll meet her tomorrow after we dance. You know how nervous I get, and we want to win. So, no distractions... O.K.?"

“All right, Peter, your father and I’ll wait. Are you ready to go?”

“Yeah, let me go grab my stuff.”

Peter runs up to his room, grabs his crimson sheet from under his bed, and buries it in the bottom of his suitcase. For the past three weeks, Peter has been looking at his mother’s old ballroom gown with growing intensity. He knows that the gown will bring him luck for tomorrow’s competition. “We’re going to win tomorrow, and my parents will learn the truth. They need to know,” Peter thinks to himself as he runs back downstairs to his parents’ car.

The car ride to the competition is slow and dull. William and Lacey attempt to retrieve information from their secretive son, but their attempts fail. Peter sits next to the window looking out over the curvaceous lands of the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately for Peter, his parents didn’t stop their idle interrogation about Samantha and his new partner.



“I’m glad you went on that date with Samantha,” Williams says with a sly smile and a wink to Peter from the rearview mirror.

Peter continues to stare aimlessly out of his window and rolls his eyes with each remark his dad says about Samantha, the would-be partner. Peter’s parents are satisfied enough about Peter’s secret partner, but they keep pushing for Peter to be with Samantha. Two days ago, Peter finally gave in to his parents’ persisting requests and took Samantha

out on a date. Peter, still looking out his window, remembers the awkward encounter with her.

“She’s definitely pretty with that long blonde hair and round silver eyes,” he recalls to himself, but he shrugs the memory off when his mom asks, “Well, will there be another date, Peter?”

“Umm... Mom—I doubt there’ll be another date. It went pretty bad.”

Peter’s parents don’t stop with that acute explanation and push for a better, more acceptable one. Finally, Peter gives in to his parents, again, and tells them about the tragedy.

“FINE—I’ll tell you guys whatever You want to hear so you can let me concentrate for the competition tomorrow. I picked her up on time. She was wearing this beautiful chocolate dress that was outlined in aqua satin, a beautiful dress because it matched her eyes. She smiled, and we got into the car to go to dinner. The entire time we just sat there staring at each other. Actually, I had a better conversation with the waiter, he recognized me from high school.”

“Oh really, who was it?” interrupted Lacey.

“Adam—Adam Nolan, you know, he was the Valedictorian. But anyways, Samantha was nice, and we both share a love for dancing, but that’s it. There is nothing there. Period.”

“C’mon, Peter,” William cajoles, “you know that we just want you to be happy and find someone. You’re young, and you should be dating around and figuring out what you like or don’t like.”

“Well, I can tell you what I don’t like, and her name’s Samantha,” Peter huffs and slams his head back against the head rest, his face red and eyes rolling.

Peter broods in the back seat for the rest of the trip, remembering how horrible the conversation about Samantha was and how close he was to coming clean to his parents. The entire subject made him nervous, and he wasn’t ready to confront it. Like his parents, he isn’t the confrontational type—competitive, definitely, but not confrontational.

After two hours of driving and the intense interrogation, William, Lacey, and Peter arrived to the Renaissance Hotel, the location of the ballroom competition. There are vibrant colors of orange, purple, blue, canary yellow, and other vivid eye-catching colors sewn with feathers or jewels. The women are wearing their clown faces, and men are running

around with their numbers flapping in their wakes. This entire scene reminds Peter of the first competition he saw—the first competition that told him he was going to be a spectacular ballroom dancer.

“Well, all right, I guess we need to go to check-in and practice for tomorrow. You ready, Peter?” William asks.

“Hmmm? Oh, yeah... yeah, I’m ready.”

William, Lacey, and Peter check into their rooms, and then, Peter runs off to practice with his mystery partner. They need the practice; they need to be perfect for tomorrow.

After several hours of practicing, Peter returns to his parents’ room. They ask him questions and tells them not to fret, but he knows tomorrow is a big day, not because of the competition, but because the secret will be unveiled. After two hours of game planning with his parents, Peter retires to his bedroom with uneasy anticipation about tomorrow.



William and Lacey find a round table covered with white linen close to the floor. The juvenile and the senior competition have already been concluded, and the young adult competition is beginning. While Peter’s parents take their seats, couple by couple is announced Peter’s couple number is 168, and he’s third from last to be announced.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Couple 168—Robert Fallen and Page Anderson.”

The crowd applauds, except for two people—William and Lacey. They are confused; they heard the correct number, but they don’t see Peter on the dance floor.

William inquires, “Where *is* he? Do you see him?”

Lacey looks and stares at couple 168. They walk closer and closer to where she sits at the round table next to the dance floor. She looks at Page Anderson, and everything becomes fuzzy. Anderson is Lacey’s last name, but a lot of people share that last name. Then, Lacey looks at Page’s gown for the waltz and notices the fabric. The dress is made with a lavender silk lined with white feathers and encrusted with jewels around the deep V neckline—that gown is Lacey’s old ballroom gown.

Lacy gasps, “It couldn’t be. No, it couldn’t be.”

William barely hears her, and he doesn’t understand her whitened, wide-eyed expression. He looks around and his gaze falls on the couple

next to their table—Couple 168.

“Are you serious?” William shouts.

Peter sees the shock on his mother’s face and is disappointed by her reaction, but then, he hears his father’s reaction. Peter, or Page, wants his family to accept the real Peter—the Peter, who loves gowns, dancing, and wants to be a woman, not date one.

The music commences, and no one else recognizes that Page is a man, except for his partner, Robert Fallen, Page’s secret lover. Page is at least accepted by one person, but what will his parents say when they’re done? Random, awkward questions pop in-and-out Peter’s head while he dances, but they don’t interfere with his natural skill in the art of ballroom dancing—he was born with it pumping in his veins. Although he was raised a ballroom dancing traditionalist, he still respects the craft with every swift, sharp movement with a lady-like grace. Peter doesn’t see why his gender should affect how and when he competes because his heart and soul belongs to it.

The music stops, and the dancers give either a bow or curtsy. The judges give a brief thanks and dismissal. Then, the couples rush off stage to either their families or to prepare for the Latin portion of the competition. Couple 168 only dances the Waltz because Page cannot wear one of those skimpy ballroom gowns with mid-drifts or thigh-high slips that are common to the Latin portions of the competition.

Page approaches William and Lacey, who are still dumbfounded by their son’s secret, with Robert next to her for comfort, support, and courage.

“Hello, Mom... Dad. I’m Page,” Peter declares to his parents and gives a light curtsy.

William and Lacey don’t know what to say, and Page’s cheeks flare under all of the pageant make-up as she gives her father a huge grin.

“Dad, I know you once told me that you wanted me to find someone beautiful like mom, and I have. I looked in the mirror while wearing this gown, and I saw what you saw in mom.”

William can’t look at his son—his daughter—*whoever* that person is wearing Lacey’s lavender ballroom gown. With disgust and disappointment, William turns away from his only child. He remembers the little boy following him in his footsteps at ballroom competitions; the days they played basketball in the driveway, or the time when he



gave his teenage son “The Talk.” William trembles at the mere thought of those times—all those pointless, useless times. Lacey looks at her son with a blank stare. She doesn’t know what to do; she loves the person in front of her—male or female. And she knows that her husband can’t see the person; this is a serious issue, especially for a man with a large ego, like William, to handle.

Page reaches for her mother’s hand, but Lacey is frozen until her hand is sharply grasped and yanked away from Page’s reach. William snorts with disgust and storms away from Page with Lacey in his wake. Page, dumbfounded and hurt, watches her parents, who had their heads down with shame, walked toward the neon red light blaring “Exit.”



## The Pocketwatch

怀表

Justin Foster

Johnathan woke up to the same dark room he had left the night before; nothing had changed despite the vivid dreamscape he had visited in his rest. The sky outside was formed of dull, overcast clouds that hung heavy with rain. Without much thought as to what he was going to do that day, he climbed back into bed, curling up beneath the warm covers.



His attempts to find sleep again were equally fruitless, quashed by a loud knock at his apartment door.

He was surprised to see one of the only faces he did know from around town: Reggie the postman.



“I’ve got a package here for you, John. Sent next-day shipping with insurance and confirmation, so I’ll need you to sign here.”



Tossing the wrapping aside, he opened the box to find a rather peculiar object. He pulled from the box a large, golden pocketwatch on a long, golden chain. He eyed the watch as one might a strange curiosity, examining every large feature it had.



“I suppose I should set it...” he remarked to himself, moving his thumb to the smaller button to the left of the largest knob. He gave it a press. He watched as the second hand spiraled backwards to its original position, joining the hour and second hand in their rest. “What the heck?” Johnathan blurted out as his thumb released the smaller button; as he did, the second hand began its tireless trek around the watch-face again. Again, he pressed the same button to the same result—the second hand slid back to its starting position . . .

[Want to read more of this story? You can find it in  
*Filibuster 2011: The Director’s Cut*,  
at [www.aum.edu/filibuster](http://www.aum.edu/filibuster) ]

## Life is Full of Shit

人生充满狗屎

MeKoi Scott

Life is full of shit;  
The diarrhea won't quit.  
Need: toilet paper.

## Halt

立定

Alicia Fry

Halt!  
You have the right to remain unhappy.  
Anything you do or say can and will  
Be a reflection of this.

## To the Absence of a Throne

缺失的宝座

Joseph S. Brannon

While in the modern era, the worker stage transcends  
Class hands and cage stands, strands of a new clergy,  
New anointment forgiven from hierarchy,  
New shelter face and mortal race  
Calling the Royal Family Fall.

Nimble hips with name grace and solid  
Strut pace amass in this place, a trace of the throne remains here,  
With wild, unkempt aspirations, contained in minutes overdue,  
Minutes which should last, but never do.

My blood contains History, love, and your blood to mine  
Has a mystery, a cruel order, and when nape-skin  
Prickles like raindrops in the stale air, I can still smell your name.  
Hauntingly familiar; a cursed Family Protector.

We may rebuild the order, my dear, but the Flow will never  
Grant us release from this royal burden, these over-ancient tidings,  
All but to dust, we've outgrown.  
Yet these things we know, we are not entitled to leave to the Fate of Time.  
Let us build a new throne, of mountains and leafs,  
To be the last grim dukes till the Ending Eve.

# Wrinkles

皱纹

Matthew K. Kemp

you had laugh lines  
 over your cheeks  
 that spread like mighty deltas  
 to the ocean  
 from your eyes  
 and across  
 they held your stories  
 in their creases  
 and gestured me to listen

i used to think  
 that they were wrinkles  
 but now i  
 in my young age  
 grow them too

so i smile wider  
 and laugh louder  
 knowing that i  
 will have Daddy's wrinkles

“Bliss”

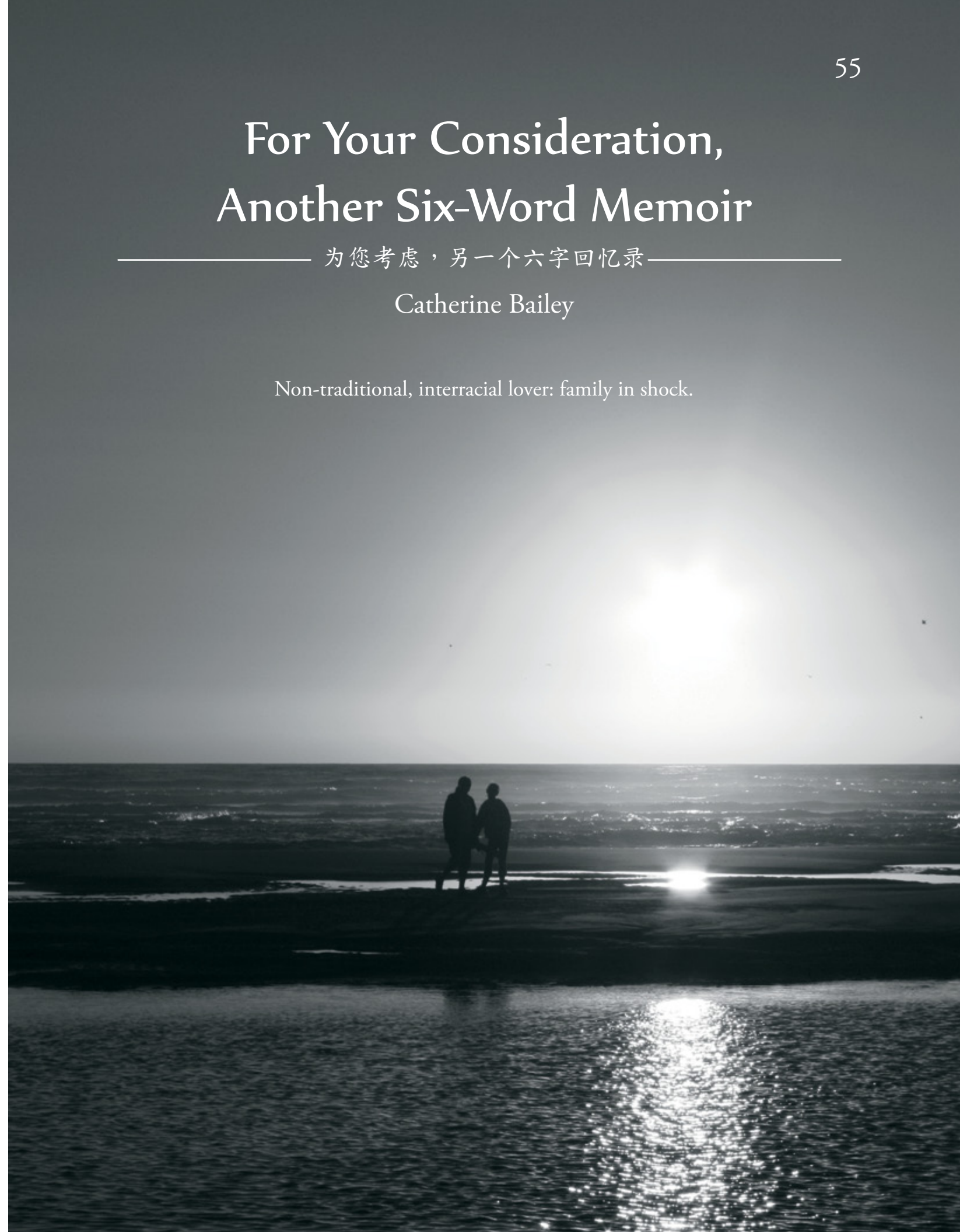
by Audra Hagel (opposite)

# For Your Consideration, Another Six-Word Memoir

为您考虑，另一个六字回忆录

Catherine Bailey

Non-traditional, interracial lover: family in shock.





## The Duck and the Swan

—— 鸭子和天鹅 ——

Kevin Lee Garner

### The Duck

It's me, again, friend.

How's the water? Does it end?

The blank expression  
adjoining your quack suggests  
otherwise.

Empty eyes I envy—  
you don't remember me—  
even if... especially if I don't  
remember  
everything.

### The Swan

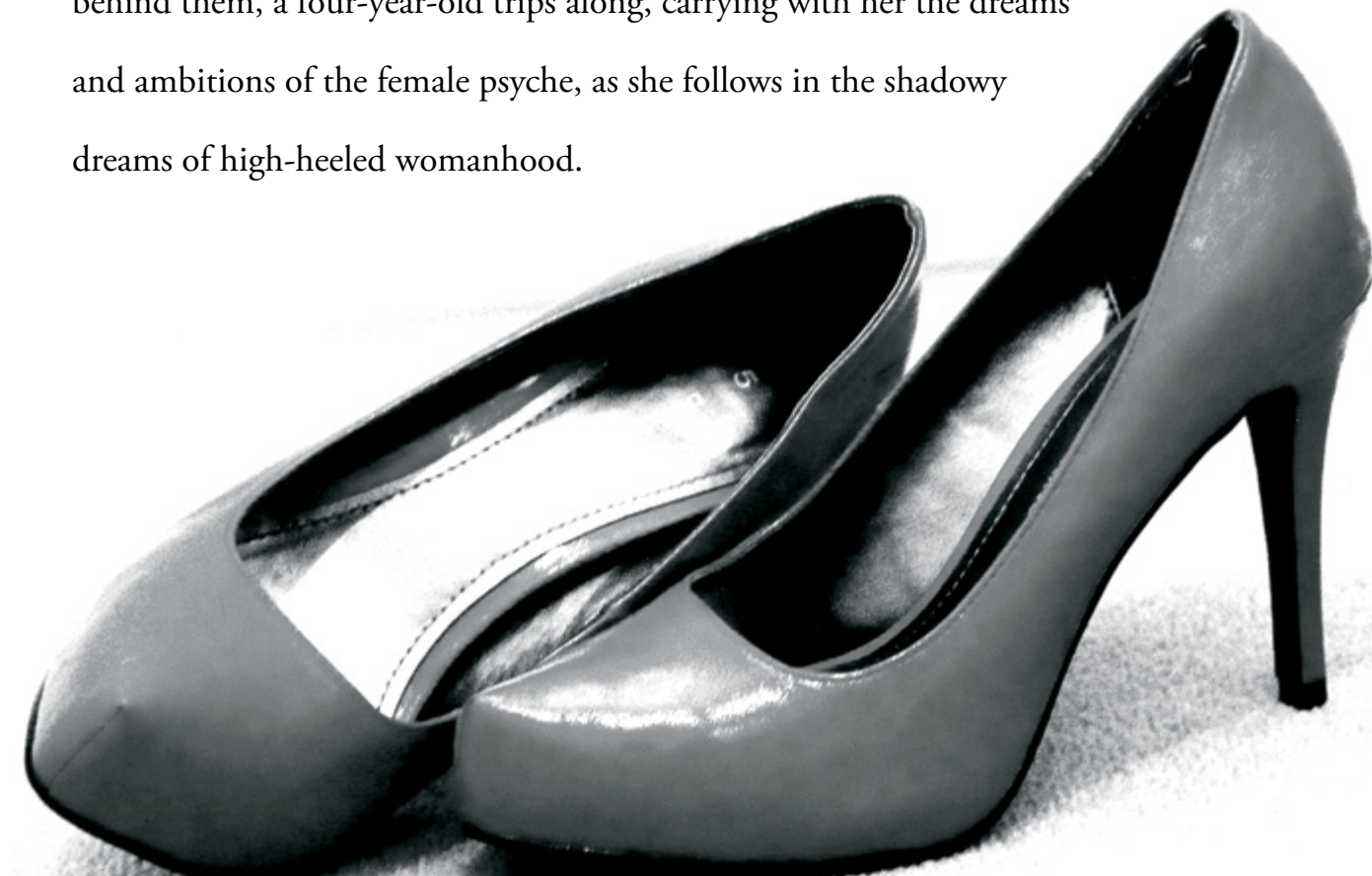
Sail away with all  
that is ignorant.  
I will remain with all  
that is true.  
I loved your beauty,  
but I can't say  
that I really loved you.

## Icon of Womanhood

—— 女人的标志 ——

Audra Hagel

*Click clomp, click clomp*, high heeled shoes on a wooden floor. It's the idolized sound of maturity, the walk of a woman. It's the sound of a four-year-old in her mother's shoes, treasuring high-heeled dreams of womanhood. *Click clomp, click clomp*, the systematic sound of women in the workplace, the modern treadmill of the age-old social race. Women—working, shopping, walking, dancing—wear that mark of maturity—the classic icon of their walk—stylish, elegant, torturous, yet fun. Armed with heels, these women march to a new rhythm. Not far behind them, a four-year-old trips along, carrying with her the dreams and ambitions of the female psyche, as she follows in the shadowy dreams of high-heeled womanhood.







## Origins, Pt. 2

—— 源头 第二篇章 ——

Joseph S. Brannon

Mortal Sovereignty meets the Earthly Parade  
 At Brimcall, as the World Gate shimmers in  
 Predawn light. Here the armies stand,  
 Not a spectator in sight; Ultimate Clash,  
 The battle won without a fight.

## Capital Idea

—— 资本理念 ——

Alicia Fry

I want your words to be YOUR own;  
 I need your words to come out SOBER.  
 I have your words totally in focus.  
 No overexposure,  
 No flash—  
 Or blur—  
 Just right,  
 With a beautifully vague backdrop of color.

Let it be your doing, your words;  
 Let it be your thoughts, your actions.  
 Let it be your truths, your desires;  
 Let it be your dreams, your intentions.

I want your words to be truly YOUR words;  
 I need your words to come out of your SOUL.  
 I have your words totally engraved.  
 No overcompensation,  
 No fluff—  
 Or falderal—  
 Just right,  
 With a gracefully drawn expression of design.

“Justice”

by Sarah Fredericks (opposite, top)





# I Do Declare! a Six-Word Memoir!

我宣布！六字实录！

Catherine Bailey

Strongly dislikes sweet tea—Southerners mystified.

## “Schmoozin’ and Booizin’”

by Sarah Fredericks (opposite)

## Private Language

私人语言

Robert Bullard

Discussing harsh diseases,  
How they are foreign until  
They are local, and nothing  
Is more local than home;  
They sit with downcast eyes.

No doctor walks by who can  
Alleviate the simple  
Math of three minus one.

For some, memories like tears  
Flow down the face; others dams  
That hold the depths in secret.  
Here are both merely sitting:  
Two parents' private language  
Is all they say to outsiders.

## Mighty Mini Axolotl

强大的微型蝶螈

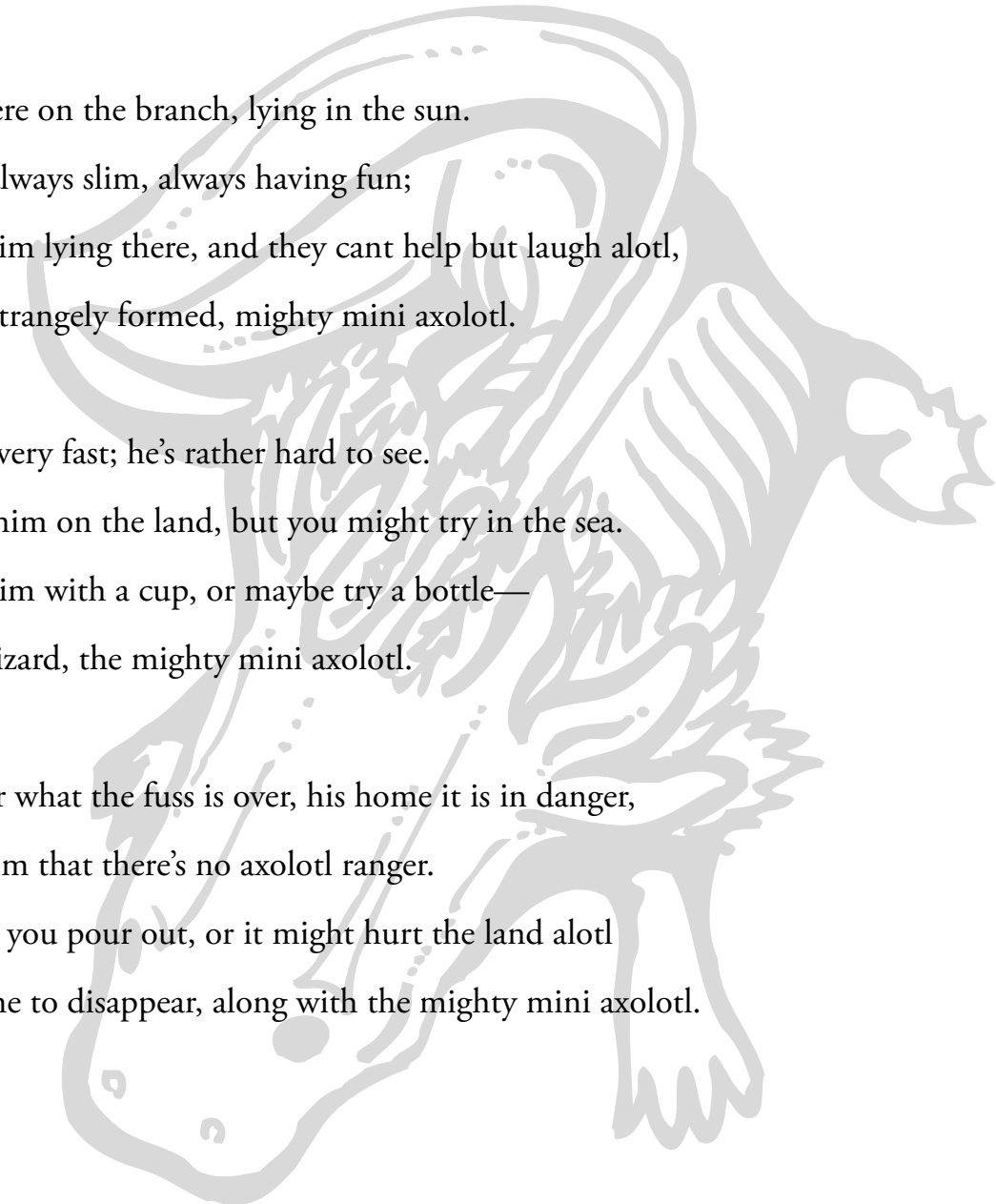
April Fredericks

If you want to hear a tale that will make you sit and ponder,  
Let me relate to you the story of a critter disappearing way down yonder;  
He is a little-known creature, living down where it is hotter:  
He is the oddly-colored, oddly-shaped mighty mini axolotl.

See him sitting there on the branch, lying in the sun.  
He's always cool, always slim, always having fun;  
Some people see him lying there, and they can't help but laugh a lot,  
At this curiously, strangely formed, mighty mini axolotl.

He moves so very very fast; he's rather hard to see.  
You cannot catch him on the land, but you might try in the sea.  
You might catch him with a cup, or maybe try a bottle—  
This speedy little lizard, the mighty mini axolotl.

And if you wonder what the fuss is over, his home it is in danger,  
And woe is it to him that there's no axolotl ranger.  
So be careful what you pour out, or it might hurt the land a lot!  
And cause his home to disappear, along with the mighty mini axolotl.



# Untitled

无题

Matthew K. Kemp

the first time i opened that door  
to an empty home  
the silence hung thick  
in the air  
choking me  
as i exhaled

it seemed so empty  
without you there  
colder  
quieter  
awkward

it was all wrong  
after you left  
and my soul  
still holding onto routine  
would project your voice  
into the rooms  
into the silence

it never left me  
that silence  
overbearing emptiness  
in my soul  
it never left me  
you  
never left me

that house isn't the same  
the rooms are different colors  
the floors are bare  
the wallpaper in the kitchen  
where you would always sit  
is gone  
but it's not empty  
either

when i open that door  
i still long to hear you call  
and ask if it's me  
like it would be anyone else  
and still  
you're not there  
but in your place  
is a family  
and the pitter-patter  
of children



# Read It

阅读

Amie Seidman, Joshua Brand, Shalette Langford,  
Andrea Lewis, and Christopher Swift

Your teacher told you don't you come around here,  
Don't wanna see your face, unless you come prepared.  
The book is in your hands, and the words are really clear,  
So read it, just read it.

You better study, you better do what you can,  
Don't wanna be a fool; you wanna be a knowledge man.  
You wanna be smart. You need to understand,  
So read it, so you can comprehend.

(Chorus)

Just read it, read it, read it, read it—  
No one wants to be repeated!  
Showin' how smart and strong is your mind;  
Open your book and see all you can find.  
Just read it, read it.  
Just read it, read it.  
Just read it, read it.  
Just read it, read it.

Time is runnin' out, better read while you can;  
Don't wanna be distracted, you wanna understand.  
You wanna be in school, better read what you can,  
So read it, just read it.

You have to show them that you're really not scared,  
You're playin' with your life; this is your future, so be aware

They'll doubt you, then they'll leave you,  
Then you'll say it's not fair,  
So read it, so you can comprehend.

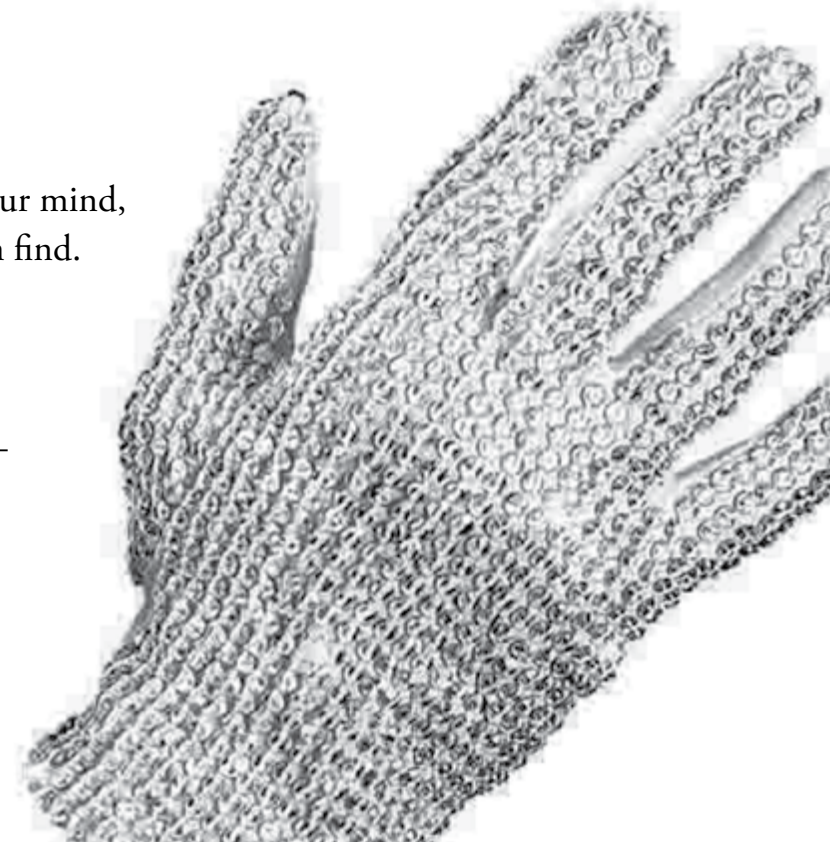
Just read it, read it, read it, read it—  
No one wants to be repeated!  
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Open your book and see all you can find.

Just read it, read it, read it, read it—  
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Open your book and see all you can find.

Just read it, read it, read it, read it—  
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Showin' how smart and strong is your mind,  
Open your book and see all you can find.  
Just read it, read it.  
Read it, read it, read it.  
Read it, read it, read it, read it—  
No one wants to be repeated!  
Showin' how smart and strong is your mind,  
Open your book and see all you can find.



Just read it, read it, read it, read it—  
No one wants to be repeated!  
Just read it, read it.  
Read it, read it, read it.





# Midnight Seraphs

午夜天使

Roya S. Hill

## Amari

Night. Darkness. Two things that the Guardians craved. For centuries, they lived in the shadows, waiting for the days when the humans would believe them only to be myths, strange fantasies. But they were more than myths. They kept order in the orderless world of the humans. Without them, there would be more kidnappings, more assaults, more murders. There was only one rule amongst the Guardians—no exposure to a human, and if it should happen, never allow that human to live.



*How many are there in the van, Koen?* she asked. The Guardians spoke their own language.

*Four. All with weapons.*

*Vigilance. Keep them away from the house,* Amari said.

*The tin box?* Savion inquired, meaning the van.

*Leave it. Their police can sort it out,* she answered.

Moments later, all of the lights inside of the house were extinguished. The shifting movements of the men in the van grew fervent as Amari and the others prepared for what was to come.

With talons sprouted, teeth bared, and wings spread, Amari and the other Guardians took to the darkened sky. The wind wrapped around her invitingly as she hovered over the van. Just as the lights lining the streets flickered off, Amari touched down on the roof, and Koen punctured the four wheels.

The men scrambled to prepare their weapons, yelling at one another . . .

[Want to read more of this story? You can find it in

*Filibuster 2011: The Director's Cut,*

at [www.aum.edu/filibuster](http://www.aum.edu/filibuster) ]



# Harold's Star

哈罗德之星

Kevin Lee Garner

“Is he dead?”

A burble of copper flavor stung his throat. He tried to swallow it down.

“Honey, he’s resting. Hear that beeping noise?”

“Yeah.” The young voice travelled around his head—crisp, cherubic, and silver, like sine waves.

“That’s pawpaw’s heart beating. He can hear you, you know?”

Little fingers touched his hand. “Hey, pawpaw,” she said. “I know I ain’t been here in a while, but—.” Her weight fell against the mattress. Greta lay beside him, breathing tufts of air into his ear. “I miss your stories. Remember when you—.” His leg became numb. The silvery voice wound around itself a thousand times and became a tunnel. “Zee fra bow mi guh boo jee zaaa suh—.”

He felt himself falling through his bed and sinking through the floor. A joyous bolt of adrenaline leapt up his chest and throat, a stream of screeching wind howling into his ears. Falling, falling, falling, he became weightless while the great below yawned into view, and he crashed into a slopping sea of doughy paint, the warmth filling his lungs like viscous gravy.

*Then, from the accretion discs of life jutting from the sludge of the sea, he burst forth as a creature, tightening every sinew, pushing himself from the masses, and realizing his solid shape, heart pounding from exhilaration, breaths deep and consuming. Clawing the massy earth, a hard-framed, sharp-featured creature shakes off the tendrily fingers of animus pudding and begins to run, stirring a great rumbling miles ahead. A deep growl swells in his chest; jolting to the logical end, he roars, shoving aside with his voice the stringy clouds in a toxic sky.*

“Harold?”

He is now a boy in the sand, watching the beast crest the dune

ahead, its tail whipping the air. He stands, surveying an infinite horizon and oceanic waves—the beach of his boyhood. He starts after himself, scaling the hill.

*Fire surges up from the plashy paint; each paw pads, claws, and tears apart the earth below. The ground heaves together like flesh and hardens while wavy bends of light break in every direction from the creature’s eyes, mouth, and nails. He whirls to the left and to the right, sending fingers of vegetation, shocked by the spontaneous infusion of life, into the air. And o! the earth groans under the feet of this wild one; in pain, like childbirth, she produces towers of wood and leaf, heaves up mountains, and pushes apart her crevices to let lifewater surge from the icy tips of newly snowcapped summits, the liquid blasting into a sordid, insatiable sea, the waves and waves frothing together, breaking apart, swirling and pulsing.*

“Harold!”

“Mom, what’s wrong with pawpaw?”

He sees the boy and the beast. He is in the passenger seat of the pickup truck, and a phantasmagoric nightmare lives inside a nearby lake—perhaps a trick of the nighttime lamps upon the water, or... or his imagination playing games with him, yet life within the shadow-laced chasm of the deep does pull him; therefore, he observes as

*the creature leaps unto the firmament to lick the dome of the sky. There, a blue blaze flows forth from his long tongue, bleeding in every way, covering the unbridled eye of space with an azure lens and darkening into frenzied storms over convulsing oceans. Hypercanes render the fluid chaos a sea of countless swords. The creature touches the ground and roars louder, pulverizing nature’s malice into a murmuring complaint.*

“Son, you think you’re tough shit, but I ain’t put you to work proper.”

“Yes, pa.”

“I know what you’re thinking, Harold. You want to watch films and drive around town and impress the womenfolk, but we need you this summer.”

“Why I got to work on the farm? I ain’t getting paid.”

“Listen closely,” the man says. “That there is a plot of fertile soil. Without work, it’ll never be anything but wasted investment and lost potential. You’re gonna be uncomfortable. Gonna feel pain. Gonna raise crops and send them right out. And that’s life.”



“But why, pa?”

“Why, what?”

“Why we gotta go through all that trouble?”

The man kneels and looks Harold in the eyes. “We wanted the world to ourselves, so we kicked God out. Well, now we have our rights, and we’re stuck with them.”

“What if we work for nothing?”

The man stands, brushes himself of red dirt, and says, “God is good.”

“I can’t see that, pa. How is God good and loving if—.”

A callused hand swipes across his face, the shock more painful than its sensation. “Boy, you better take that back.”

“Why, pa? Why!”

“Because if you want to be left alone, one day He’s gonna listen. So, don’t be making these big conclusions until you take everything into account. Now, grab that plow, boy.”

*At last, life. He shakes off his mane and paws at the dirt. Ears rearing back and nose flaring, he drives his mouth into the ground, pulling out a hunk of earth, and from the gap emerge little creatures of all legs and furs and armors and ears and feelers and teeth and pincers. The swarm so unleashes upon vacant air its teeming life that the soil can barely suffer it.*

“Mom, what’s all the beeping for?”

“Harold!”

He flexes his arm—the bicep looks like a rock formation, or an unfinished sculpture of a bird’s nest where a clearly-defined egg lay atop a solid mass of marble. Tough guy. The sound of rock and roll and scratches from the gramophone inject music into his veins. He pumps the barbells and stares at a picture of a woman on his mirror.

“I’ll ask her tonight. Gotta look sexy,” he says between breaths. “She’s gotta say yes. If she doesn’t... If she doesn’t... well, damn.”

*Far from the eyes of the legions rises the creature, exhaling warm breath over them as they claw their way from the hole. Patrolling to and fro, he studies them one by one.*

*The world.*

*His world.*

*They confer one with another regarding the proud creature towering above and sitting high, upholding its breast with ripped, muscular forelegs*

*fully stretched, tail tossing mountain-sized waves behind.*

Harold is driving his children to the fair, a fight from earlier that evening on his mind. *Winning ain’t never winning*, he figures. *When you win, you lose. When you lose, you still lose.*

“Daddy! Let’s ride the sunshine thing!”

“No, daddy, the carousel. I’m gonna throw up!”

“All right, ladies, all right. We’ll do the carousel and—.”

“Aw, daddy, what about the sunshine spinny thing?”

“We’ll do the Ferris wheel instead. Will you girls agree to that for daddy?” Screams of joy. *She’s a character all right, but I love that Latina. I’ll apologize when we get home.* “Don’t run, now. Stay with daddy.” *She’s more important than who is right.*

The scene pulls him atop a Ferris wheel, the lights below charging his boyish glow while the girls squeal with delight.

*How sweet it is when the miscellany of elements finds solidity and purpose! They marvel at their hair and nails, their exoskeletons, their subtle, sundry poisons. To the creature they report in the countless calls of all-life, and in response, the beast roars his final time, shaking the core of the young planet. Hearing the terrible power in his voice, their myriad eyes turn orange. Drowsily, they accumulate and wrap their mass around his back as a binaural hum*

*undulates  
louder and  
louder, fast  
becoming  
unbearable.*



**They marvel at their hair and nails, their exoskeletons, their subtle, sundry poisons**

*Boy Harold screams. Young Harold cries. Teen Harold beats against the doughy wall rising, yet the world has lost consistency enough to amass into insurmountable sludge, now applying pressure atop the creature. Man Harold turns his back.*

She lay in a hospital bed, her full lips and soft Caribbean skin paled and spotted by cancer, and Harold weeps uncontrollably. Her heart is ablaze, like a silent star in space burning with impossible intensity. Her hand softly presses his, her eyes warm with tears from low morphine. The girls, now wives with children of their own, stand silently by while Harold weeps and weeps. *Why do the best ones go first?*

“Harold,” she says.



“I’m here, sweetie.” The words were like a palm tree on the beach during a sea-borne storm. *Can she have my life?*

“God... is good, Harold.”

“I know. I know...” Tears wind down the deep lines of his face.

“Harold. Dios es bueno. We’ll meet again, mi amor.” Her coughing is violent. Fluids fill her lungs.

*Tell me what prayer, damn it, and I will pray it!*

*The creature struggles. The world bears down. His muscles ache under the constant weight until his forelegs tear and buckle, and like the end of an age, Boy Harold sinks into the slough unnoticed. Spiny vines of once-defined creatures dig through his paws and between his bones. Young Harold hurls*

## Spiny vines of once-defined creatures dig through his paws and between his bones



*his rowdy frame atop the mass only to be consumed. The creature wails and arches his back. He wriggles and writhes while teen Harold tries to run but sinks.*

*The world pulls upon him more in fear than anything else. The beast is falling into them. His body is beginning to disassemble into the elements. He is becoming all and nothing.*

“Pawpaw,” Greta’s voice asks, bouncing down a silver hall of mirrors. “What does it mean to die?”

*It means that if there is a God, he is all the pain... “It means...” Murder-suffering-tears... “Your mawmaw...” Pointlessness-fruitlessness-frustration... “Is on a boat and sailing to the sunset.” Fearmongering-vivisecting-cosmological judgment... “And we’re just waiting for the ship to come back for us.”*

“Why?”

“Because...” *God is death...* “Nothing lasts forever, baby.”

*Man Harold bursts into red flames and cinders away; Old Harold reaches out his hands, his body covered in boils, his chest cavity opening with marrow-deep cracks to reveal a black hole.*

At offering time, two women pass by his pew, eyeing the dollar amount on his check and talking loudly enough to proclaim their interest in his affluence. An imprint of the couch is still on his face; static

of a television having screamed busy hours of nothing from a night ago drowns both the preacher’s red-faced rhetoric and the confused sevenths of a baby grand hymnal machine. He blinks home; devotions wane like the evening itself: a pulchritudinous fade into night, then hoarfrost, while the dishes pile higher and mold proliferates.

*It spreads like beads of water on a napkin, sprouting in all places and sending spores into the air. Clouds round out into plates of green and reach down with spider-web threads of interlocking mold, and the only smell is death—*

“Harold! Oh, God... Greta, hit the red button. Nurse! Oh, please, Daddy. Daddy, don’t die!” She screamed, “Daddy! Don’t leave me!”

He had a moment left. He could say anything, do anything, be anything. Hail Harold, demigod and high priest in the church of his dying earth. The copper flavor returned from a distance. Greta’s weight pulled softly at the blanket. Fluorescent light began to pierce his eyelids. He heaved in a near-unnoticeable breath. From the back of his throat, he exhaled, “God is good.”

*The creature opens his mouth, letting the body return to the elements, and a bright star erupts into full view, growing hungrily as it ascends to the sky—because nothing glorious, nothing rife with creation power, nothing at all can contain eternity in the valley of the damned.*

*The world.*

*His world no more.*

A steady ringing rose from the heart monitor, mindless and insincere in its report of what was, but in the eternal present spanning across the limitless divide between the living and those truly living, covered in light and sound and tongues of flame, Harold is.

---

**in**

the eternal present spanning across the limitless divide between the living and those truly living, covered in light and sound and tongues of flame, Harold is.



“Endurance”  
by Audra Hagel

## Dive

潜水

Andrea VanderMey

Swimming deeper, falling darker,  
 Under the surface, swallowed by depth.  
 Memories, like diving rings, survive.  
 Motionless. Soundless. Bright with color.  
 Visible from the surface, too far to touch.  
 Hand grazes the hard plastic edge.  
 Arm extends—reaching out,  
 Clutching the memory.  
 One is not enough, the power of the memory draws in more.  
 The weight encompasses, begins to burden.  
 These thoughts are too much,  
 Attaching to their victim,  
 Impossible to let go,  
 Pulling. Drowning. Deeper.

## Fish in a Tank

箱里的鱼

Antonio Byrd

Roger Kite awakened in the morning and saw the sun, murky and distant. He saw everything as murky and distant, and it left him unsatisfied in everything he did, though Roger never noticed this in the day. He populated his mind with the daily duties to his university. But first, Roger hopped on his five year-old treadmill that he began to use only six months ago. He worked his legs until they burned and sweat and muck covered his body. Roger rewarded himself with a hot shower, thinking, *I've made progress now*. He tried on a pair of size thirty-four pants, tucked the button through the hole, released his hands from the waist, and immediately felt the button burrow into his waist. Roger sighed and calmly pulled the pants off.

His slightly larger clothes were ironed from the night before, so he had only to put on his university polo and a pair of jeans. Sneakers fit his feet well. Then came the breakfast of no great portion—just enough to keep him full until noon.

He drove his car down the same route, turning right onto Bell Road when Roger could have driven straight on Edison Road and take it to the back entrance of the campus, closer to his office. There were some three hundred roads Roger could have traveled, explored, and filed in his cabinets of information for future reference, but they remained empty. As he circled around campus, a memory popped into Roger's head—a memory he did not consciously choose.

“Do you know if the library is on South Street or Carpenter Drive?” a freshman once asked him in his office.

Roger looked up from his computer and shrugged. “I have no idea.”

“You mean to tell me all this time you've been here and you don't know where things are?”

“Well, I've got a lot of school work, so there's not much time for



exploring. You'll realize this when you're a senior."

"No, dude, you need to get out more!"

Roger passed two cars piled over each other; a businesswoman climbed out of hers, marched to the other car, and dragged the driver out by his ear. She then smashed her fist into his face over and over.

## She then smashed her fist into his face over and over

Roger, however, was left undaunted by the strange discussion between the drivers beside him—he stared ahead and laughed at the memory: "Get out more! I do get out more! And who is he to tell me what I need to do with my life? He's just a punk eighteen year-old. His major is probably undeclared. He just drifts like wood in a river. He has no aim, no direction. I need to get out more? He needs to take a long look at his life!"

Roger entered the office, greeted his colleagues, and sat at the front desk. He committed his brain to creating a storm of ideas for campus activities. Campus life needed to be served daily, after all, or else the blood would cease to flow, and the bones and skin of academics remain. Roger produced the best ideas. This time, it was a cowboy-themed event, including a hoedown, mechanical bull riding, and a chili contest! Roger leaned back in his chair, pleased with himself, and sure his office would like the ideas at the staff meeting. And they did.

"I like it!" said the Administrative Coordinator.

"That is great, Roger!" exclaimed the Graduate Assistant.

"Fantastic! Let's get this event moving everyone!" cried the Boss.

Then it was back to the computer to design flyers and put advertisements on the website—a check on grammar, an adjustment to a text box, and a resize to another photo. Send e-mail messages and take a call.

"Roger speaking!"

"Hi! May I speak to—"

"She's not in right now. May I take a name, number, and message?"

Write the message in bad handwriting. Toss the paper in the bin

and e-mail the message to her instead. Clock-out. Say a word of good-bye.

At noon, Roger walked to the cafeteria and spotted a classmate sitting by herself in a booth. He continued to walk, head down at an angle, hoping the girl wouldn't notice him. No such luck. She looked up from her chemistry books, the image of Roger in the reflection of her eyes; smiled; and waved. Roger jerked his head up and forced a grin. He waved back but quickened his pace before the girl could display any gesture for him to join her.

He saw many choices on the menu: mashed potatoes with gravy, grilled chicken, salad, yogurt, pizzas of all kinds, an assortment of cheaply priced drinks prepared to quench Roger's thirst. His eyes darted from one item to the next, beads of sweat streaming out of his pores. A lump grew in Roger's throat. He sent it to the bottom of his bowels with saliva when he finally found the choice that he thought was no longer available: a flatbread and lemonade.

His debit card settled the cost, all the more useful as Roger made a hasty retreat to a corner of the cafeteria and sat among old friends. He left his stomach unsatisfied, inexperienced much like the rest of his head. As a vegan may vomit from eating meat after years of abstaining from it, so, too, would Roger if he bought pizza or salad, or both! But not really, though it would be a welcoming experience.

Roger hung out with the same friends—Kenneth, Ashley, and Trevor—to talk about the same topics without end. The conversations always began with specific statements. First, Kenneth asked a question about Roger's job.

"How was work?"

Then the reply from Roger:

"Oh, great! We're planning a cowboy-theme event on campus!"

Roger turned to Ashley.

"How was psychology?"

Then Ashley replied, usually with a complaint of some kind about her professors.

"Sucks! Dr. Kimbler is so boring! He just stands there and reads off the slides. I swear, if I have to sit through another two-and-a-half-hour lecture with that guy, I'm going to scream!"

Finally, Trevor boasted of his classes.



“Well, I can’t complain!” Trevor said. “I love Drawing II! I’m telling you, Roger, you should get into it!”

“Yeah, right, Trev! You know I can’t draw worth a can of beans.”

They played a thousand video games on their laptops every afternoon, and there were a thousand more left unplayed or meant to be played or on the way from publishers in order to be played. Some said Roger’s friends were just as single-minded, but that was not so. Follow any one of Roger’s friends and discover the broadness of their minds. All three acquired needed knowledge and desired topics for conversation. Trevor happily drove down Edison Street to reach the back entrance so that he did not have to walk so far to class, and Ashley made a point to try everything on the cafeteria’s menu to satisfy her curiosity. Kenneth sought to satisfy his love for fashion.

Oh, the assortment of clothes Roger himself could choose from. Throw out the faded polo shirts for designer t-shirts. Look more comely with a pair of slacks, a vest and coat, a hat to match the shoes and socks, a watch to warm the wrist, a ring to tuck a finger into, or a tattoo to impress the ladies.

“Have you even tried to sketch something?” continued Trevor. “I mean, seriously try to sketch a sunset or tree?” Trevor leaned forward, watching Roger stare at his flatbread in response.

“Well, we all have our talents. Some things aren’t meant for everyone.”

Now we may stop from these observations and reply that much of what Roger did was expected. We have chosen our roads without regret, thinking that it has made all the difference. Nevermind the potential successes and failures of the other roads, yet that is the point, Roger had chosen his path, abandoned all roads, and we say “well done!” But how much more loathed are we for watching him pass up the opportunities given to him while walking that road.

“Hey, Roger!” called a squeaky voice.

Roger jerked in his chair and looked up. It was the girl from the booth. “Oh, hey! I didn’t see you there!”

“How did you think you did on yesterday’s test? That thing was hard! He should’ve given us a study guide, like last time.”

“Oh, definitely! I think that part on the lysogenic cycle left me

daunted a little; I really couldn’t explain it.”

“I thought that part was easy.” She touched Roger’s shoulder; goosebumps flooded his body. “Next time we should get together and study.”

“Yeah, that’s a great idea!”

The girl made her exit, and once she was gone, the table exploded into jokes and whistles. Roger blushed. *It’s not like that; not like that at all. I was just being nice. Why would I go out with someone at my age? I have my studies to concentrate on.* But he scanned the cafeteria and saw more familiar faces. He knew their names, knew their majors, knew one hundred things about all of them—knew so much about them that he pondered what it would be like to befriend them.

*How do people go from being strangers to being friends, anyway? What if they don’t like me and my conversation aggravates them or bores them? Plus, they have their own friends. People always have their own friends. And how did I become friends with the three people I’m sitting with now?*

*I can’t even remember.*

At night, the possibilities multiplied. There were many places to visit instead of going home. He had loads of money and a new car from his parents, so he could drive far for hours and hours, exploring the night life of the city: clubs, poetry readings, concerts, parties, anything but the routine.

However, it was back down Bell Road to home and another light dinner to keep him full overnight. When Roger laid his head down to dump the minutiae of the day into his dreams, sleep did not come so easily. Roger closed his eyes and lay still for a moment. Then he turned over, folded his pillow, and turned again. He rolled onto his back, and promised to never move again.

His day, like many days before, went well. Much was accomplished, and if there were failures, they were so small that Roger barely concerned himself with them. At night, always at the end of the day,

Roger felt something was missing, or that he had missed something

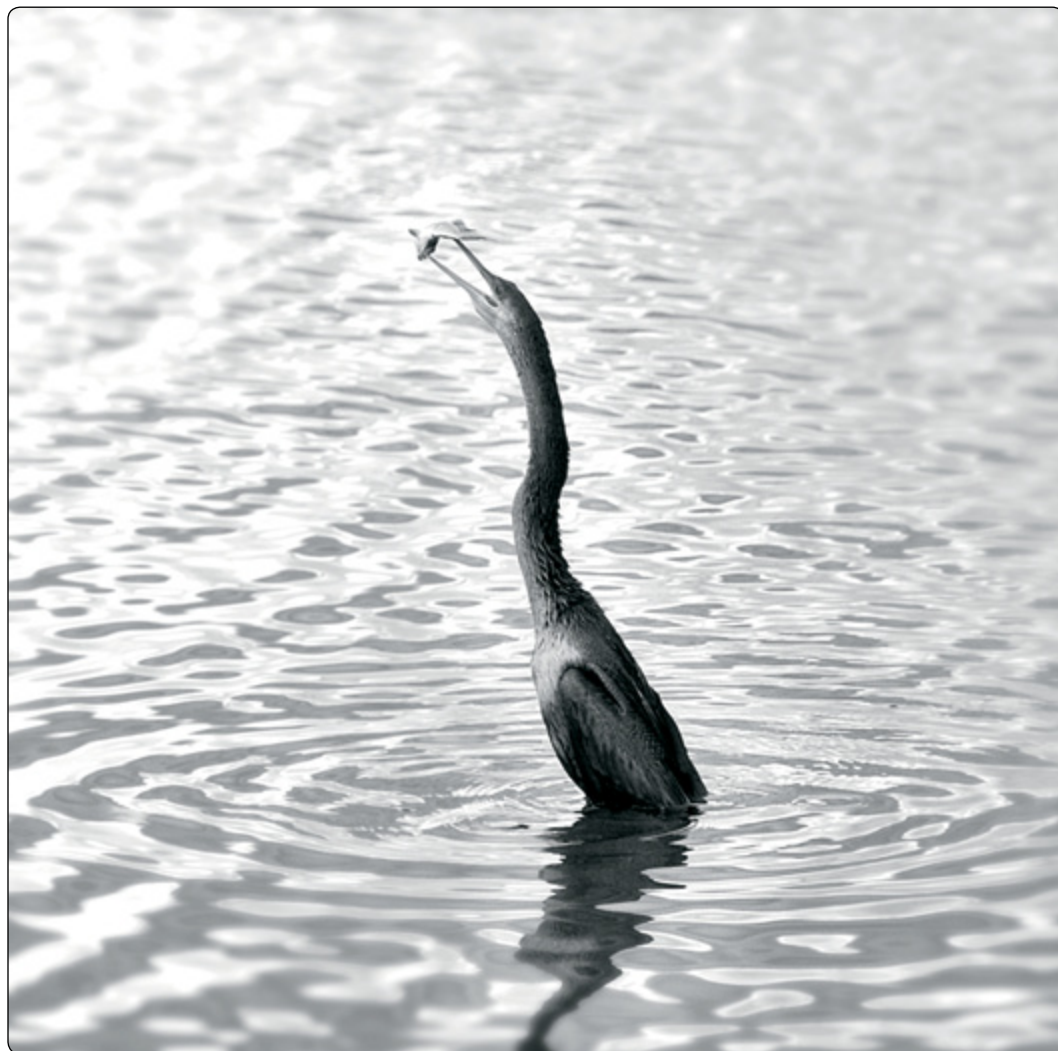


**“Youth is wasted  
on me.”**

important. “Youth is wasted on me.” Roger looked at the ceiling, and for a moment, the words stayed in his head; he was teetering on forming images of his childhood and adolescence, a review of his twenty-two years on Earth that would lead to a great conclusion.

But then he thought about the girl. “I can’t even remember her name.” Roger spent the rest of the night trying to remember, until he turned on his side and fell asleep.

The next day his routine would continue, the necessary activities piled on top of the unconscious truth that he was, and perhaps will always, be a fish in a tank.



## A Night's Terror

—— 一夜的恐怖 ——

Kali Piro

White plywood door, golden locked handle—protective barrier.

Blonde baby in hand, brunette girl by my side—I’m their shield.

Loud cackles from the other side, bottles crash—mother not home.

Stepfather—drug addict, loser—parties with his five brothers.

We are scared, don’t know what to do—I call mom.

Mom, angry that she can’t enjoy the night out with the girls—returns.

Front door slams, we run to mother for comfort—war starts.

We—forced to the side—witness red faces and cursed slurs.

Movement stirs outside; mother and stepfather—not alone.

My eyes peek, full of fear and tears, through cracked blinds—eyes glued.

Five brothers throw mom onto plastic patio table—why?

Laughter grows louder to cover her screams, six beers are poured.

Drenched with the stench, clawing and biting—my mother.

Our screams are inaudible to the blue-and-red sirens—saviors.

Separated, cuffed, and hauled away—both stepfather and mom.

I scream in protest—officers don’t believe me—I’m twelve.

## Bandages on Her Neck

帶绷带的女人

Sarah Fredericks

She turned her head to see her reflection in the window: white gauze wrapped around her throat like a triple strand of pearls. On the left side of her neck was a bulge. She imagined red, blood-soaked bandages, encrusted with yellow ooze that seeped out between the stitches and formed little spider webs of puss on the surface of her dressings. The gauze was clean. She pursed her mouth in a nervous pout, smearing cherry-colored gloss across her lips. It had happened. A spasm in her stomach. It didn't really happen. Something—something else. She met his eyes through the glass.

She had... she had been in a car wreck. Yes. She maneuvered a blue coupe through the tight hairpin turns up I-82 when a landslide washed debris and mud onto the road. A tall wave of brown water followed and crashed into the side of the vehicle, slamming it into the scrubby trees that fringed the cliff. The car spun around before lodging between two pine trees. The force crumpled the car's steel frame till it resembled a giant bow-tie. Paramedics used the Jaws of Life to pry open her car door.

Mop in hand, he shuffled through the lobby. It was disappointingly empty. A dank apartment on Fifth and Hanover waited for him at the end of his shift. Empty. He would go to Jimmy Cho's for the Noodle Special, sipping broth under stuttering florescent lights to delay the inevitable. In the dangling conversation and the superficial sighs, he found the borders of humanity. Like a poem poorly written, he was a verse out of rhythm, a couplet out of rhyme—in syncopated time. Through the window he met her eyes. What happened to you, baby?

**The** traffic became a moving mass of interwoven colors and noise. Outlines and details blurred.

I am better than this. She rubbed the heel of her hand hard against her cheek. Her skin was flushed to a deep plum. The sun feels good on my face. Eyes closed, she tilted her head back in a rapturous moment as the soft wind molested her, sliding under her clothes and wrapping its fingers around her. She trembled in its warm embrace. An ambulance siren reminded her of reality. No. The apartment is dusty from disuse; I haven't been inside for weeks.

She had just had a tonsillectomy. For weeks her neck had been swollen, throat raw. She had been wasting away. It hurt to eat, hurt to drink. Her restricted windpipe didn't allow her to rest at night, and she developed sleep apnea. When she managed to fall asleep, her own soft, cow-like snore disturbed her. One day, it happened. Her tonsils burst. An ambulance rushed her to the hospital for emergency surgery, and things had been tense for a while. "She lost a lot of blood," the surgeon said gravely, "but she'll pull through. She's a fighter." Her mother wept as her father shook the surgeon's hand in stoic gratitude.

She rubbed her cheek with her knuckles. Will they know?—a cloud floated in front of the sun—they already know. The traffic became a moving mass of interwoven colors and noise. Outlines and details blurred. A giant knit sweater, rolling like the sea, the threads each sliding in their own directions, pulling and tugging. She sat on the wooden bench, legs neatly crossed, the brown fur on her Uggs rippling in the wind. Isolation. A lump caught in her throat, and her heart started to race. No.

It has to be cherry gloss. He licked his own chapped lips. Cherry or strawberry. You are all that with your lip-smackers and miniskirt. A mysterious breeze fluttered the open ruffled collar of her blouse. Almost. Paging Dr. Rodriguez to Radiology. Rodriguez, Radiology. The wind caught a heavy black curl and tossed it over her shoulder. Put a daisy in that hair, baby. Let's kick down the cobblestones, looking for fun, and feeling groovy.

Like wheat. He looked at the fur on her boots rippling with the breeze. You're healthy and nutritious. As she tucked a straggler back under her hair-scarf, a flash from her right hand caught his eye. You're a rich dame. The mop slopped onto the floor with a sucking sound. You look good. Why play around with the common man. What? Daddy's limo stand you up? When I ain't a sleep, honey, when I ain't sleepin', momma, when I ain't a sleepin', you know you find me crying.



She had been diagnosed with malignant melanoma. One day she went to her general practitioner for a regular examination, and he discovered on her neck a kidney-bean freckle with black spots. A biopsy confirmed his worst fears: skin cancer. She called her best friend, William Andrews, and they went for martinis and shoe shopping at two o'clock in the afternoon. She never cried. A week later she was scheduled for surgery, and she sat alone in the hospital lobby at six in the morning, waiting for the nurse to take her back to pre-op. She tapped her new Prada pumps impatiently on the carpet. Later they rolled her green-sheeted form into the operating room to remove the tumor.

Don't think about it. Think about anything else instead. A woman walked by, dragging a chubby child licking an ice cream cone; he wore overalls with no shirt and muddy Barney sneakers—the left shoe flashed with red lights in the heel. Those shoes are my world. The boy vanished behind a shiny black car. Of course he would come for me. She looked around, halfway hoping for an escape route and halfway worried that someone inside the building would see him. He got out of the car. He was sorry. He didn't mean it. Gripping her upper arm, the man pressed her body against his. The color red suffused her consciousness. As he leaned in for a kiss, a police car drove by and she turned her head away from his lips.

Benny turned from the window. He slopped the dingy mop into the yellow rolling bucket. Music blared from his walkman: folk rock. The afternoon was drudgery, nothing but noodles and fluorescent lighting. He shuddered. On the other side of the glass, the man from the black car slapped Lily.

Shoved through the open car door. The color red. Dust in the apartment; nowhere to go.

She had been attacked by a vampire...

A black Mercedes Benz rolled into the passenger pick-up lane. She visibly winced and darted her head to the left and right. Daddy didn't bring the Rolls Royce? Tsk-tsk! Embarrassed to be slumming in the Benz, huh? The rear passenger door opened, and a man with a bouquet of daisies emerged. Flowers ain't good enough; need something shiny or sparkly. The man from the car pulled her into an embrace, but she turned her head, dodging his kiss. Teach her to behave in public, brother. You don't know that you love me; you don't know but I know that you do. You think that you're above me, yeah, but what you think isn't always true—No, you don't know where your interest lies.

Benny watched his tear drop and splash soundlessly onto the linoleum. He turned his head.



“More Than You Know”  
by Richard Price

# Reflections in Passage

—— 通过思考 ——

Arvilla Fee

The full-length mirror stood in her mother's bedroom,  
So tall it seemed to reach the ceiling,  
Encased in a heavy oak frame, sturdy and fine;  
She barely reached even a foot high to the bottom  
Of the mirror.

Little chubby hands, sticky from waffles and syrup,  
Pat the glass, and she shrieks in her toddler language,  
Patting her own face in the mirror and then  
Holding her hands flat—palm to palm—  
On the cool glass.

Small girl now, about three-feet high, staring solemnly  
Then breaking into a grin, showing missing teeth:  
Frown, grin, frown, grin—she giggles wildly  
At herself and presses her forehead  
Against the hard surface.

Teenager twists critically this way and that for a better view:  
Does this dress look alright for the prom?  
Tilts her head, sighs—pushes her hair up  
Then lets it fall back down to her shoulders,  
Glossy in the reflection.

Graduation day—she stands proudly in cap and gown,  
Not even believing that high school is over  
And she is now nearly as tall as the mirror.  
She gives herself a high-five and watches her print  
Fade on the glass.

“I cannot believe this day has come,” mother says,  
And she tries not to cry as she arranges the veil.  
The young lady fights back her own tears  
And surveys the full-length of her beaded white dress  
Framed carefully in oak.

The mirror now stands in the young mother's room.  
“Shhh, Shhh, darling, look there you are, Shhh...  
See your little face, you look just like me—  
Just like me when my mother held me in her arms  
And I saw the pretty glass.”



# (Extra) Ordinary

—— (额外) 普通 ——

Miranda Hale-Phillips

You call yourself  
“Only ordinary,”  
But so  
The ordinary  
Really is  
Extraordinary.

If you believe in God,  
Why, He made you  
In His image,  
For His works.

If you do not, well  
Even cold-hearted,  
Efficient Science  
Declares your glory.

Your brain!  
So small, really—  
Yet so intricate  
And delicate.

20% of oxygen,  
20% of calories,  
15% of blood supply  
To your brain!

The blood within,  
Coursing strong,  
Runs through your lungs  
Every minute!

Stress not, and  
Seek to laugh!

It bolsters your  
Hearty immune system!

Breathe deeply,  
Bring oxygen in  
As you need  
88 pounds!

Shades of gray  
Are quite various—  
As you can see  
Over 500!

Do not seek  
To be like a model  
As most of them are  
Skinnier than us all!

Release guilt,  
Enjoy life—  
Guilt damages  
The immune system!

Our bodies,  
So delicate,  
So strong,  
So different!

You, then,  
Are hardly Ordinary  
But are, in fact,  
Extraordinary.

Smile!





# Christmas Bankruptcy; or Why Dickens Was No Financier

圣诞节破产，狄更斯为什么不是一个金融家

Alexander Bruce Herbitter

Charles Dickens' classic novella, *A Christmas Carol*, was intended to be a moving piece of social commentary aimed at the aristocracy of 19th century Europe (and particularly those around him as a boy in London). It was intended to lampoon the economic injustices of capitalism, materialism, and the industrial revolution at large. However, Dickens was no economist, no financier, and no businessman.

Ebenezer Scrooge is, as written, a jackass of the highest caliber. But let's put his personal dysfunctions aside for just a moment (to be examined shortly) and look at the way he runs his business. He is criticized for several things: inflexibility with regard to payment schedules, unreasonable interest rates on his loans, and low wages to his employee. The first two should be dismissed out of hand by simply remembering that the terms of the loan would have been clearly stated before it was given. If the person getting the loan was unhappy with the payment plan or the interest rate, he didn't have to take the loan to begin with. Scrooge didn't force his customers to do anything. But we can examine these two points further. What if Scrooge let his loan holders pay him late? Would he then be allowed to pass that on to his employee, Bob Cratchit, by paying him late? How would this affect poverty-stricken Bob and especially his son, Tiny Tim? And what is the reason for his rates of interest? Dickens never reveals to us the exact percentage, but that's not necessary information. If the people seeking loans cannot get lower interest rates, and Scrooge's interest rates are higher than the market average, then we can assume that Scrooge is dealing with high-risk loans. That is, he is giving loans to people other banks won't give money to because these loans would represent too high a default risk. In this respect, Scrooge would actually be sticking his neck out (to some

degree) to help the poor. Where other banks see a high risk, he sees a person in need of a loan. The reason he needs to charge this high interest rate is so that he can keep his business going in spite of his undoubtedly high default rate. Or to put it bluntly: without his inflexibility and high interest rates he would go out of business and Bob Cratchit would be without a job, Tiny Tim would die, and the poor people of London would have absolutely no options for getting loans and would have to suffer.

But I haven't spoken about the low salary Scrooge pays Cratchit; many of the same things can be said about this as were said about the interest rates. If Cratchit cannot find employment at some other business for more money—or at the very least with a nicer boss (I did admit Scrooge is a jerk)—then one has to wonder about Cratchit's ability. Basically, one would assume he kind of sucks at his job if he can't find a better one. There's also something to be said about the number of kids Cratchit has. It certainly makes an emotional ploy for Dickens to paint the picture of Cratchit having all these mouths to feed, but at some point you have to shift the responsibility off of Scrooge and onto Cratchit. Personal Finance Lesson 1: don't have kids you can't afford.

Let us now return to the personality quirks of Mr. Scrooge. Dickens both implicitly and explicitly characterizes Scrooge as greedy, but let's not take this characterization at face value. We need to ask what greed really is. A good working definition of greed is the desire to be happy. That's what greed is. Really, really, really wanting whatever makes you happy is being greedy. Under this definition, the question "is Scrooge greedy?" becomes "is Scrooge happy?" The answer here is an unequivocal no. Scrooge does everything in his power, in fact, to remove every shred of happiness and pleasure from his life. He is the very antithesis of greedy: he is sad. Dickens fundamentally misunderstands capitalism and so, unsurprisingly, he fundamentally misunderstands the capitalist. His attempted character assassination misses the mark as he knocks down straw men.



## Personal Finance Lesson 1: don't have kids you can't afford

## Blue Topaz

蓝玉

Kali Piro

Shiny new silver ring:  
two dolphins hugging  
blue topaz, stone of her birth,  
for a celebrated occasion—  
unlike her early death.

She was a tall brunette with  
a freckled monument  
decorated with brown specks  
by the kisses of angels.

She a was loving, compassionate,  
argumentative, mule—stubborn.  
She pushed limits  
because she could.

Troublemaker versus Golden child,  
a battle—now dead and cold  
like the coolness from the silver  
unworn, unadorned—put away.

She was the grass;  
I was the root—

we were bound together  
like grass; she grew too  
much, needed constant attention.  
Envy, a diagnosis, led her down  
the path of gullible desperation.

She loved this ring,  
a gift from me,  
like she loved that devil  
boy, who was responsible.

He promoted her fears—  
father's negligence.  
Her forest eyes—glazed—  
were blinded by the dark.

I cannot visit her. No,  
instead, I sit here and hold  
this cold piece of silver:  
two dolphins, Robin and I,  
both born in the reign of blue  
topaz.

## A Wanderer's Elegy

一个流浪者的悲歌

Kevin Lee Garner

I am Aurora Borealis,  
shedding my light  
in a cold sky.

I am rays and beams rippling on the globe,  
a confluence of conditionals  
against the backdrop of heaven,  
a phenomenon with no sufficient name,  
an infant of eternity.

The closer I draw to earth,  
the faster I fade.  
The further I fly,  
the sooner I die.

What I would give to blanket you  
with warmth, but these photons  
travel too far from their source.

Even when my heart rages,

I am just  
light  
in a cold sky.

## An Antisocial Squirrel

反社会松鼠

Audra Hagel

On Thursday afternoon, I visited a pond. That, in itself, sounds dull when, in reality, that singular visit provided me with a memory of the brilliancy of the afternoon light, the coolness of the subtle breeze, and the liveliness of nature at that moment. What, perhaps, seems like a simple afternoon enthralled me as I watched small birds, gossamer dragonflies, a gorgeous natural view, and an emotional squirrel obviously off his normally prescribed medication.

The birds ignored me. The dragonflies avoided me. The magnificent scenery touched me with its glow but remained indifferent to my presence. The squirrel, however (oh, that little, fuzzy, caffeinated, frantic, frenzied creature impersonating a squirrel), upon his awareness of my location and after darting up the trunk of an old oak tree (no, there was no yellow ribbon tied 'round it), stared at me from the lowermost branch of the tree under which I sat. Apparently, he was having a bit of an (oh, how do I put this?) emotionally distressing moment. He scolded and spat and ran away to hide. Finding security along a branch overhanging the swing where I was comfortably, blissfully situated while unintentionally irritating the charming little squirrel, he proceeded to drop bits of acorns in my hair. Oh, yes, sweet, darling little thing, this squirrel. However, I did not retaliate by stomping my feet, scolding, spitting, or running away to hide. I laughed. He was not impressed.

Despite my blatant refusal to acknowledge openly the annoying squirrel, and in spite of the enchanting call from the vibrant reflections of the light on the water—the glistening gems of light sparkling from hazy blue-grey ripples sliding across the pond's surface—somehow, it was the squirrel, I believe, that most captured my fancy. In his own, irritating way, he was intriguing.

Reluctantly, I arose. My innocent session of tormenting the psychotic squirrel by merely existing too near him drew to an end. Whether or not he was pleased to see me depart, I cannot ascertain. I bid him adieu, yet he said no farewell, verbalized no angst, and let drop no more acorn pieces. Perhaps, in his own, antagonized way, he, too, was sad to watch me leave.

Frankly, I think he jumped down from the tree where he was lurking and danced under the oak when I left it vacant, gleefully scattering leaves, twigs, acorn bits, jargonized squirrel chatter, and maddening laughter as he leapt and played on the empty knoll under the shaded canopy of an old oak tree beside a glistening pond where dragonflies play and birds call, a place where I no longer witness the chagrin of a reclusive, possessive, antisocial squirrel.





# Exchanges of the Heart

交流的心

Kali Piro

I.

I'm twenty-two years old, and I'm looking at photographs—trying to remember the times as they were in relation to how things are now. Desperately seeking answers, I pause on one page in my photo album. Five pictures litter the black page. In each picture, I'm about six years old and very unhappy. My face is wet with tears and colored red, and my arms are flinging toward the camera as a benign attempt to escape the man holding me, the man who is my father.

II.

A girl, not yet a woman, makes a stand for herself. She is eighteen. Lonely and ashamed, she calls her father to set up a face-to-face meeting. He drove from Jacksonville, Florida, to Jacksonville, Alabama, without making a quick stop to see his daughters. The girl loves—hates him—but she needs closure. But most importantly, she wants her younger sister to have their father's love because the younger sister needs it more than the girl.

The father answers the phone and agrees to at least drive halfway to see his eldest child. They arrange to meet at the Galleria in Birmingham, Alabama, on Black Friday at noon. The girl's voice quivers with each sentence because she knows why she wants—no, needs to—meet him.

Black Friday arrives, and the girl gets into her car for the hour drive to meet her father. She parks two miles away from the mall; it was the closest parking spot. She fidgets and prepares herself for what she's about to tell her father. She must do this—if not for herself, then for her final grade in her psychology class. Confrontation is a must because she needs to move on and accept the relationship she has with her father.

The girl enters the food court and finds a table. People—all happy—talk about the great sales and the wonderful people who'll

receive the purchased gifts. In a crowd of people, she is the only one with a troubled expression and deep-residing turmoil. As the incessant confrontational thoughts reel in her head, she spots her father in the crowd.

He smiles, comes toward her, and sits down at her table. He's confused as to why she asked him to be there, and finally asks, "Why?"

"I've asked you here because there is something I need to tell you. But when I start talking, you can't interrupt me. You must let me finish before you say anything."

He agrees with a shake of the head, and she begins, "You haven't and won't ever be my father. I don't love you; I appreciate the fact that you gave me life, but that's about it. To me, you are a sperm donor, and that's that. I don't want anything from you, because all I ever get are broken promises."

He sits there listening and soaking every word up like a sponge as he blankly stares at this daughter's tear-stained face. After a few moments, he says, "You called me and made me meet you for you just to tell me that I'm a terrible father? Well, you could've done that over the phone."

The girl responds through her tears, "I'm telling you all of this because it's not too late for you and my sister. She needs you, and you can make things right with her where you messed up with me. I'm showing that you have another chance."

I.

I sit across a man who's afraid of commitment. He doesn't want anything serious, but he admits that he likes me. I don't understand him, and I won't settle or sell myself short. When it comes to this department, I'm me, and that includes my historical fears of being neglected, alone.

II.

A few months later, my mother calls my father and begs him to take my sister. She's gone wild and can't be controlled by my mother anymore. He laughs in the phone and tells her that she had her; she raised her, and it's her problem.

My sister overhears the entire conversation. Tears followed by black lines covers her face.

Two months later, my sister is killed in a car accident. She was still hanging out with the bad crowd that my mother had tried to get her away from. My father didn't help; he didn't care.

He comes to the funeral. Bastard.

I.

The girl doesn't want to make the same mistake as her mother and continues to pay for it several years down the road. She refuses. She tells the man that she can't continue and thanks him for at least being honest, a quality that she hadn't expected a man to have. Now knowing that this man can be an honest adult, she understands that all men are not the one man in the photographs. There might be hope, but there'll always be tears.



“Ever-Watchful” by Allison Parliament

## Falling Stars

流星

Sarah Fredericks

A flaming star fell from the sky into mortal flesh—

And he, watching, shivered.

Light and heat dissipated as the mantle of human nature rested heavy on her.

His star was gone.

He missed the blistering intensity of his mind ignited by a mind ignited by the stretch for something unattainable, indescribable. Religion and reality had blended in a cataclysmic embodiment of the celestial bodies in her body, burning far out of his reach.

And when he touched the fallen star, he died because she died at his touch.

Now he curses the after-light of the star's heat and glow.

“Damn you,”

he says.

.

.

He was a star, too.

Once.

When two stars collide, the burning mass of energy and fire is utterly consumed.

In the dark he swears because

they fell

together.



# This is Living

—— 这是生活 ——

Arvilla Fee

Shaylee gripped the steering wheel. Head lights were coming toward her, but they shouldn't be on *her* side of the road. She pulled to the right, but it was too late. An explosion of glass and metal ripped through the stillness of the night. Shaylee flung her arms up in front of her face, trying to shield herself from the flying shards—then everything went black.

“Where am I?” wondered Shaylee. Maybe she'd died and gone to heaven. There was a bright light... didn't people near death always talk about bright lights? Shaylee wasn't an expert on heaven, but she was pretty sure that it didn't involve sharp pains and probably had a little more room. Everything around her was dark, cramped, sharp, and hard. She heard a voice close to her ear—was it God?



Shaylee's next memory was waking up to extremely bright lights in a white, sterile room with numerous tubes, machines, and beeping sounds. A sea of unfamiliar faces floated above her, and a million voices seemed to buzz and hum in the air. She felt an uncontrollable panic rising in her throat and tried to scream, but she couldn't utter a single sound . . .

[Want to read more of this story? You can find it in  
*Filibuster 2011: The Director's Cut*,  
at [www.aum.edu/filibuster](http://www.aum.edu/filibuster) ]

“Untitled”

by Andrea VanderMey (opposite)





# Academic Apocalypse

世界学术完

Steven Parker

Brain overload	My skull is a crater
Thought capacity has reached threshold	My mind is no more
It's mental meltdown	I have become a Chernobyl disaster zone
Subatomic intellectual holocaust	A Level 7 mishap
Grey matter fallout	Mind numb, brain dead
My thought bubble has popped	Virtual veggie coma
And the coolant of idea juice	Staring at my assignments
Can't shunt information overflow away	With the glazed look one gives
	When one hears a long-winded lecture
	That could put a speed junkie to sleep
Calamity ensues	
Academic Armageddon	
Collegiate chain reaction	I am on burnout
Leaving a meritous massacre	I am on terminal velocity impact
Of GPA genocide	I am tanked
Spiraling into paper graveyards	Empty and tapped
Of radioactive research papers	
Contaminated college rule binders	
And desecrated dissertations	...crap... I still gotta do my analysis...

# Words and Arrows

词和箭头

E. D. Woodworth



words and arrows fit  
through tiny slits in façade  
both can wound or kill

# The Day the Whole World Went Away

这一天，世界消失了

Kevin Lee Garner

“Well, what makes you happy?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then find out. Ain’t enough time to sit around writing in a diary.”

“It’s all the same. We like happiness because we’re programmed to like it. Everything boils down to a 1 for true and a 0 for false. Everything comes from switches.”

“You’re nuts, Lagmon.”

“I know.”

“So are you coming to the party or not?”

“Nah. I’ll just go home. I don’t care about them, and they don’t care about me. We just work together. It’s all code. You just learn the code and put on this face. We’re programmed to sense, then to feel, then to judge, then to like and dislike, and so forth. We’re robots that are programmed to ‘feel’ pain, or pleasure, whatever.”

“A simple ‘no,’ Art. You haven’t even started drinking yet.”

“Oh, but I will. At home, or Wings.”

“All right, but I’m going.”

“s cool. See you tomorrow.”

Arthur Lagmon sat up. An abrasive siren did not sound in his ears from across the room. The large-lettered, blue-lit alarm clock was off. The dustless (and therefore relatively invisible) beams of sunlight, only signified by their patterns on the floor—varying s’s—, were frozen in place. The ceiling fan rested in funereal stillness while the house’s inner workings made themselves clearly known to him in this novel silence. No electronic frequencies. No near-imperceptible ringing in the ears. “Power’s out,” he groaned and threw his body backward against the thin sheet and bleach-white pillow.

Oily sweat across Arthur’s brow swelled with the artificial chill most familiar to people suffering fevers. The complete silence deafened him. “Hey-o!” he said just to make noise, his voice echoing quick as lightning through the three-bedroom, two-bath house. Before long, he found himself in the shower. The water pressure told him that something was wrong. What usually came in steady streams instead broke into beads only centimeters from the shower head.

“Well that was pointless.” New underwear. Varied shirt (this time muted blue plaid with muted black for an air of rugged sophistication; only Frank would notice). Some pants. Same belt. Dress socks and shoes. A watch. Gear (wallet, keys, cell phone). Dressed, Arthur could walk out the door, set the alarm, start the car, drive to work, and successfully complete an entire day without opening his eyes, if only he didn’t have to watch for traffic and lights and errors in computer code.

Eyes closed, he left the house with a muffin in his mouth, hands busily opening the alarm panel and unlocking the front door. He stopped and opened his eyes. “Oh yeah, the power’s out.” Arthur exited the premises, securing the dead bolt and clicking the button on his key chain that featured a padlock undone. The car responded. The road commenced to pass under them.

“Staring at the sea, will she come?” His MP3 player processed the bits in silence.

The beginning of his automatic day. Then, “Oh”; there were no cars on the road. He looked over at his neighbor’s house. A white Plymouth Voyager sat parked in the driveway. Leeroy seemed to be home, and the man was never home for long, much less in the middle of the morning. Arthur checked his cell phone. No service. Frustration. Tossing the useless thing into the passenger seat, he barely noted the rows of trees passing by on either side. Uniform in architectural theory but varied under that intellectual covering, the suburban houses lacked the usual people mowing lawns, riding bicycles, getting in Arthur’s way. The driver’s side window slid down. The music became louder. Pleasure aesthetic.

The Jackson Group parking lot lacked the people taking the good parking places. The car rolled into the lot and found itself parked in the nearest blue-line spot. No parking police. No flashing lights. But no cars in general either. Confused by the occurrences having transpired thus far, an instance of Arthur had been created from the steel and fiberglass womb of the sporty Eclipse. Instantiation, perhaps, more so than declaration.

Keycard in hand, he approached the metallic glass complex. The sunbeaten structure featured a reflection—a man not wearing a tie approaching the door with a freshly rested brain ready for ordering the high-level languages of computers. He slid his keycard across a metal panel, but the green light confirming access to the building did not respond. The card slid again. And again. And again. And again. And again.

“If this is some kind of joke because I’m late, then can it!” There was a pause. “Open the door!” No response.



Arthur found himself driving to the nearest burger joint. Empty. Doors locked. Onto a Mexican restaurant. Doors locked. His stomach demanded food. Hands grabbed the muffin. Mouth ate a little. The road passed under Man and Car.

“What the hell is going on?” His Eclipse rolled into a cracked parking lot while Arthur surveyed the silent face of downtown Montgomery. The Bank tower that had switched owners recently, a cesspool of commercial endeavors, now looked like a dead, prehistoric tree towering over a metallic, glassy wasteland. At this, Arthur felt something like the loosing of a constricted vein, some intangible fluid now coursing through his brain and down into his extremities, giving him the desire—and nerve, at long last—to kick a puppy.

He honked the horn. He pressed the accelerator. He took the hilly roads at seventy, then a hundred, then a hundred-and-fifty. He chewed the half-eaten muffin. He jerked the wheel. He unbuckled his seatbelt. He honked the horn again. He screamed swear words out the window. He turned on speed metal and maxed out the volume. Taking and throwing his cell phone out the window at a passing stop sign, Arthur screamed, “I can do whatever I want!”



Days crept by. On an overcast morning, Arthur coasted through the downtown area. At the end of the longest road there, Arthur wheeled around. “Okay, Lagmon. Let’s do this!” He floored the accelerator. Screeching tires and white smoke... and Arthur was gone. He sped his Eclipse down the vacant road. In fact, Arthur Lagmon *became* the Eclipse. For two hours, he sped back and forth, pushing the car until he could smell a burnt vacuum cleaner odor filtering through the vents.

“How’s my baby?” he asked his car, patting the inanimate dashboard and parking.

When he looked out his window, Arthur found he was parked in front of a bank. He picked up a loose brick from a hedge and hurled it into the windows. Inside, he rummaged through desks and kicked over computers. He tried but failed to open the vault, and after nearly twenty minutes of disorganizing furniture and breaking expensive equipment, he left.

Struck with an idea, Arthur drove to the food mart and smashed the glass with the same brick. Humming, he piled prefabricated foods into a buggy. He popped open cans of fruit and boxes of Twinkies and stuffed his smiling face. He opened Deli Select meats to taste, but the smell of week-old roadkill tickled his nose, issued down his nose and into his mouth, and caressed his tongue with the taste of rotting flesh. Arthur threw up a little in his mouth. Angry, he piled up packages of paper towels, advertisements, cereal, feminine hygiene products, and ripe meat.

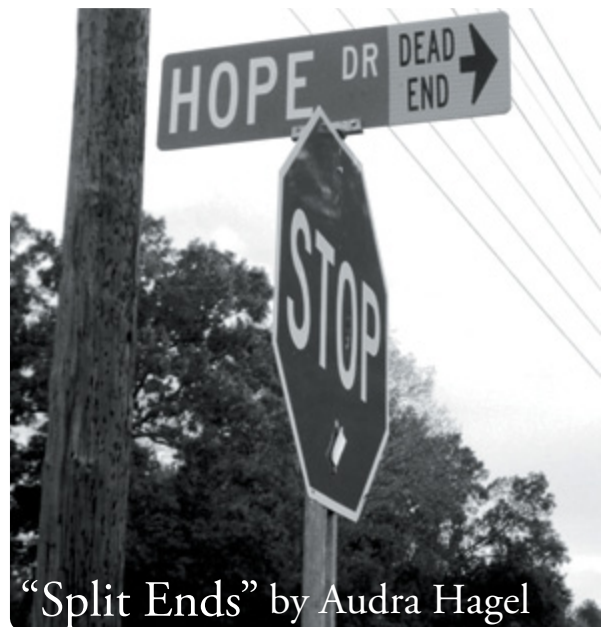
Arthur found a light and fluid, and he soaked the piles and the linoleum floor. With the Cheerios, Maxi-pads, and rolls of Brawny strewn about, Arthur arranged a smiley face and squeezed the child-proofed trigger on the lighter. The fluid, hungry for fire, opened into liquid flames and consumed the piles like the mountainous sacrifices of ancient times—Arthur the Bookybooky and his red grill lighter upon the Food Mart ziggurat. Soon after he left, the flames devoured the fixtures and all the sundry products on every shelf, and the heatwave from the burning building soon melted the windows across the street, spilling liquid glass on the cracked downtown sidewalk where Arthur would not see.



The next day, nothing had changed. Arthur went to another store and broke into a caged propane tank repository just outside. He hauled every tank into the store and trailed flammables across the street to a catholic church. There, he started the fire. His heart raced, as though it were detached from his still body. He waited as the fire burned closer and closer to the grocery store. Once the fire entered, Arthur braced himself, cringing with pleasure. But nothing happened. He stood, about to protest, when the whole building exploded and threw him against the wall of the church.

“What the hell, man!” he said, checking his head for blood. The store buckled and fell into a burning heap. He wasn’t bleeding. Frowning, he went home.

The day after, Arthur started reading books to pass the time; that, or he would burn down a random building, or break something. One day, while covering



“Split Ends” by Audra Hagel

his seedy face from another explosion, this time with glass shrapnel stinging chunks of brick and mortar from the short wall in front of him, he stood and surveyed the ruin. It was an unsatisfying heap of stuff burning. It was the same feeling Arthur once had for food after eating more than his fill at the buffet. The sight just sickened him.

*I need a bigger explosion;*

*“Ha ha, that’s what she said!”*

*“Frank!”*

After that day, Arthur stopped blowing things up.

Days and nights began to meld together, like water in zero gravity, into a wavy, bubbly blob without definition. Lying in bed, roaming through town on foot, taking cars when he could find the keys, and breaking into houses and looking at photo albums inspired Arthur to write in his polyvinyl-chloride diary: *I am in Zero Gravity—like my intangible equivalent to bone density has already halved and is quickly repeating process at unfixed intervals;*

Wandering through people’s houses without speaking, he wrote stories about photographs and paintings.



*Efficiency... HA HA HA HA HA HA HA;*

His diary began to take on a life of its own.

He couldn’t tell you how many days later, but Arthur was looking in a mirror again. He’d grown a beard. It was Greek-looking. Aristotelian stock, but with its curly fingers, the beard only reached an inch into the surrounding space. Every time he scratched it, the sun would illumine a cloud of dandruff falling from his face. Driving someone’s minivan, Arthur found a swimming pool, but as he approached the fence, the smell of the water punched him in the throat. He ran away, coughing while tadpoles and insects wriggled comfortably in the green and brown sludge. Listening to the silence of the radio on full volume, he drove to Lake Martin. The water was cool, refreshing, and full of fish and leeches now. He bathed, but not for long.

One night, Arthur rested in a public restroom with the door locked, sitting against the wall, legs spread, warm beers of various brands strewn before him. He gave a foamy burp and spit out the fizz. He took out a rusty can-opener and pried open some baked beans to eat. The beans were good. They stuck to his mustache; he sucked the juices from his upper lip and licked his grimy fingers, remembering when he had procured this particular meal. Supermarkets had become so ripe with aging, unrefrigerated meat that he had to tie two layers of t-shirt over his face just to get through the cashiers’ stations. The morning sun shone from under the door, but Arthur pulled up a blanket. He never kept count of anything anymore and just went to sleep.



Days went by; his beard, if stretched out, almost reached his collar bone. He laughed and cried at the same time, locked in another gas station bathroom with booze and moonlight.

“Frank,” he said. “iz just a joke. Frank.”

*“Why’s that, Lagmon?”*

“I don’t know. Why do we laugh anyway?”



*“Because you’re one sick mother—”*

“I’ve gotta get out, Frank. I’m a-going crazy.” He took a long draught from a ’40. “They’re coming eventually, anyway. You know this is stupid, right? It’s not real, right? I’m going to Mobile, Frank. Ships’ll be coming any time. Someone’s gotta fill up all this prime real estate.” He vomited before he could finish speaking. “Ships... coming...” He blacked out.

Later, after several more massive hangovers, Arthur headed to the beach. By then, he had grown a long beard, and his tangled hair fell below his shoulder blades. The interstate was no longer accessorized with dead animals; nature often cleaned up after itself and kept most of its trouble off the road. Arthur put miles of road behind him, his steps fluid and even, passing over it like a camera eye, unaware of himself but in total control.

*Burp. “So, Art, what about people, dude?”*

*“People are less efficient computers than our workstations; and their programming is faulty; volatility is random; task managing is miscellaneous; output is significantly crippled.”*

*“That’s deep.”*

*“I ain’t even started, Frank.”*

*“That guy over there. The one talking to the blonde chick.”*

*“More an expression of self than a meeting of two variables. One variable is showing that when included with another variable in an equation, the first variable catalyzes the preferred solution.”*

*“Sex?”*

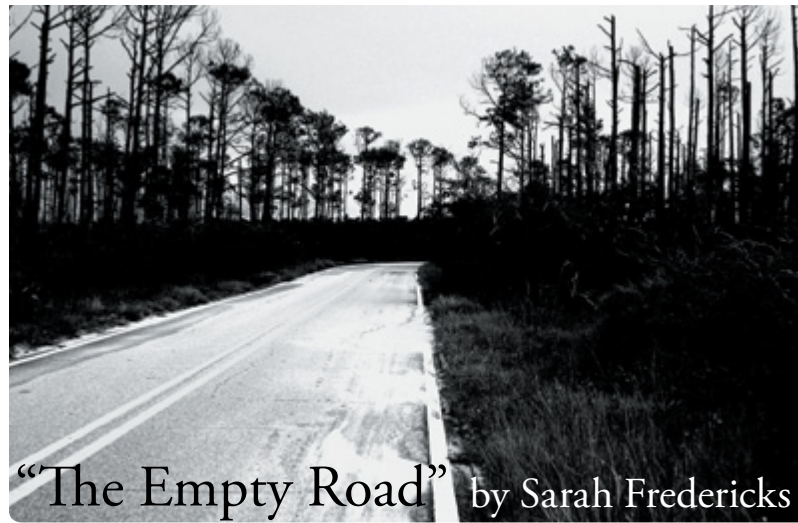
*“Sex.”*

*“Man. What’s the equation for getting her to go home with him?”*

*“Testing ‘True’ to an array of Boolean values set by current social standard checkpoints—do you smoke? (how often? is it a habit or a hobby? what kind?) what music do you listen to? (hobby? habit? pleasure? passion?). The questions and caveats are endless. The unconscious series of switches in the brain handle such matters; or they fail in trying.”*

*“Well that sucks.”*

Every day that he walked I-65 south, he had to break at rest stops and lock himself in restrooms and residences. One afternoon, he reached into his backpack for a water bottle, but he only had junk food left, so he kept walking until he came to a rest stop. The buildings comprised



of more ’60s ugly architecture. He approached a sun-beaten drink machine, took the safety off his shotgun, and blasted off the locking mechanism. He stocked his pack with two days’ worth of water. He zipped up the pack and was about to leave when he saw a deer grazing in the wild grass. The gun grew heavy in his arms. His face had become pimply from all the junk food, but he put the safety back on and left. The deer ignored him.



The beach had more grass and tide-waste than before. Fish skeletons and shells littered the sea strand. A few overturned, broken boats had sandy hulls gaping half-sunk and storm-tossed against awkward pine trees. Evening had come; nature smeared bright pink and deep blue across the sky. And on forsaken shores, Arthur couldn’t calculate how long it’d been since the whole world went away.

Arthur roamed the shore until he came to a beach-front house. There was a boat still in one piece attached to a dried up dock out front. With little effort, Arthur picked the lock to get inside and closed the door gently behind him. He found a dusty couch to sit on for a while, and he fell asleep to the sighing of the ocean.

When he awoke, he went to a tall mirror and looked at himself. His jeans were tattered and smeared with grime. His shirt hung like a robe over his half-burnt, half-tanned skin. He fancied he resembled a biblical prophet—unkempt, dirty, lonely. On his way out, he saw a guitar in the corner of the room. He’d never played a guitar, but a moment later, sitting atop a ruined shrimp boat, he plucked the strings for the first time, facing the dying horizon. It sounded like a cat being strangled, a real mood killer, but Arthur played anyway. As the days went by and his hair grew longer, the melodies took shape. After long days of silent exploration and writing, Arthur would return and serenade the ocean.

One evening, Arthur stopped playing. Blood trickled over his mouth. His nose was bleeding. He looked at the guitar, trying to ignore the pounding sinus headache. Playing was like talking, or walking, or just thinking; it was a way of doing things. A white-hot flash of pain. He couldn’t ignore it. Foodstuffs were going bad, even the canned gruel, which often had mold spots on the surface of the light syrup. Canned soup became so viscous and rotten that nothing in the glob was worth eating.

Leaving his guitar, Arthur visited the front lawn of someone’s house. He dug through the dirt until he found at least five worms. Taking his pole and tackle box to the pier, Arthur worked the line through the hook’s hole and secured it quickly. He took the squirming creature and impaled it several times on the hook. That afternoon, ignoring his migraine, Arthur caught a small fish. He secured his catch on a large hook and cast it out again while the afternoon sun dried the blood to his lips. Within minutes, he caught a young shark and struggled with it, trying not to fall off the pier. Under a layer of fat, his toned muscles worked the line, pulling the shark out of the water. When he dragged the frantic fish to the splintered pier, he bashed its head in with a club and later cooked it over a gasoline-fed wood flame.

Despite fresh dinner that night, he felt like sludge. Rummaging through pharmacies, Arthur had little luck finding antibiotics.

His sun-blonded beard was down below his pectorals. Often, while he played various songs





from memory, dolphins gliding along the surf would loop their smooth, purple bodies, break the surface of the choppy ocean, and slide back under, echoing the myriad life of a twilight ocean with their cries. Often, he would stare while he played, waiting, and for his patience, they would leap out of the water, flapping their tailfins and making splashes taller than Arthur. It was like Sea World.

*I don't want it to end; he wrote. It's like a movie; it could be over, but I want to rewind to this part over and over; I don't even know who I am anymore; numb;*

One night, he put two pistols down next to him and sat atop the broken hull of some shrimp boat to play. Arthur tried to remember what it was like to program web applications, to get paid, to have people serve him at a restaurant. Where were the ships? He courted her. He played songs for her. It is not good for Man to be alone. It'd been in the back of his head all along, like some hilarious joke that was going to end eventually, like any decently written program would. Eventually.

Clouds gathered over the moon. Storm season. Licks of rain cut across skin, so Arthur started to pack up. As he unzipped the tattered case to put away the instrument, he stopped. Finger grime



“Jetty Crash”  
by Audra Hagel

and worn spots all along the fret board still showed in the moonlight. A dolphin stuttered aloud in the surf as a shark pulled it under. He stared. A prosperous series of tasks began, completed, and renewed since Arthur awoke one day in an emptied world—tasks to which he devoted the most fixed attention and care—were a waste of time. Like years of video gaming: accomplishments as volatile and isolated as memory in a RAM chip. Static electricity made

his arm hairs stand. Thunder in the sky. He would never get to tell anyone about this amazing world. It belonged solely to him. Eve wasn't coming.

He left his things and went to the beachfront estate. The boat was still there. He took it out; the rain beat him; he was like *a piece of wood sanded down, down, down, down, until inside I find I'm nothing at all. Wood is nothing without other wood... and pain... and work... and pressure;* Though the gas had long since separated and become useless, he tried to fire the engine. Nothing. *I'm in Zero Gravity, wasting away, wasting away, yet in the heart of the black hole, with so much pressure sanding me down, down, down, into nothing. Inside the stick is more nothing, more air; nothing times infinity;* He let the boat find itself beyond the surf. A rumbling. The sky seemed angry.

The wind pummeled through a moonblack void on every side; rain needled horizontally through the air and into Arthur's eyes; he covered his face. His hair fell to his legs almost, and he shrouded himself in it, waiting for the boat to go further out. The rain increased. A peal of lightning. A hoary jab of thunder thumped his head.

“I want to feel,” he finally said. It felt weird to talk. He didn't talk. It was unnatural when

there was no one to talk to. Like everything else, it was nothing spectacular: just more weather in the wheel *cranked out by unseen hands;* The thunder rattled his chest, and he fell down, knees buckling. Getting back up, he looked at the sideways rain; it was hyperspeed on Starship MadHouse666. Howling noises. Banshees. The rain started to needle his flesh. Vampires.

*Humanoids!! WTF LOL IDK JK ROTFL;;;;;;;;;;;*

Silently, he stood, and without complaint, he thudded on the bow from the wind's elbowing shove. //loop// Silently, he stood, and without complaint, he grasped his forehead, the sinus cavity *ROCKING LIKE A HURRICANE! ROO HA HA! ROOO HARDY HAR!!; R;R;R;R;R;R;R;R;R;*



“I want to feel,” he said, laughing like a girl.

*“You sticking around for the pizza party? They should be done setting up in an hour or so.”*

*“Party? I've got no reason to spend more time with these people.”*

The boat rocked and threw him down. He fell with another thud.

“Come on, Lagmon. Free booze, man!”

“I've got plenty of money and nothing worthwhile to spend it on. I'll have plenty of booze.”

Lifeless lump of clay, amorphous, invertebrate wretch pressed e'en by the light of thunder, a namby-pamby smell of infected mucus. *Snot! Say it, snot;;* Infected snot.

“You should've been an English major or Philosophy or something.”

“I'd rather be efficient than not.”

“Come on! If the world is meaningless, why be efficient?”

And he fell again, into the water. *Crying.* Into the water. He struggled to swim, imagining for a moment that the dolphins would come for him.

*“Because I don't need social clout. Everybody else can do that. I'll be dead one day, and I don't need that. I don't need anybody.”*

*“That's pretty f'd up.”*

Then, the boat spun clockwise and plowed over Arthur's head. He literally saw stars and inhaled salt water. He vomited.

*“Well, I mean look, every experience in a person's life is his own experience. The only* He thought it, but he didn't say it.

*thing worthwhile enough to exchange between people is intelligence for further advancement. I* He struggled to swim, and he swam[...]away from the shore. *Merciless God!*

*don't care about the authors of my Java books. And they don't care about me. Everybody is a*

*A sea of black nothingness. Nothing exists beyond my eyesight*



# Stop.

Arthur Lagmon awoke on the shore. He pulled his face out of the sand, mirroring the wastes of a ruined sea strand planted atop a vacant planet seething with pointless activity like bacteria in a Petri dish. Crabs scuttled to and fro, ignoring him.

A couple of grounded fish angled their bodies and puffed with their mouths. He sat for a moment in the sand. An image appeared in his head as though on a computer screen. A little sandy blonde-haired boy sitting in much the same way he was, a picture in an album in a house, one of countless houses, a boy at the beach with humanity around him like a mist. The boy had gripped two fists of powdery granules and let the individuals trickle back to the masses, frozen in time with a curious look on his face. The boy would live on as long as the photograph persisted, at least, while this one man, Arthur Lagmon, persisted.

As though pushing against the planet, he got up, brushed himself off, and located the pieces of his guitar. His movements slower, heavier, ineffectual, he took another guitar just like his friend, stringed it, tuned it, and returned to his place that evening on the bow of the shrimp boat. Taking a deep breath, he remembered everything and everyone, as though straining to hear or to see in a bad dream, how they tried to reach out to him, to burst his bubble and breach his pod, how he rejected them all, their gravity, their weight, their demands on him, their neediness, and against the soggy breeze he commenced to play out this short story, fingering and sliding out melodies, ascending and descending, to the welcoming ocean where no one would ever hear. And lying back, he wept.



## Appendix A

### Letter From the Editors

To our dearest reader,

In the Summer of 2010, we (Sarah Fredericks and Kevin Lee Garner) were on one of many road trip adventures when we came upon a provocative yet gloriously taxing idea: rather than one editor spearheading the production of an artistic creation such as *Filibuster*, two like-minded individuals—with exponential synergy—could take on the job of composing this memorable opus of student compositions.

Yes, as we headed to Birmingham for some delicious Tex-Mex, we decided that we would submit our application for joint editorship of Auburn Montgomery's literary magazine. After undergoing the interview and selection process, we began the daunting (and somewhat humbling) task of making a new edition of *Filibuster*.

From the beginning, we envisioned a process wherein the general editors would work closely with specialized teams in the areas of marketing, layout, and graphic design. However, as the project progressed, we began to take on more and more roles out of necessity, until the two of us were doing everything. The whole process challenged us, educated us thoroughly, and for weeks on end, caused us much sleep deprivation. Nevertheless, now that *Filibuster* is in your hands, we would not change anything.

As a child of formalism, *Filibuster 2011* is a Sino-American fusion of Asian symbolism and Western experimentation. Moving away from the styles of previous editions, this edition of the magazine emphasizes a harmony of structure in the midst of chaos, the power of columnar balance against the fluidity of beauty, the juxtaposition of eternity and ever-present mutability.

Each visual element of this magazine underwent careful consideration. From the symbolic, hand-drawn watermarks to the use of large-lettered quotes, each element, unique in its own right, contributes to a deeper sense of meaning which, we hope, will inspire quiet reflection. Every page is meant to be touched, felt, read, considered, pondered, and ultimately, experienced.

We give you our best. Now, give us yours.

Goodbye, Auburn Montgomery,

*Sarah Fredericks Kevin Garner*



## Appendix B

### The Red Pages

#### XVII

#### Ruan Ji, 3rd Century AD

I sit alone in the empty courtyard.

Where is the man to whom I can bear my heart?

Outside, before me, stretches the endless road,  
an empty road—no cart, no horses.

Climbing, I look over our land—  
vast, so vast, it stretches before me.

One bird only, heading northwest,  
and some little animal, lost, scurrying the other way.

Evening is the time when I miss my friends the most;  
to comfort me, I write of our conversation.

Kevin Garner, 2008 AD

This river is the color red;  
it flows into the sea.

Two lives become one thought—

It is the restless mind.

## Appendix C

### Credits & Acknowledgements

**General Editors** Sarah Fredericks  
Kevin Lee Garner

**Marketing** *ibid.*

**Graphic Design** *ibid.*

**Watermarks** Sarah Fredericks

**Technical Development** Kevin Lee Garner

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**Literary Advisor** Dr. Robert Klevay

**Special Thanks** *Elohim*

The AUM English Department & Faculty  
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The AUM Student Government Association

Dr. Alan Gribben

Dr. Eric Sterling

Dr. Robert Evans (“mutability”)

Dr. Robert Klevay

Dr. Susan Willis

Chris & Julie Fredericks

James & Cynthia Acton

Robert & Elaine Garner

Mollie Folmar

David Stauffer

Anton Jackson

David Blatner

独坐空堂上，  
谁可与亲者。  
出门临永路，  
不见行车马。  
登高望九州，  
悠悠分旷野。  
孤鸟西北飞，  
禽兽东南下。  
日暮思亲友，  
晤言用自写。

I sit alone in the empty courtyard.  
Where is the man to whom I can bear my heart?  
Outside, before me, stretches the endless road,  
an empty road—no cart, no horses.  
Climbing, I look over our land—  
vast, so vast, it stretches before me.  
One bird only, heading northwest,  
and some little animal, lost, scurrying the other way.  
Evening is the time when I miss my friends the most;  
to comfort me, I write of our conversation.