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INSTRESS!



iNSTRESS!

LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE

Welcome, one and all, to the 48th edition of *Instress*

As always, we are impressed by the work that comes from our Misericordia family, and *Instress* is an illustration of how we are a close-knit family, one of the many examples of the fabric of the Misericordia community. With each issue, our students' writing improves, and we are continually reminded of why we work hard to put together this magazine. The students who take what spare time they have available to them to help with the production of *Instress* deserve our praise, and we admire their thoughtful, honest, emotional, and joyous submissions. We are also proud to say that we were able to include work from all those who submitted either prose or poetry to *Instress*. That is a great accomplishment and an exemplification of our hardworking Misericordia family.

Furthermore, we would like to honor one student on the staff of *Instress*: Heather Marsicano. Heather, whose course load borders on the absurd, managed portions of nearly every aspect of the magazine. She worked hard getting submissions from students around campus, managing the website, dealing with e-mails, evaluating submissions, and creating the layout. Her layout alone is an artistic achievement. She has, as Ezra Pound described in his famous Canto 81, gathered "from the fine old eye the unconquered flame." Without her efforts this year, *Instress* would not be the magazine that you hold now in your hands.

Please, dear reader, enjoy the poems and stories and photographs in these pages. Feel them truly in your bones, and live them in your life as deeply and passionately as you can.

Matthew Nickel & Thomas Simko

AWARD WINNERS!

THE KURT VONNEGUT AWARD FOR BEST SHORT FICTION

"The Blockade Runner"

Jacob Hebda

THE WALT WHITMAN AWARD FOR BEST POETRY

"On the Corner of Fifth and Shit"

Alexandria Smith

THE DOROTHEA LANGE AWARD FOR BEST PHOTOGRAPHY

Emily Halbing

INSTRESS
ASSEMBLE!



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&

MATTHEW NICKEL

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ALEXANDRIA SMITH
JACOB HEBDA

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THIS ISSUE OF *INSTRESS* IS DEDICATED TO TOM SIMKO!

Instress would like to thank Tom Simko for his dedication to making *Instress* the literary magazine it has become. Thank you, Tom, for your organization, advising, and hard work!

SINGING
INSTRESS
MAKES
KIDS
OPENMINDED

I came to know
you by the way
you wrote poems.
Verses from a personal
diatribe that, when I read,
begged why you couldn't—
fly from the sighs that
would wrack your brain
and the feelings of
zero, compounding
and dumbfounding
everyone who'd read
yet I came to know
you by the way
your words
affected me

"THANKS
OODLES,
MAN"



"BY
SIMKO'S
BEARD!"



It's too bad we only got to work on this together for one year, but it was a great one.
Thanks for inspiring us and for all your hard work.

Take Only as Directed
Thomas Simko

	Standing
at the	counter
cutting my	pills into
quarters.	I need them
to last	until I can
find a job.	Carelessly,
I cut	myself.
One skitters	across
the floor	lost amongst
the unwashed	linoleum
and the worn	appliances,
escaping	like the blood
from my finger.	You don't want
to see me off	my meds.
Paying bills and doing homework	
takes a backseat to fighting the	
urge to	crash
my car	or hang
myself	from the rope
in the garage	that I didn't
need to buy.	At this
lesser dose	I can get by.
I take the	missing pill
as a loss,	bandage my
fingertip,	and continue
my task	with more
care. Four	less days
to find work.	

AWARD WINNER!

EMILY
HALBING!



AWARD WINNER!

On the Corner of Fifth and Shit

Alexandria Smith

"God grant me
the serenity."
The silver coin
Whispered to me
From the inside
Of my coat
Pocket, as if urging me

In these draining
Moments of need
To remain calm
Collected
Strong enough
To deal with every
Aspect of a defective
Life that is not mine

I rub its scratched
Plastic casing, an
Insulated edge
Constantly shielded
From the outside world
One of which I have
Never seen,
Only believed from
The folded corners
Of magazines,
headlines shrieking:
"Junkies Prowl
The Secret Streets,
Robbing All of
Love and Hope,"
Or "Drug Addled
Siblings Turning
Tricks for Dime Bags
Of Dope"—

"God grant me
the serenity,"
The coin tells me again
I wish I could listen
Amidst the silent
Howls and muffled
Screams of his
Ink and paper heart
Bleeding handfuls
And handfuls
Onto the ice
And salt covered
Streets

AWARD WINNER!

"The Blockade Runner" by E.W. Bottel

Translated from the High Hebenese by Jacob Hebda

A young man in a brown shirt ran through the marketplace. The vendors there were closing up for the evening. Shops stretched up from the streets, yearning for something beyond the clouds dripping from heaven's face.

Gulls jeered the boy in brown when he reached the docks. He found a barrel to sit on, and he perched there, eyeing the birds for a moment. With a sigh, the boy turned his gaze seaward.

Squinting, the young man peered through the forest of masts that rose from the harbor. He tried unsuccessfully to identify the ships.

Red rays fell upon the lifeless sails and stained them the color of blood. This resemblance made his heart quicken. Sweat refused to abandon his palms, even after he rubbed them into his trousers.

"She promised she'd be here." He remembered the letter he received earlier that day.

"But how well do promises hold up against the broadside of a warship?" The boy ran a hand through his hair. He imagined billowing sails and decks painted azure and gold. Gun ports flung open, revealing snouts of black steel smoking. And that hostile flag, raging with its twin circles.

"No. She can't be dead." He shook his head to clear the doubt from his mind. "She just can't be."

A gull laughed at him as it wheeled overhead.

Beyond the clogged harbor, the young man could see the green flank of hemlock-clad cliffs. The trees there possessed the girth of giants. A lone emerald spire thrust above the rest, catching Arbawui's dying light.

The boy studied the distant tree until evening crashed down upon the world. Heat fled the air, leaving the atmosphere pleasantly cool. Even the gulls fell silent.

No longer able to discern the solitary hemlock, the young man left his perch on the barrel and sprawled out on a lawn adjacent to the docks. He continued to watch the harbor from there. A few of the ships' windows glowed butter-yellow. Their banners rustled in the breeze.

"She should have been here an hour ago," the boy thought.

He threw his head back on the grass. A red light winked at him, flickering between the leaves of an aspen. "Argys, the guiding star," the boy said. "It'll lead her home safely. It must."

To keep his mind from considering the worst, he engaged himself in a game. He observed the stars and their patterns, trying to name the constellations one by one. Somewhere out at sea, she might be looking upon the same stars he was. His heart shuddered. A nameless feeling rippled through him.

"Garren would know where she is." He raised his hand and traced the outstretched wings of the great heron. "He watches everything from up there. He can see where she is right now, even if it's nighttime."

Garren gave way to Achaberu, then Laberavang. When Morkel slithered into the sky, a cool wind descended from the north. The young man drew his shirt around him. This effort failed to repel the chill. He considered returning home, but decided against it. How could he forgive himself if he missed her arrival?

Soon, Morrawui rose, smiling upon the water. The boy sat up, holding his right fist over his breast in salute.

Heaven's eastern reaches blushed next. The young man walked from the grassy bed of the lawn to the wooden planks of the docks. A pair of soldiers in emerald cloaks passed him. They raised their lanterns, and when the light revealed the boy's face, they nodded to him and disappeared among the aspens.

The young man resumed his perch upon the barrel. His gaze searched the western horizon, now empty and cloudless, but still burning with stars.

Morrawui rose higher, and Arbawui spilled over the forested plains east of the city. Then another light erupted upon the water.

He guessed at first that the new object was an ice-spike, a glowing blade that rends the night and sometimes lands on Athawui as a charred pebble. But the light did not fade, as an ice-spike would eventually. His heart throbbed, and he looked again. Could it be her?

The light became more defined, appearing as a blazing white triangle gliding over the bay.

"A ship, but is it hers?" The young man thought. Hopping from the barrel, he dashed along the dock, stirring the gulls who slumbered upon the pilings. They took flight in a clumsy affair powered by groggy wings, sending a pair of feathers floating toward the boy as he neared the edge of the dock. He reached out and caught the feathers. They would make a nice decoration for his cap when he returned home.

As the ship drew closer, the boy's gaze rushed the top of the highest mast and his spirits surged. The Lovelian tricolor, black and white and green, waved at him. At the center of the white stripe, a pair of upturned box elder seeds sat wreathed with leaves from the same tree.

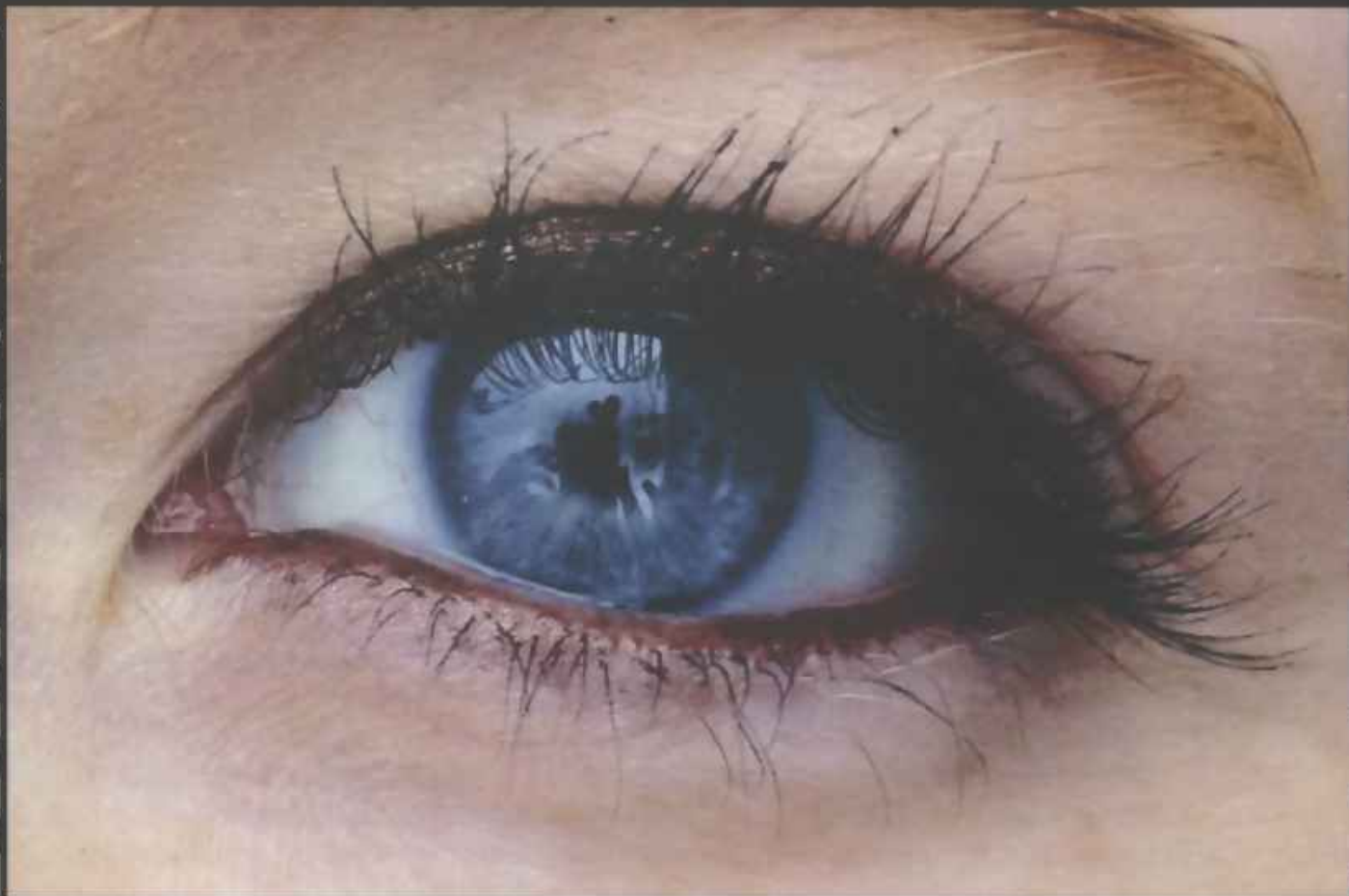
Then the young man saw the ship's wooden flanks, splintered and pock-marked from cannon fire. The sails were shredded and torn, hanging like ribbons from the mast. Sailors in brown coats climbed the rigging and spilled over the deck. They hammered and sewed, patching up what damage they could.

Fear smote the young man. He clutched the two feathers tightly, as if to ensure that they would never leave him, and closed his eyes.

Nothing could prepare the young man for the wonder of hearing her voice again. He could hear it, rebounding from the cliffs of the harbor as if the trees themselves were issuing directions for the repair detail on deck. The boy watched as the captain inspected the work crews. Sunlight struck her hair, which flowed from beneath her cap in flaming curtains.

At last, the ship arrived. The young man threw open his eyes. A white feather danced in the air, but the wind knocked it into the water and the waves swallowed it.

Tears slid over the boy's cheek when he saw the sailors carry her body from the ship.



SARAH
CREMINS

Snowflakes and Troubles

Rita Molino

The snowflakes fall
Like shredded pieces of a cotton ball
Until they form an illuminated
Blanket of glistening pillows
Just waiting for you
To place your weary head
And as the snow pillows
Fade to water
Your troubles melt away.

Untitled
Asia Thompson

He takes your breath away with nothing but a gaze.
Captivates you and leaves you standing in a daze.
Whispers millions of sweet nothings in your ear at night.
Makes you forget about the horrid neverending fight
that has become your life.

You want to suppress all of the days filled with the yelling.
And screaming and punching and scratching and flailing!
The choking! AH, the choking! You just want it all to STOP!
So you make it fade away and only let the good memories flow
onto the emptied slate inside your mind.

You keep justifying, saying that he's just being himself.
Or blame God!
After all, these are just the cards you have been dealt.
But God would never conjure up a plan
that left his baby girl in spiteful and deceitful hands.
Hands that had intent to kill that day inside that parking lot,
when he stomped and STOMPED and STOMPED until your nose began to snot!
And he made you lick his shoe with your neck enclosed inside his fists,
and he said that he could kill you and it'd be as if you didn't exist.
Or recall the day he choked you because you caught him in a lie.
Or when he made you look so different that you thought that you should die.
Unrecognizable, even to your own eye,
because he ripped your hair clean out and caused all that blood inside your eyes.

No! God would never devise up such a plan.
It was God when she came and helped you take a stand.
And told you that you looked as though you'd died and then come back,
and called the cops because you were too afraid of the attack.
Snatched you out of that nightmare and helped you see your dream.
I hope that you can see now that life's exactly what it seems.



HEATHER
MARSICANO

Cheshire Cat

Auraleah Grega

I wish you would not weigh so heavily on my
shoulders.

So weak and useless they are.

It is unfair that you do.

I am in no dream.

I have not fallen down.

I am here,

amid the real reality,

But I feel your shadowed smile shining on my back.



Seed

Meghan DiGerolamo

A seed in the shade will never grow.

It will sit and rot with time.

It will not sprout or become tall.

It will not stretch its leaves out wide.

It will not reach its petals to the sky.

It will never turn its face to the sun,

And it will never grow petals of yellow or white.

Find the seed that will ever be in the shade.

Put it in your palm and show it your light.

KARA
PAWLOSKI



Break

Thomas Simko

You know that awkward thing, when you're talking to a pretty girl for the first time, and you say something witty or clever, but as you say it a fleck of spittle flies from your mouth and lands on the table in front of you, or worse, on her blouse, or worse, makes skin contact? Yeah, that happened. I guess it's not as bad as farting, but it's up there.

She sat across from him at the table, stirring her coffee. He checked his phone again.

"So, what classes are you taking?"

Without looking up from her coffee, "Oh, nothing special."

"Well, wait, did you get to pick, or did your advisor pick everything out?"

"It was kind of half and half."

"And you didn't pick anything, like, interesting?"

She stopped stirring the coffee. "Look, it's not important. Whatever. Can we talk about something else?"

"Sure, what'd you have in mind?"

Silence. It was that kind of foreboding, heavy silence you read about in bad fiction, but it was there nonetheless. Only maybe five seconds, but still. It was a silence they had grown used to in the last few weeks, one that had never made its presence between them in the last four years but appeared now, again, once more.

"Anything planned for the weekend?"

"Not really. Are we not going to talk about this?"

"There's nothing to talk about." She went to pull her hair back into a ponytail, forgetting she had had it styled into a pixie cut the week before. Her hands rested again on the cup of coffee.

"Why'd you do that anyway?"

"What?"

"The haircut. Your hair was long. It looked good."

"This doesn't?"

"Well, wait, no, it's fine, I just. I liked it long, too."

"I needed a change."

"What, this isn't big enough?"

"Seriously, Scott, I can't go over this again. This, I don't have a choice."

"You did. You took it."

She had long, brown hair, and when I say long, I mean like, butt-length. He used to call her Rapunzel when they first met. She'd heard it a million times before, but she humored him.

"Look, this school is one of the best in the country. I couldn't turn them down. You could move if you really wanted to."

"I can't, and you know it. Not with my mom how she is. Not now. Probably not soon."

"I'm telling you, we'll make it work. We'll talk on the phone. We'll have Skype sex. Whatever. It'll be fine."

"You know how competitive that school is going to be, what a tax it's going to be on your time."

"We'll make it work."

"Yeah."

He worked warehouses to pay for his mother's ever-increasing medical bills. Dropped out of college. Lived in his old bedroom. When they met, he couldn't stop apologizing that they had to always be at her place if they wanted privacy. It never bothered her.

"Don't 'yeah' me. I'm trying here." She tried to take his hand from his phone. He withdrew. Quietly, "Fuck off, Scott. This isn't just hurting you. Look at me." Breathing out, he looked up.

"Look at you? You, who has avoided my calls for two weeks and suddenly has time today of all days? Yeah, it'll work."

"You're not even going to try?"

"Of course, of course I'm going to try, Janet, I just, I know you. I know you too well. I know how you get. I just, I just know."

The chef at the hibachi place they always got lunch at told them they had "the marriage face." He didn't explain what that meant, but they kind of had figured it out.

People walked by at the airport lounge. They both watched as each passing group met or departed. Kisses, hugs, handshakes, smiles. Scott looked back at his phone. She took a sip of her coffee. It was cold. The departure for her flight sounded over the PA.

She stood up. He went to take her bags for her, but she waved him off.

"It'll be okay. Everything will be okay."

"I believe you."



SARAH
WIGG

Sleeping Beauty

Katie O'Hearn

I power walk down the hall. Room 416. Room 417. Room 418. I stop outside the room I had essentially sprinted to and come to a sudden halt outside the door. Now what? I run a hand through my hair. What am I even doing here? Marie is going to kill me. I could still see the anger behind her ice blue eyes when I told her I had to go and why. She had asked to come along, probably because she didn't want to let me out of her sight, but I couldn't do that to Ella. Not after what had happened.

Oh, how do I always get myself into these situations? Well, I came all the way here. I might as well go in.

"James." I can hear the tone of surprise in Kiersten's voice. I glance around at the familiar faces. Faces of people I used to consider mutual friends . . . well, that's not fair. They've never been anything but nice to me. But they were always more hers than mine. Surprise is evident on all of their faces thanks to my arrival.

"Maybe this was a bad idea. I shouldn't have come." I'm twisting the flowers in my hands, looking toward the door.

"No!" The almost unison answer calls back my attention.

"No, actually, we'll give you some time alone. I could grab a cup of coffee anyway. And a bagel. Maybe an egg sandwich on a bagel. I'm starving!" Kiersten bounces up.

"We can all use some food," Alison admits.

"Would you mind staying with her for fifteen minutes?" Rose asks.

I take in the sight of them. The look of surprise is now replaced with . . . what? Pity? Sympathy? But behind whatever emotion wavers in their eyes, there is a clear sign of exhaustion in each of the faces that look at me. Not one of them has makeup on. Alison's cheeks are blotchy, her eyes slightly swollen. I realize she has been crying. In fact, it looks like they all have to some extent. Kiersten's nose is red underneath, a telltale sign she used too many tissues. Poor Rose looks like she can barely keep her eyes open.

I force a smile and nod. "Of course. I came to see her, and it looks like you guys could use a little break."

"Thanks, James!" Kiersten exclaims, giving me a small hug before running out the door. Probably afraid I'd change my mind.

"It's really good to see you, James. I wish it was under different circumstances, but nonetheless. We missed you." Rose touches my arm and her smile reaches her brown eyes.

"Thanks," I mumble.

Alison stops before me, too. She glances back into the room, then back at me. "I'm really proud of you, James." That's all she says, but it is in recognition of how hard this is for me. And the hell I will receive for it from Marie.

I swallow and nod and watch them walk down the hall together. That's when I notice Brody has hung back. He stands with his hands in his pockets looking at me.

"Where's her family?" I ask, looking over my shoulder, hoping they aren't on their way back anytime soon.

"They went home to grab some sleep and get a shower. It took a lot of convincing on our end. But, they did need rest, and we are essentially her family, too."

I nod, knowing that's how Ella views these four individuals.

"James, I'm really glad you came. Even if she is asleep. She's really missed you. More than you know. I probably shouldn't say anything, and she'll probably give me hell for it if she finds out, but she was never prepared to lose you completely. She was naïve enough to think you could still be friends." Brody is looking right at me, measuring my response.

I shift my weight, and the words are out of my mouth before I can stop them. "I was naïve enough, too. That's why I agreed to it originally."

Brody nods. "But then again, you two still had such strong feelings for each other. She was a mess over the whole Marie thing, you know. We were all about ready to sign her up for counseling. I mean, it's almost been a year. But she kept telling us she was turning a corner over the whole thing. She really was when . . ." He trails off and gestures to the bed.

"She broke up with me, Brody. Twice actually." I spit the words out. I am so sick of everyone taking her side. Everyone telling me what a mess she has been when I started dating Marie. I know she never liked Marie, but I needed to move on. I needed to do what was best for me. And I liked Marie. I love her now. I mean, we have our ups and downs but what couple doesn't?

Brody sighs. "I know. And yet . . . and yet you're still here. So, even though you two aren't meant to be together in that sense, I think it's time you two finally admit how much you mean to one another. And that you try to find a way to be in each other's lives. I think you're both naïve enough to make this friendship thing work."

I bite my lip and don't say anything. I just process his words, trying to figure out what I am supposed to make of them. Brody approaches and puts his hand on my shoulder.

"It is good to see ya, man. She'll be thrilled you were here. I'll give you guys some time."

I make my way to the now empty chairs.

"Oh, and James?" Brody stands in the doorway. "This might seem silly, but she's been unconscious for three days now and, well, she was always obsessed with fairytales and princesses and whatnot. Disney, moreso than anything. I just thought it might be worth a try, you know, one kiss? Just a suggestion. No one would know either way, but I think it's worth a shot." We share a look before he exits the room.

Jesus Christ, what am I doing here? I ask myself again, trying to process all of the comments made within the last ten minutes or so. I look at the flowers in my hand. Lilies, Ella's favorite. And I forgot a damn vase. I guess some things never change. My eyes scan the room and I find an empty vase sitting by the windowsill. I'm sure her mom brought extra. Mrs. O'Connel thinks of everything. I don't look at Ella. Instead, I run into the bathroom and fill the vase with water. I carefully make a spot on her night stand and place the card up against the vase. Ella loves cards. She was always writing her friends cards or letters. I wonder how many she got in return. I have to admit, this is only my second contribution despite our history.

And now it might be too late.

I sit down in a chair next to the bed and finally force myself to look at her. There are about twenty stitches forming a ragged line across her forehead. Her brown hair is curlier than I ever saw it. She always said her hair was wavy, between straight and curly. But I can see the curls forming naturally, framing her pale face. There is a steady beeping noise from a monitor. I think it is measuring her heart rate and blood pressure. The small plastic tubing enters her nostrils, providing oxygen.

I wipe away a tear. She never said so, but I think she hated when I cried. Never knew what to do, but never said anything to me about it. Always afraid she'd hurt me, and while her friends can all say how hurt she has been these past ten months, she did end up hurting me. Despite her best efforts. Twice. Because I did love her. Maybe even more than Marie. Which is probably why those two hate each other. I reach out for her hand. It's so cold. Ella hated being cold.

I look around the room. Surely someone brought Ella a blanket. I smile despite myself when I find her plush Tinker Bell blanket. Brody is right. For a twenty-three year old, Ella is still hopelessly obsessed with the Disney written notion of happily-ever-after.

I carefully place the blanket over her, trying not to think about all the times we cuddled together under the same blanket watching TV. And TV always led to kissing, which . . .

No, I'm not going down memory lane. Not again. I try to think about why I came. It was Brody who called me. He said he thought I should know that Ella had been in a bad car accident, that she was stable but had been unconscious for several days. He simply said he thought I should know and didn't know if anyone had told me. He told me the name and address of the hospital. Said it might not be his place, but it would mean a lot to Ella to know I visited. Even if she wasn't conscious at the time. Who knows, hopefully she will be by the time you get here.

I didn't know what to say. It was a phone conversation, so he couldn't see the horror that flashed across my face. He couldn't see the tears instantly form in my eyes. Or how pale my face turned.

But Marie could.

I thanked Brody for letting me know and said I'd have to see. My schedule was kind of busy. All the time Marie's ice blue eyes bore into me. I knew it was going to be a fight. Just like it was when Ella had asked if she could see me before I graduated. I didn't know what she wanted. To catch up? To see where we stood? To confess she loved me? To say goodbye? Marie and I had been on a break when I told Ella "yes." When we got back together . . . well, just running the idea past Marie had caused a huge fight. And we had just gotten back together. After avoiding giving Ella a definitive answer for days, I finally said it looked like I was too busy to meet up. Despite her giving me two weeks notice. She asked if I had a minute, if she could call. But I was about to crawl into bed with Marie for the night. When I said "no" I got a simple text. She said she was proud of my accomplishments and happy for me but she was kidding herself thinking we could be friends. And I didn't respond. Just let her go. Brody's most recent confession hints that I hurt her just as badly as she hurt me. Maybe worse.

I hold her hand and stare at her. I think her ribs are wrapped. That's right. Brody said she bruised three ribs and broke her leg. I glance down and notice for the first time one leg seems larger buried under the blankets. I don't know what to say. One of the reasons we broke up. Ella said we couldn't talk to each other. Not really. Not about the things that mattered. Like, how even though we are broken up, even though we are no longer friends, I don't know what I'd do if I lost her. If she didn't survive.

"I don't get it, Ella. You are the most careful driver I know! I used to always tease you about driving like a grandma! It was me you were always worried about driving. Having to travel to work and back in bad weather. How is it you got into such a bad accident?" It doesn't make any sense. I don't want to, but I know I'll end up asking Brody more questions about the accident.

Brody . . . he had suggested that I kiss Ella. I think back to all the classic fairytales. A prince's kiss, a true love's kiss, it always saved the princess. But Brody was the last person I'd expect to be suggesting such a thing. For starters, he hated getting involved in people's personal lives or causing drama. He was the one always telling Ella that she had to realize love wasn't like fairytales. It was a lot more complicated than that. No one was perfect. How could he lecture her for so long and then suggest I act as if this was a fairytale. And clearly I'm not her true love. I loved her, but I don't know if she ever loved me. Not romantically, anyway.

Maybe she just realized it too late? Brody did mention they almost needed to get her psychological intervention. It could be an exaggeration, but what would it hurt? Marie will never know. I doubt anyone will be returning soon. And what if Ella doesn't survive? I never did get closure from our break up. Never did get a last kiss.

Oh, what the hell. I stand up, gently push her hair back. Before I can overthink this, I close my eyes and touch my lips to hers, take her top lip gently between my own. I feel the telltale flip in my stomach, the friction in my jeans. God, she still gets to me and she can't even kiss me back. I pull away, but I can still smell her shampoo.

She lay there, just as still and helpless as before. I feel my heart sink and realize I had bought into Brody's suggestion. I sigh. I guess we are all just holding out for some sort of miracle. It's probably the only reason Brody suggested it, a last ditch effort to save Ella. Maybe I should go catch up with the rest of the crew. Suddenly, this room seems too small for the two of us and all these machines.

I'm backing away from her bed when suddenly her eyes flutter open. Her deep, blue eyes look confused as she scans the room. She doesn't sit up, but her eyebrows knit together and she touches her stitches.

"Ella?" I ask in disbelief. Clearly, this is just a coincidence. She had to wake up some time. My kiss had nothing to do with it.

Her eyes meet mine and she smiles at me. Then winces at the pain the smile caused. "This sure is painful for a dream."

Her statement further confuses me. Obviously, this is the farthest thing from a dream. "Why would you be dreaming about this?" I point at the machines.

She starts to shrug and stops, eyebrows knitting together in pain again. "Because that's the only time I get to see you. God, it's good to hear your voice. Only some of the dreams get it right. But you always look like you." She pauses, staring at me. Maybe waiting for me to say something. "I swear, I can even smell your cologne."

I don't know what to do. Before I can respond, her friends are walking back in. They're talking loudly now, clearly reenergized from the caffeine break. They all stop in their tracks when they see Ella's eyes open.

"What?" Ella asks, clearly confused.

"Oh my God! Ella, you're awake!" Alison runs over, sobbing.

"I'm going to call your parents!" Rose says, giving Ella a quick kiss on the cheek before she steps out of the room with her cell phone glued to her ear.

Brody is staring at me. "No?" I don't respond. "You didn't? It worked?" He asks in disbelief.

I nod and shrug. Clearly, I don't understand it either.

"What worked?" Kiersten asks suspiciously.

"Wait, this isn't a dream?" Ella winces again as Alison hugs her. The sight of her friends and their elated reaction to seeing her seems to have convinced her this is reality.

Alison laughs. "Why, do you often dream you're hospitalized with multiple injuries?"

"No, but then, why is—that means—James is really here?" She tries to piece this together, her eyes never leaving mine.

"That's the concussion, James. Nothing to take personally," Alison tries to cover for her.

Brody laughs and enters Ella's line of vision. "Maybe we still need to call that shrink, huh?"

Ella glares at him, warning him to stop talking. Oh, he is going to be in trouble if he tells her everything he revealed to me.

"What happened?" Ella asks.

"It doesn't matter. What matters is that you're awake now. And you're going to get better," I say, walking over and taking her hand.

She smiles at me. I don't think she's fully convinced this isn't a dream yet. "And you're here." She gives my hand a squeeze. "All of you." She smiles looking at her friends she loves so much.

"And your parents are en route. Your mom was so mad you woke up when they weren't here. We only just convinced them to go home and get some rest about an hour ago," Rose says as she walks back in the room.

The nurses rush in to check on Ella now that she is awake. They escort us all out, saying she needs some rest. Ella's eyes get wide and she clings to my hand.

"No, don't go." She is looking at all of us.

"Well, now that you're awake we need to tend to a few things. Like sleep. Personal hygiene," Kiersten reminds Ella.

"We'll be back during visiting hours, promise!" Alison rushes to reassure Ella.

She nods, her eyes meeting mine with uncertainty. I gently give her a kiss on the forehead, causing all of her friends to fall silent. I didn't think they were even capable of all being in the same room without at least two of them trying to talk at the same time.

"Don't worry. Despite how hard you may try to get me to leave, I'm not going anywhere. Not this time."

I sit down next to her. Brody somehow convinces the nurses to let me stay, saying I just got here all the way from New York. I watch them all walk out. Alison and Rose leave first, emotionally drained and unsure of what happened while they were gone. Only Brody and I know for sure, but I can hear Kiersten prying for information from him. "What worked?" she asks again.

Brody shrugs. "I think Ella finally got her fairytale ending. Let's just hope she doesn't screw it up. Again."

I look down at Ella. She is fighting to stay awake. I'm not about to tell her to go to bed, not after she was unconscious for so long.


"So, I guess we have some catching up to do. Let's start by talking about that whole happily-ever-after notion," I say, giving her one more kiss.

DARNETTA
YUSKO



DANIELLA
DEVIYO





MARY
BOYE

Stolen Dreams
Michelle Cameron

He captured me there, below the stars
Upon the lapping waves
Caught while sleeping, unaware
By a pirate and now I his slave

Drowning in a sea of tears
Trying to be brave
Oh, how stolen dreams do weep
He a pirate and now I his slave

Of Wax and Dreams

Thomas Simko

Flittering white down,
sunlight glinting off quill tips,
it's my fault.

Heat lines make little rainbows in the ocean spray
where the gulls pick and peck
fighting over what has washed ashore.

We were weightless once,
but freedom cannot be built
by shaking hands in the candlelight.

Candles are liars
that emanate a flickering hope,
that breaks on rocks with bones,
that mixes red and failure
into a blue-green sea.

I wish I had flown
into the embrace of Helios
with him.
For what becomes of the word
"father"
after king and god help you
murder your son?

HONORABLE MENTIONS!!!



MELANIE
QUINTANILLA



What It Means To Be Human

Yalixsa Delgado

A finger painting.

Created by tiny hands like tiny paintbrushes
in tiny pools of red yellow and blue
moving, flexing
while tiny fingers slash and swirl tiny lines
on paper not so tiny.

Eyes bright,
fluttering with the foreign feeling
of paint reaching up to knobby elbows.
Seeing a collection of colors
so mixed together that brown seems to reach
every corner of the canvas.

It is a portrait of a young, vivid imagination.

Of expression and joy.

Of opportunity and naïvety.

Today, it is a fantastic new galaxy sparkling in space.

Tomorrow, an undiscovered creature of the night.

And then it is a gift.

An indescribable piece of genuine love
that no one else can comprehend except
an always amazed mother.

A mother who keeps it on her bedside table
so that when she wakes up in the morning,
she can be reminded of her greatest accomplishment.
So she can see what this piece of her heart has created
and dream about a world that is putty
in the hands of her baby.

A daily remind of what it means to be free
and what it means to give life to the lifeless.

And then it is lost.

A dusty picture wedged between the bed and the wall,
forgotten but ever present.

Footsteps go back and forth,
always seeing but sometimes not looking.

Fingers no longer instruments,
but calloused tools and dangerous weapons unlike any other.

Eyes still bright,
but fluttering with questions about futures and existence and choices and expression and passion and true
love.

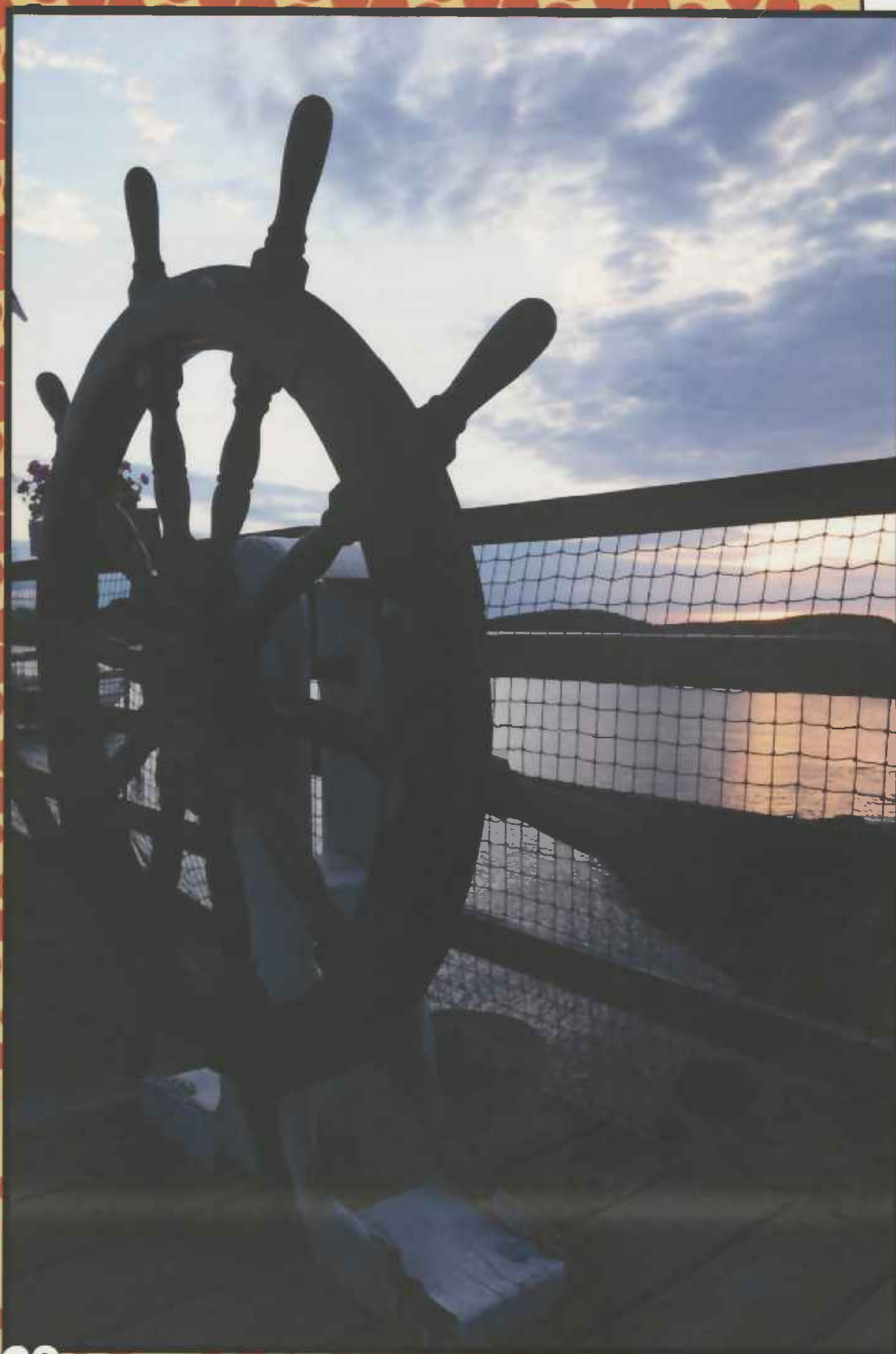
Until it is found

and life is brought to the lifeless
in a world that is just putty
in the dusty palm of
paintbrush hands.

MARY
BOYE



SARAH
WIGG





MELANIE
QUINTANILLA

HONORABLE MENTION!!!

The Girl

Emily Halbing

Today, the sun was out
even though it had rained the day before
She walked along the faded white line
just at the edge of the road
And she thought about the time her brother
wouldn't let her borrow his movie
And how sorry she felt when she took it anyway
and it got ruined

She spotted a small flower
trying to grow through the concrete
She thought about picking it
but decided not to
It deserves the chance to be something
despite its ill fate

A boy came to her mind
He seemed nice at the time
but he wasn't
Thinking back, she decided he never cared for her
and she regretted their time spent together
Still, she thought about the green eyes
that were so nice to look at
Sort of a pale jade
like her mother's

She thought about the time her dad tried to hold her
hand
and she recoiled
"Dad, there are people around," she had said
If she had looked at his face
she was sure she would see heartbreak
because she was sure that had broken his heart
so she didn't look
She wishes she could take it back
but she knows she would have done the same thing
again
if given the chance

She thought about all the times her mother
looked to her for sympathy and kindness
and the girl rejected her
out of pride, maybe
she wasn't sure
Sometimes she wishes the whole thing brought them
closer
instead of so much farther apart

She balances herself along the white line
as if one misplaced step
would bring her life to an utter halt
And she wishes some things were different
but she knows some things have to be this way
like the flower
that might never last
but has to try



HEATHER
MARSICANO

MARY
BOYE



The First Thing I Learned to Grow was Garlic

Matthew Nickel

Dig and plant, and transplant . . . That soil on your fingers will make you hold your pen more firmly—more of the earth-spirit will get into your books.

John Burroughs to Edith Rickert

The first thing I learned to grow was garlic
draw a straight row, stay low, close to the soil
“the closer you are the better you know how things grow”

each row loosened clods trowel twisted holes for cloves
everything is economy of motion, details in order
like Hemingway, like Pound, with poised tension

“Like Burroughs,” I asked, kneeling for garlic
trying to be precise, breaking each clove from the head
without finger-bruising thinking of a poem

each word in its proper place
each seed in the right soil; I pushed the cloves
root-side deep into black earth.

“Will this teach me to write better, planting,
growing things, tending—”
not right away

but someday stay attentive
to the way things grow, the way weeds take
hold, you must be a steward

I tried to imagine writers in the garden with us
Hemingway planting potatoes under mounds,
Pound humming birdsongs, trimming all the plants

Burroughs teaching girls to transplant
holding roots with thick earth hands
holding hands with thick smiles and laughter

order the chaos of wilderness, but know each action
has consequences, then you will learn to conserve things
and by knowing exactly how to love without breaking.

The row was finished *the earth trembles*
and we must choose
to move in it with infinite care and love

a catbird touched a low branch, titled its head
and I pushed the loose dirt over the third row,
thought of the winter, the garlic's long growth

under earth slow cold then sudden spring burst
rising into sun, June scapes,
Bastille Day harvest, always the same rhythm

that is why ritual is so important,
on my knees
I bury the last of the cloves.

"So we keep planting in case we lose something,
we can grow this here and make the loss mean something"
the wind shifted *yes, someone has to keep making it new*

above a red-tailed hawk rode the wind
someone has to write the poems,
to stay and tend the garden.



MELANIE
QUINTANILLA

Adapt

Hilary Hoover and Thomas Simko

Click, scratch

across

pages.

The feather skritches haphazardly
dragging like nails
that draw ink from blood.

Baring candidly the fresh wounds
of phrases trapped under parchment,
the lost key flitted twixt the bindings.

A single drop of ocean caressed
the surface of her glistening dreams.

DANIELLA
DEVIVO





HILARY
HOOVER

“Zhekhtanadol”

Sierakul keilathazendae nekaponieb.
Lievoktesk raenamorrołanekonayawuien tsaelagorb

“Fallen Star” by Sara Nurva

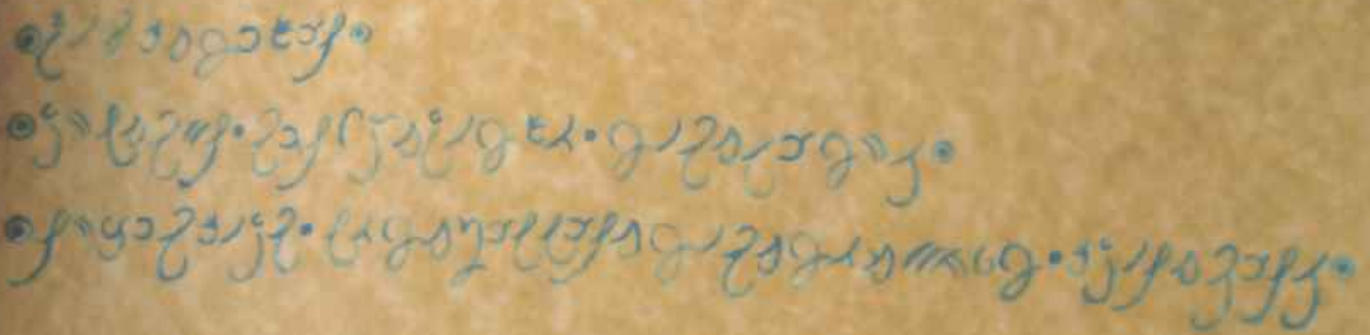
Translated from the High Hebenese by Jacob Hebda

Gray cotton adrift in lavender sky
A pair of eyes, like chocolate droplets sliding over milk, turn away.

“Zhekhtanadol” or “Fallen Star” by Sara Nurva

Translated by Taylor Sambucus

The gray cloud against evening
Her eyes open and turn away.

A photograph of a piece of aged, light brown paper with handwritten text in a cursive script. The script is dark and appears to be a mix of Latin and non-Latin characters, possibly a constructed language. There are three lines of text, with the first line being shorter than the others. The paper has a slightly mottled texture.

On The Square: Wilkes-Barre, PA 2007

Erin Delaney

Amidst the chirping of walking signals
and the stench of transit exhaust,
they wait on rectangular benches
exposing unpolished raw wood
and chipped red paint.
Among the working class worn down faces,
a hunched woman pushes a handcart
full of bags.
She stretches her arms
from the pockets of her
billowy woolen skirt and doesn't
break a sweat in the July sun
as she reaches into a garbage bin
for recyclable cans.
Here,
everything isn't on square,
cigarette butts are scraped
away like the forgotten dangers of cancer
men and women in business attire
eyeball the scene
fill their arms with lunch bags
and sneak back to their
constipated cubicles
avoiding reality
without a question mark arch in their spines.



MARY
BOYE

You're a Monster, Babe

Alexandria Smith

You write of
heartache
Of mistakes
you made
in the seventh
grade
Of the day you
molded your
breasts of hurt
and clay
And weaved your
your womb
to give birth to
babies of paper
and ink
Tiny, trembling
Frankensteins
that do nothing
more than remind you
of your failings
in the
cold
halogen
sun

The Cycle

Maggy Hanlon

We all think we're so unique,
As if we're not all in sync;
A rare form of a complex kind,
We find ourselves always in a bind,
Trying to stick to the status quo
So hard that we lose our own gusto;
The very thing we thought we had
We've resisted so much that now we're all mad.
This cycle never dies,
It only takes us to the skies
Where we find our one true measure,
Hopefully we find some treasure.

How to Save a Life

Katie O'Hearn

The church bells started chiming at five o'clock. The church is about three blocks away but I can clearly hear the bells' distinct chime. I wrap my arms around myself trying to brace myself from the harsh winter wind. He should be here any minute. He always came at five o'clock. This time, I was ready for him.

On cue, his grey civic coupe rounds the corner and parks at the top of the hill. The door opens and I feel my stomach do a somersault at the sight of him. Just as it always did. His head disappears back into the car for a moment before he resurfaces and shuts the door. I can hear the resounding click and watch the lights flash as he locks the car. As he emerges by the hood of his car and starts walking down the hill toward me, I see he has retrieved a bunch of red roses. I can't help but give a small smile. Red roses are my favorite. He definitely is not going to make this easy, but this time he has to listen to me.

He walks down the hill carefully, his shoes crunching in the fresh coat of snow that blankets the ground. He doesn't look up once. When he finally reaches the spot where I stand, he simply sets the flowers on the ground. Doesn't even glance at me. I bite my lip. This is going to be a lot harder than I thought.

I take a deep breath. "Listen, Ron, we need to talk."

He finally glances up at me, as if realizing I am there for the first time. His green eyes lock with mine for a few seconds. God, how I miss staring into those green eyes. But he doesn't say anything. Doesn't as much as smile. Instead, he just buries his hands in his pockets and stares straight ahead. Right through me.

"I know this has been hard on you. Hell, it's been hard on me too. But it's almost been a year."

He takes a deep breath. "God, I miss you Lexi."

Just a simple sentence. Five words strung together. Yet I can already feel that all-too-familiar burning sensation at the back of my throat. But I can't cry. I can't be weak. I have to be strong, for the both of us.

"I know. I miss you too. It might not seem like it. Christ, you have no idea how hard this has been for me too. But you have to accept the fact that I'm gone, Ron. It's over. It's time for you to move on."

My well-rehearsed speech falls on deaf ears. Instead of so much as acknowledging my statement, he simply sits down in the snow and starts making a snowball. He is so frustrating sometimes. As much as it would've hurt to see him turn around and walk away at my words, I would rather watch him walk away than stand here and drag this on.

"I see you everywhere. A song comes on and the lyrics always remind me of you. Or I go for a walk and someone is walking a Border Collie and I think of how you always wanted to get one. Or someone walks by and they're wearing your perfume and it's all that I can do not to fall apart. Then I close my eyes at night and you're always there, waiting for me in some dream or another. It always feels so real, and then my alarm goes off and the illusion is shattered."

I look down at my hands. I knew it had been bad for him, these past twelve months, but I hadn't realized how bad.

"Lucy misses you too." He says softly, his eyes never straying from the snowball he is carefully forming. He sets it on the ground and starts making another. "She asks about you all the time."

I sit down alongside him. I feel a tug at my own heart and find that I can't quite meet his eyes. "Just another reason for you to move on, Ron."

He starts diligently making a third snowball, this one appears to be the largest of the three. "I keep replaying that night back. Over and over. I should never have let you go. All I can see is you walking out the door, in that red coat you were so proud of. Always said it was something Kate Middleton would wear." For the first time I see a faint smile tug at the corner of his lips. I think he may have even let a small chuckle escape.

"You were running late, because Krista had convinced you to curl your hair. Just in case you guys went out for a drink after the movie. I can still see you running around the house, in your usual last minute scramble. Giving Lucy a kiss before handing her over to me and giving me a quick peck on the cheek. Always in a rush."

I nod. "You told me to be careful. Just like my mother always did when I left the house. They say you end up marrying your father, but there you were chirping at me like my mom."

"And you turned around and flashed me that smile. 'Always am!' Blowing me a kiss goodbye, your curls bouncing as you nearly ran out the door."

He trails off shaking his head. I swallow thinking back to that night as well. It was the first time I had seen my old college roommate in a year. Lucy was just two at the time, and something as silly as a midnight premiere of the last installment from my favorite book series seemed just as exciting as a night out at the bars used to. Ron thought my girls' night with my former roommate was an excellent idea. We normally took the rare opportunities of a babysitter for a date night, and the occasional football game with the guys or mall run with the girls appeared to be a rare treat since our recent entry into parenthood. Krista was still one of my closest friends and we had been talking about the movie since we finished reading the last book. She and her husband just had their first baby a few months ago, and she was dying to get at least one drink at the bar after the movie. A midnight showing was already past my bedtime since Lucy was born, but I humored her and got all dolled up. The recent mother of a six month old, my money was that Krista would be asleep by the time the previews ended.

Of course, I was running late. I was meeting Krista at the theatre and then she was staying with Ron and me. Lucy had spilled her juice all down her jammies, and afterward I had given her a bath. Ron knew I was running late and held out his arms. I gave Lucy a few kisses and then handed my dripping baby to her daddy. I gave him a peck on the cheek as I dashed out the door. Then he called after me, "Be careful!" I turned around ready to roll my eyes as he knew my mother's constant mantra drove me up a wall. But instead, I turned around and saw him holding Lucy. She was still dripping from her juice spill, and he already had a clean onesie in one hand. All I could think of in that moment was how much I loved him. So I gave him my biggest smile and answered as I always did my mother, "Always am!"

If only I had known then what was waiting for me at the movie theatre . . . Some deranged lunatic dressed up as the villain. Sneaking in and shooting at random. It had all happened so fast. After a few shots we realized it wasn't some worker from the theatre dressed up as they sometimes did for big movies. I had just enough time to warn Krista, to point to the floor and scramble to duck under the chairs when I felt a sharp pain hit me and something warm start sliding down my back.

I get up so that I am kneeling right in front of Ron. "I would have gone running right back into your arms if I had known. But who could have known that? I was going to the movies! Since when was it dangerous to go to see a movie? But Ron, it did happen. You can't keep coming here every single day. You can't keep clinging on to the past. You have Lucy to think of, and yourself. As much as I'd love to, I'm not coming back."

A flicker of the sun causes him to look up, almost directly at me. I bite my lip and glance behind me at the blinding bright light of the setting sun. I don't have much time left. So I reach out and grab his arm. He shivers, but I know it isn't from the cold.

"I've been selfish too, Ron. I didn't want to let go of you either. So every day when you came to visit, I'd watch from a distance. Drink in the sight of you, listen to you as you updated me on all of Lucy's latest achievements. Because I didn't want to let go of you either. But I've realized, we don't have to let go of each other. Not completely. We just need to accept that something really bad happened but it can't be changed. So, don't let go entirely but you have to move on. And I do too." The light is starting to get brighter. "Quite literally."

I reach up and touch his cheek. He reaches his own hand up and touches his cheek, as if he had felt my touch. Good, maybe this just might work.

"You can't keep coming here every single day, Ron. It's not doing either of us any good. I'll always love you. Just because I'm gone doesn't mean I'm not around. I am with you when you recognize the scent of my perfume, and when my favorite song comes on the radio, and when you close your eyes at night. I'm with you when Lucy starts singing the alphabet and starts dropping Cheerios on the floor and when she learns how to write her name. So I'll never be gone, not really."

The sun is almost out of sight, but its final glare is almost blinding. I cradle my hand on his cheek and give him a quick kiss on the cheek. Just as I had done that fateful night a year ago. I follow his gaze down to the cold stone.

Alexis 'Lexi' McHue
May 23, 1991-December 29, 2020
Beloved Wife and Mother

The red roses are lying just below the last line written on my stone. I smile as I notice Ron had made a snowman out of his three snowballs. It was our winter tradition to bundle Lucy up and build a small snowman with her. As she was just two, it was more of us taking turns holding her and building the snowman. I stand up and give him one last hug. He wraps his arms around himself, no doubt from the cold chill my contact caused. I close my eyes and imagine he is hugging me.

"Merry Christmas, Lexi." With his words, he turns around and makes the trek back up the hill just as the sun sets.

MARY
BOYE



Baggage Claim

Callen Clark

I'm going to shut myself inside my room and clean. Sometimes I like to give my cave a good thorough scrub. All the little things I find and all the music I listen to take me to the times I will always remember, good or bad. I look at my dresser and the first thing I lock eyes on is the business card from the Cassa Hotel.

That was a hell of a trip, the first time I stayed in New York on my own. I kind of wanted to see what it looked like around Christmastime. The best view of the city actually was from the bathroom window. From that 22nd floor window you could see the glimmer of Times Square only a block away. Cars were pushing down a busy snowy street. Then there was the real anomaly, three pubs right next to each other and on the same block as the hotel. I should have taken a picture, maybe I will next time I'm there.

Guster's One Man Wrecking Machine comes on; this track always reminds me of Alex.

Everybody's heard me talk about my buddy Alex at some point. I've basically been adopted by his entire family. Whenever I can I make a point of going over to his place and catching up with them. His German mother would tell me about cousin Nick in Europe. I would give sister Vanessa and niece Sophia a hug. Then I would escape to Alex's room to have deep conversation about Atheism or some game related nonsense.

I see the tickets for The Chew and I get a little pissy.

I'd never been to a show taping like that before. It was a department trip to see a taping of the daytime talk show The Chew. I could care less about the show itself, the chicken they were preparing, or even the warm-up guy that called my group Amish. What I'll remember, what everyone from that trip will remember, is the traffic we got in leaving. We were stuck on that bus for something like 10 hours in gridlock traffic, and even though there were movies to be played I got my entertainment from watching rear wheel drive cars try to move while listening to Carole King's "So Far Away."

I take the Cassa cards and the Chew tickets and pin them to my corkboard, right above the birthday card Mags sent me.

Some call it a little silly; some attribute it to me being a sappy sentimental boy. The first summer I lived in PA was a lonely one. I didn't have friends to chill with, just what people I still talked to from Virginia. There was this girl I called Mags, who since I've lost contact with. For my birthday that summer she sent me a hand drawn birthday card with a CD in the envelope. At the beginning of the CD was a little speech she recorded herself using a Rock Band mic and Audacity (I know because she said so on the track).

I still have the CD and the card, they remind me that on the worst day where I deal with a slew of assholes there are still good people and if you're good too they will eventually find you.

Hanging next to the card are Ken's old dog tags.

There were times where people thought I didn't have a dad because he was always overseas. They would often ask what he was like, if he really was as crazy as he sounded. When I was really young and we would go to Synagogue there was a guy in the back that looked kind of like him, and every time I would see him I secretly wished it was him making a surprise return home like it happened on TV.

But it never was, there were even times where we would be waiting for him at the base only to find out he hit a surprise delay. That was what hurt the most, not even him going blind fucked me up as bad as that.

Every time he came home he was a little bit softer, a little bit blinder. Eventually his vision is what got him discharged, and I think that day was the most defeated I've ever seen him. It was like watching Superman die in front of me. It made me angry at a lot of different things and people for a lot of reasons. I don't know if I'll ever stop being mad about it, but I can't get hung up on it now.

I'm sick of looking at this fucking dog tag, what's American Idiot doing on the floor?

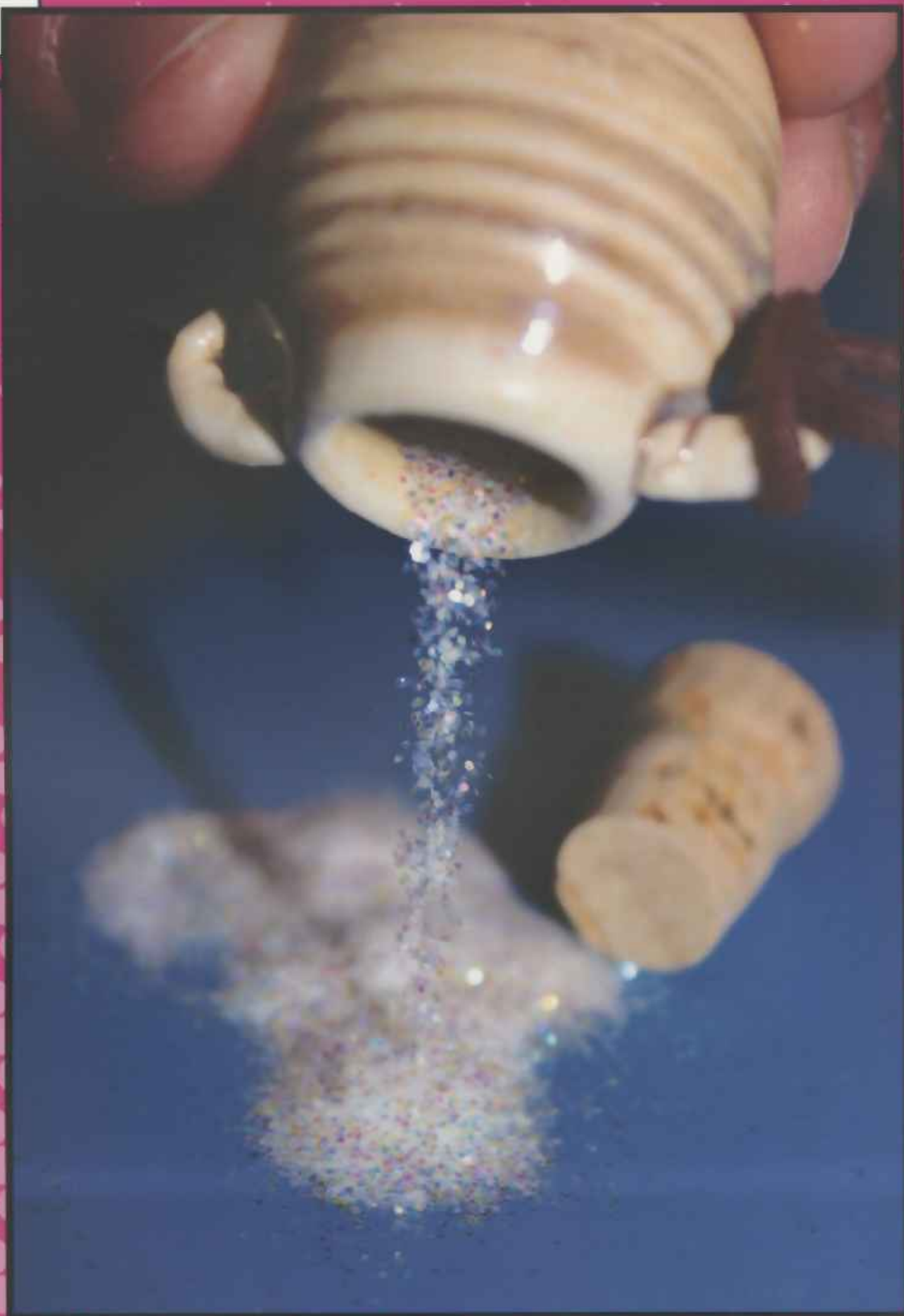
Jesus Of Suburbia was my first true love. It's what got me really ambitious about playing guitar, what pushed me through living in that messed up suburban ghetto hell in South East Virginia. Every word cut like a knife, every note worked its way into my bones like Marrow. It was the song I listened to the last time I crossed the border leaving Virginia. It's probably the song I play most on guitar, probably on iTunes as well. It helps remind me what living was like when I was a kid.

Must be a Guster kind of day, Two Points for Honesty clicks on. Cleaning can wait, I've got to write all this down, hold the moment in time for as long as I can.

SARAH
WIGG



MELANIE
QUINTANILLA



JASMINE
LONG



The Blue Bird

Emily Halbing

Blue was a flightless bird
who loved a bird from a flightful herd,
but she would never be the one for Blue.

Her feathers dappled with gold and teal
To belong to her would be ideal.
Her flawless beauty brought poor Blue to his knees.

He chased her 'til his toes were sore,
but she flew until forever more.
That girl could never be the one for Blue.

One day he caught her eating seeds.
Told her she's the one he needs,
and that he could not breathe a day without her.

She couldn't give him a second look.
She ate more seeds, and her head she shook.
While Blue watched her with pained and heartsick eyes.

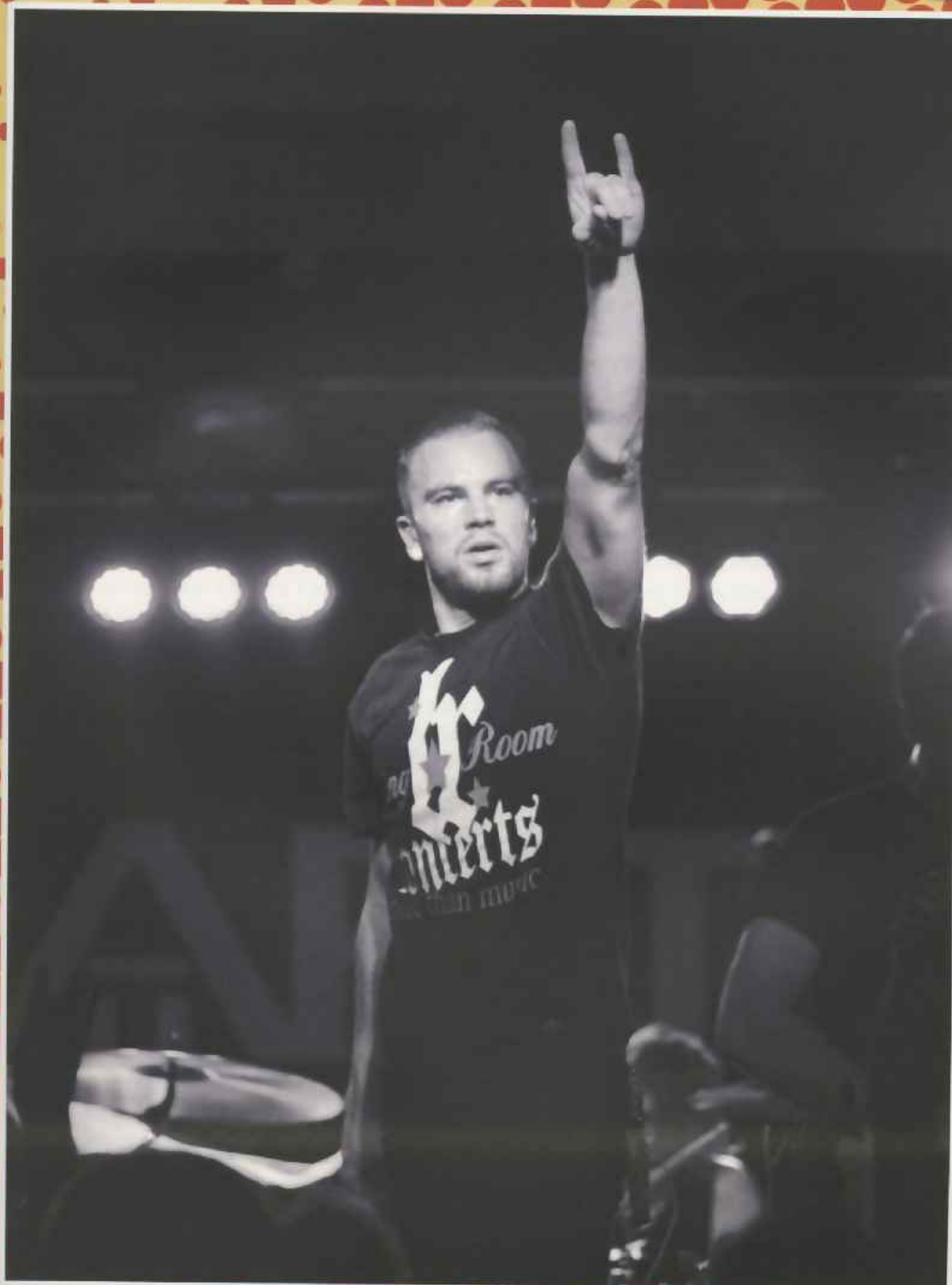
She said, "Blue, we can never be."
He asked her, "Please, just please don't leave."
But she had to, and she did it anyway.

So Blue left too for his hole in the ground.
From hers in a tree, his love looked down.
She wished that things could be a different way.

Both birds had heavy hearts, you see,
and these heavy hearts, they went to sleep
with wistful dreams of love that could have been.



SARAH
WIGG



Kaelynn Erin:
A True Story
Jared Pinter

During the summer, I was sleeping over Zac's house, and we were bored, so I said, "Hey, you wanna mess with someone on Facebook?" It was at that moment that I decided to randomly message a girl named Kaelynn Erin. Maybe I was just really bored and wanted to mess with someone I didn't know. Maybe I was also attracted to her because of the pictures that I had seen her post in the past. Who am I kidding? This girl was gorgeous, and this was a pretty good excuse to talk to her.

At the time, my friend Kriss and I did this thing where we would post the song "We're in Heaven" by *Cascada* on each other's "walls" because one day, on the bus ride home from weight lifting at school, that song was playing as we sat together and Kriss said to me, "Lie here in my arms, Jared Pinter." That was so hilarious that it kind of became a thing between us.

So, I messaged Kaelynn and asked her "Are we in heaven?" To which, she only replied, "Umm." So, I asked again, "Are we in heaven?" This time she responded by saying, "Sure." Then I asked how she knew and with every response she typed, I would continue this game until finally it was time for bed. At that point, I asked for her number and told her I would text her.

I don't even know why I asked for her number but I'm glad that I did. I mean, this was someone that I didn't even know; apparently we went to the same elementary school and she had moved to Queens in the fifth grade, but I didn't remember her at all. I don't even remember how we became friends on Facebook.

I didn't text her until about two weeks later. It was two days before I left for Otakon (some stupid, nerdy convention thingy), and our conversation led us to a phone call in which I successfully attempted to cheer her up after some asshole had pissed her off at school that day. It was fairly easy; I just told her a few Ron White jokes that I had pretended to have come up with myself, and I got her laughing rather quickly.

"Last winter I, uh, I went to Florida for New Year's with my best friend, and while I was down on the beach, relaxing, I got a call from my mom. She was jabbering, into my ear, something about my dog shitting on the floor. So, I said, 'What do you want me to do about it? I'm in Flor-id-duh.' 'Well, I don't want to clean it up,' she replied. 'Alright, then put a paper towel over it and I'll be home in two weeks,' I replied back. 'That's not funny Jared!' So, I finally said, 'Alright, I got a real solution to this problem: put the dog on the phone.'"

That probably isn't even a funny joke, but she laughed. Whatever. I cheered her up.

When she was no longer upset, we continued to converse and get to know each other for the rest of the night. I couldn't put the phone down and neither could she. At one point, I had mentioned to her that the entirety of my social life was going to end on November eleventh of that year. At that moment, she asked, holding back excitement, if my social life was going to end on that day for the same reason that hers was. For a moment, I was completely speechless. Then I proceeded to tell her that she'd think it was stupid but that it was because November eleventh was the release date for *Skyrim* (some stupid video game, but there are dragons in said stupid video game). All she could say was "Where have you been all of my life?" and all I could respond with was laughter as I wondered the same question about her.

Knowing that I was just getting over being sick, knowing that I had to cosplay the loudest and most obnoxious anime character in history and that I'd need my voice and a good night of sleep, I stayed on the phone with her for the entirety of that night and into the not so early hours of the morning. We were on the phone for over fourteen hours that night.

And then again the next night. The only reason we even got off the phone was because mine had died on both nights. Obviously, I was too oblivious or stupid to realize that I could charge my phone and speak on it at the same time. Maybe we were just too caught up in each other for me to realize. There were even times, in those two nights, where I would attempt to speak and nothing would come out because of how weak my voice was becoming. But it was worth it.

When I got home from Otakon, my bed, my room, my whole house felt different. Cold. I didn't feel at home and my emotions were in a whirl from the post-con blues. But it didn't even matter because the next day I boarded a plane to Florida to visit and stay with my grandfather for ten days.

Kaelynn and I didn't talk much in those two weeks of me being on two different vacations, but when we did, it was awkward. Some of this was merely a result of my emotional fatigue from so much traveling, and some of the awkwardness stemmed from us not being able to talk as much because I was always doing something. During Otakon, I could only text her a few times a day, and I didn't get to speak to her over the phone once.

She was confused; she didn't know how to read me. She felt me drifting away and began to fear that she would lose me, but she would never voice any of this because she was afraid it was all in her head. But it wasn't all in her head.

I thought about ending what we had so many times but I didn't. She was happy.

Before we knew it, the end of the summer was upon us, and we hadn't seen each other once. My mom didn't like the idea of her sixteen year old son taking a bus to New York City by himself, and she sure as hell wasn't going to drive me there just to see some girl I hadn't even known for a month. And her dad felt the same exact way. Seeing each other just didn't seem possible.

So, naturally, I gave up.

In January, I received a text from Kaelynn while I was on my winter break of senior year. She wanted to know the name of the hotel that I worked at. Kaelynn, her sister, and her best friend Joelle were on vacation that weekend, and the hotel that her sister had booked was none other than the Fernwood Hotel, the very same that I was employed under.

I thought it was strange that she had texted me, but I really wanted to see her. And I thought it was strange that I wanted to see her so badly. I asked her every morning that weekend to go to the breakfast buffet that I worked at, but every time she had other plans for breakfast. She returned to Queens and I returned to working at the breakfast buffet.

The truth was that I still longed to be with her. I missed when she would ask me to stay on the phone for ten more minutes before I would go to bed.

We started texting regularly again and, after a few days, the nightly phone calls had resumed. It was then that she told me why she had avoided seeing me during her stay at Fernwood. She had still felt the same way about me as she did that summer, and she didn't think she could handle seeing me, while I was the opposite; I still felt that same way too, but I wanted to see her so I could tell her that in person. She did not believe me and wanted me to earn her trust and love back and for me to convince her that what happened before wouldn't happen again—that I wouldn't just become distant out of nowhere and push her away. I promised that I would never give up on us again, no matter how hard it got.

On February 10th, I took a bus to go see her in Queens. Well, actually I missed the bus because I ran to grab a bouquet of roses from Rite Aid, because I'm a hopelessly romantic moron. When I saw that bus pulling away, I felt utterly defeated. I literally fell to my knees and dropped the roses and, again, I felt like giving up. It seemed as if it was meant to be that we would never see each other.

But I couldn't accept that. Instead, I got in my truck and drove to Port Authority, where she would be waiting for me. I never told my mom about that, as she was strongly against this idea. Sorry, mom.

We spent the day walking through a park in Queens, holding hands and occasionally kissing. When the time came for me to go home, we walked to my truck and held each other and kissed for a moment that I don't think I could ever forget. It was so surreal. Like, there were birds chirping and shit even though it was winter. It didn't make any sense, but it was awesome. I guess that's exactly how love is supposed to be.

It was at that moment that we decided to finally become an official couple, as if that even meant anything. We already had an undying emotional commitment to one another. Basically, we decided when we each got home, we would go on our computers and make it Facebook official. Going back home sucked entirely. Seeing her was amazing, but I kind of wanted there to be more to it. Just kissing wasn't really good enough for me. Sex isn't a huge deal to me but I really wanted it that day. Maybe that's just because I'm naturally a physical lover and I just wanted to express my love to her in the most meaningful way I knew how, but I still kind of felt bad for wanting it so much.

Between that day and the next time I went to see her, I got to experience the joy of Kaelynn on her period. That was lovely. Truly, it was. Really, it was fucking great. She gets really vindictive for that one week out of the month. One night, as we spoke on the phone, she had decided to find my insecurities, which was not hard because she already had full access to my heart, and suck the life out of me by attacking those very insecurities. At one point, while we were on the phone, I said, "Maybe we just shouldn't be talking to each other right now" and we both hung up. About fifteen minutes later, I picked up my phone because I just wanted to tell her that I love her, but as I started to text her, I received a text from her saying "I love you."

March 11th: a day that I will remember for the rest of my life. That day I was blindsided. I called Kaelynn that morning to tell her I love her and to have a great day. But she broke up with me. It was true that things had been somewhat weird between us and I kind of felt like she was becoming a bit distant from me, but I never saw this coming at all. I might have begged, I might have pleaded, but there was no budging at all for her. Even in this, though, she was still compassionate toward me. But after a few days of me desperately trying to get to her and change her mind, she became very cold to me. It was her way of protecting herself and pushing me away. She thought that our relationship could only cause her pain but she also knew that if she gave me the chance I would show her exactly why she fell in love with me, so being cold was her only option. She couldn't risk me hurting her again, so she pushed me away in the most effective way possible. The last time I told her that I love her, she responded by saying, "That's nice."

That was the last time I cried, but I'm glad I got to experience that pain. She was worth every tear.

Months had past—almost a whole year—and I had not seen her or even had a real conversation with Kaelynn. I was beginning to think about her less and less and, I guess, I was finally getting over losing her when a brilliant idea had struck me.

I had a plan. I was going to help her through her fear of commitment and finally be with her again. It was going so perfectly; we were starting to talk almost like we used to. This time we were going to ease into things, rather than jump straight into the fires of love.

Then she told me about Bryan. They had been friends for a long time and they were starting to become something more.

This was a bitter pill for me to swallow at first, but I still wanted Kaelynn to be happy and able to have a healthy relationship. That is all that mattered to me. Besides, I kind of almost started talking to her again because I just wanted to have sex with her and we never got to do that when we were together. It was kind of like unfinished business, and it would have also been great if I could have gotten another shot at being with her.

My goal remained the same but my plans of reaching it had changed. I was going to get her through her fear of commitment through Bryan.

From what Kaelynn told me, Bryan was perfect for her; he was exactly like me in every way that she described him. She was starting to fall in love; she spoke to me about him in the very same ways that she used to talk to me.

But they were having their problems with sometimes taking things too fast. Kaelynn didn't really understand how one was to act in a relationship. Neither of them did, so Kaelynn would sometimes act cute like girls are "supposed to" in relationships. Those kinds of behaviors actually just made Bryan uncomfortable because he knew it was inauthentic of her. He just wanted her for who she was, and she wanted the same of him.

Honestly, at times, I would become very frustrated with Kaelynn—really, both of them—for failing to commit to one another. For being so afraid. They were perfect for each other and they were so wrapped up in their own fears and insecurities that they couldn't just go for it. Sometimes you're going to get hurt but you could never know that if you don't just go balls out! Every relationship has the same few outcomes. Pain (always) and the most incredible experience of your life (very rarely). It was especially frustrating because Kaelynn was the most incredible experience of my life already and Bryan was so afraid of finding that out for himself, and Bryan was perfect for her in every way—mainly because he is so much like me—and Kaelynn was also so afraid of finding out that he might not be perfect for her. Holy shit, if you don't try, how are you ever supposed to find out?! Do they really want to go the rest of their lives wondering what could have happened between them instead of taking a chance and finding out?

There was one particular thing that Kaelynn had said to him while joking around that he had called her out on: "You're a cutie; can I keep ya?" I don't know why that was such a big deal to him, but I guess it would have annoyed me too. I hate when girls act cute for no reason. Because it's exactly that: an act.

A few weeks after she had said that to him, Kaelynn came to me for guidance. Apparently there was something that he had said to her that had thrown her off as well. She sent me the screenshot of a text message in which Bryan had said to her, "You're a cutie; can I keep ya?" I stared at the message for a moment, in a state of pure amazement; this man really is just like me. Using that kind of irony and conversational symmetry is the exact same method I would have used to tell her that I'm ready for the next step. It was genius, it was beautiful, and it was cliché.

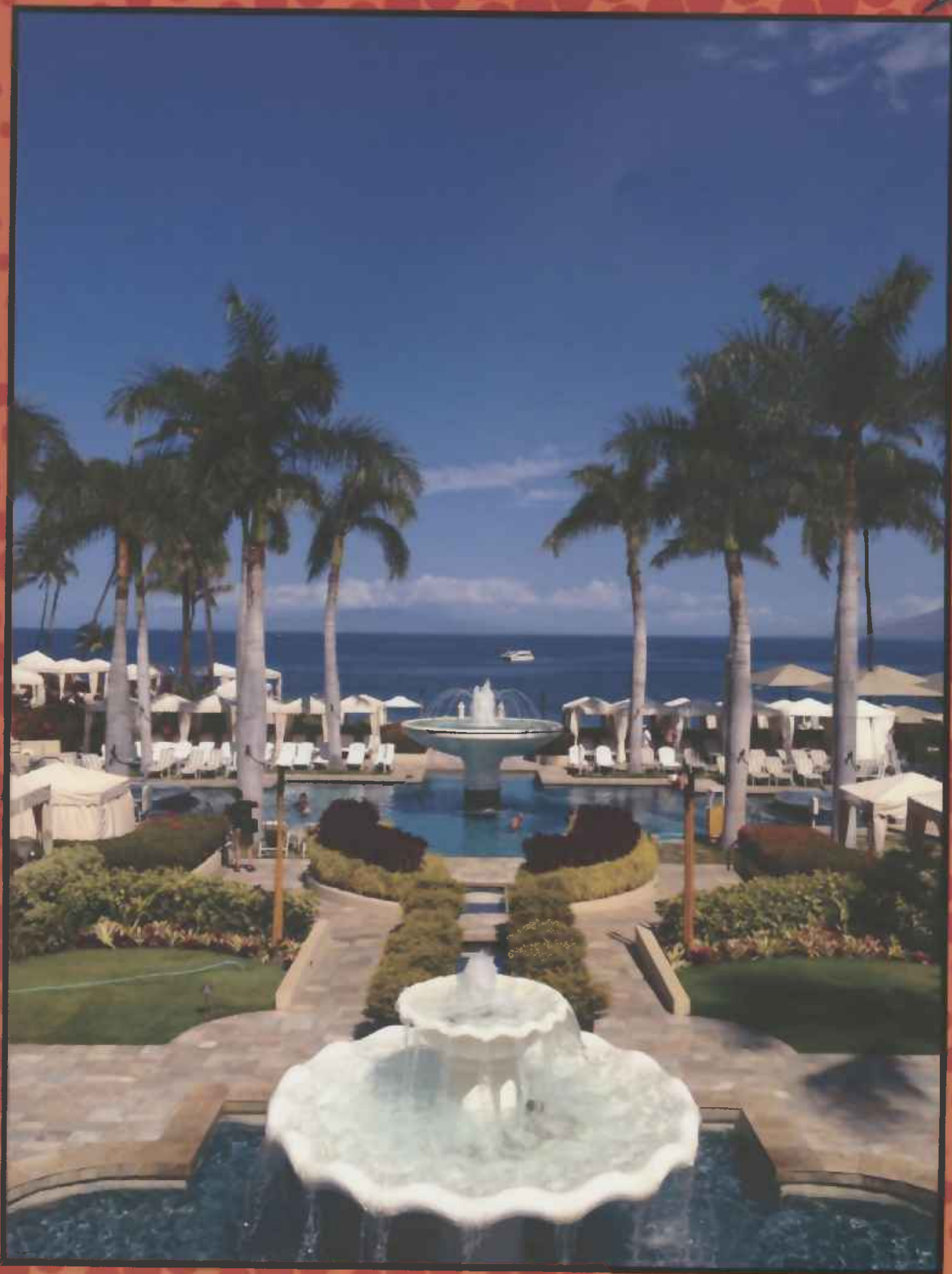
"You're a fucking idiot," I said to her. "He's telling you he's ready. Kaelynn, it's time to go balls out. You need to go talk to him! I'll give you my balls if you need them."

And they have been together ever since. And they have been happy ever since—at least according to what I've seen on Facebook and the few exchanges of small talk I've had with Kaelynn via Facebook or text message.

HEATHER
MARSICANO



MICHAEL
SMITH





JASMINE
LONG

Sun

Meghan DiGerolamo

Shaded by clouds but light still seen;
Rays of warmth that blanket all.

Weaves through trees and leaves,
Kissing fruits and flowers and cheeks.

Casting shadows below.
Fingers fighting to weed through the black.

Ever moving,
All will be reached.

Sunrise

Michelle Cameron

Bursts of orange, yellow, red; blasts like an atomic bomb
But only thoughts disturb the stillness
There's no stopping the thoughtful dawn

MELANIE
QUINTANILLA



The Golden Arch

Shannon Morgano

The Building arose from the edge of a freeway glaring in the morning sun.
Attached to the side a play place stands.
Where animals (often children) run.
They scarf down fries and processed beef in stale greasy buns.
These carbs and fats beat through their veins,
And as they revel in their fun,
Their livers scream,
Their hearts beat quick,
Their arteries begin to stick,
Their teeth decay,
Their moods will sway,
And what is it TVs say?
"I'm lovin it"

TARYN
TALACKA





SARAH
WIGG

The Domestic Life #2: Dumpster Diver

Erin Delaney

She lifts the large black lid to her treasure chest. In one hand she holds a bent metal hanger. In the other—a cloth bag (to keep her booty). She peeks inside at the gems below: white and black bags and cardboard boxes, each glistening with the sweat of delightful summer decay. And even with the smell of putrid week old meats and leftovers, juices and baby diapers, she stands on tip-toes peering in. Her eyes glowing in the sharp, afternoon sun. Her mouth straight and determined—she braces her arms against the stained and sticky edge. She launches her body up and folds over the side—a perfect 10 into the dumpster.

Prayers to the Patron Saint of Hysteria

Alexandria Smith

"Welcome to life,"
she said
And at that time
I wondered what
she meant
Light the spark
and clear your head
of all dark omens
like Father's chapel
"Dona Nobis Pacem,"
she said unto me
And at that time
I questioned when
I'd be free
From the incoherent
fears and the last
month's deterrents
"You're fine,"
she said
"You're fine."
Rise above the
undercurrents

Imperfection

Kaleigh Killian

I was given a heart-shaped stone today,
Painted with red swirls and love,
Smooth and pretty
With a layer of gloss,
But there is a small imperfection near the top
On one of the humps,
And at first I was disappointed.
I wanted a perfect heart:
One with no scratches or scrapes.
But then I realized:
Perfection is not real.
This little heart symbolizes my own:
Polished and pretty
And made to look right,
Forced to put on appearances,
But there it is,
Inevitable,
A little spot I missed when masking,
A little flaw that showed through,
But flaws will show. We shouldn't hide them.
Flaws are what make us whole.
So even though there's a flaw on my heart,
Or in fact several,
It is still beautiful
And perfect
Because it still works.
And it is mine.

MICHAEL
SMITH



VICTORIA
SCOELD



Bonnie and Clyde

Brandon Culp

Here comes dear ole Bonnie and Clyde,
Driving from the old town.
They said, "I love you more than life."
And bang they shot them down!

Bonnie wanted to be a star,
Dreaming to wear a gown.
However, she would soon be dead.
And bang they shot her down!

Oh, Clyde wanted to be a crook.
He became the best around,
Sadly his time would soon be up.
And bang they shot him down!

Dear Clyde said to Bonnie, "Babe you
Look good holding that brown."
Bonnie and Clyde had died happy.
And bang they shot them down!

Passion

Andrew Casanova

What is passion in a world that is so numb to pain, sadness, anger, hate, and fear? Do we not see what is on the news. It seems so silly but we only seem to care about the issue until it's left our sight. We turn the TV off with the click of a button. We say we have to be somewhere, can't go right now. Does anyone care. Is caring subjective. Do we only care about our own comfort. The very essence of passion can be aroused by the simplest emotion. Pain. The pain that we feel when someone or something has hurt our souls. We feel that pain down to the core. Sadness. The sadness we feel when someone has left us in a position where we feel helpless . . . like we're falling down a neverending hole. Anger. The very thing that makes us act on the injustices we see each day we walk this earth. Society proves that justice is the only thing that will silence the anger within. But isn't justice subjective. Doesn't our love for justice feed the hate we have for every injustice. Hate. The emotion we all fear to feel. It is the emotion that tells us whether we are right or wrong in our actions. Fear. Our actions dictate our path yet we all fear choosing the wrong path. Life is not a walk in the woods, but a boat ride. We fear where the river leads us, yet we aim for the thrill of not knowing whether we will come across rapid waters or the impending waterfall—which from afar is a magnificent sight . . . until you're in it, falling, falling, falling . . . Yes I know passion. The thrill that never stays constant. I live it every day. It is what keeps us moving forward. It keeps us believing that there are good people in the world that are willing to rid themselves of pain, sadness, anger, hate, and fear. These are the people willing to put their own comfort on the chopping block, so that others may live in a better world. I confess, I do not know much about anything, but I can say I know passion. Passion—the burning flame within each of us, I can see it. Don't you see it, too. It's so bright it hurts my eyes. So let your passion burn through the darkness and free your inhibitions. Be the change you wish to see in the world and keep moving forward. **Passion . . .**

Sleight of Spirit

Alexandria Smith

Strings of sinewed
flesh stretch and meet
like some sort of
body consensus
Shared combination
of physical shape and
mental defenses
Manipulated charm
still living,
still warm
Flexing instinctively
like the colored
flex of your arm
raising and lowering
to draw upon the
funneled end of
a cigarette
Here you are

But the lines of
your life are stressed
and choppy as if
Vonnegut drew
you himself and
pulled you from the
page to sit
to dwell
to wonder
I wonder
if the light hits
you in a certain way
could I see inside you?
Into the little center
lock on your breast
or better yet
into the side that
everyone seems to
know the best

Is that an accurate
portrayal of your person?
Or is it a betrayal of your
inner workings in the night
The fractured and wrapped
spirit that grips the steering
wheel in attempt to hold
on to no one
I long to know one
To know you

Coming Back to Bukowski

Erin Delaney

I flip through piles of books
looking for something new,
something to bring on some fire.
Instead I stare down
Bukowski.

We've been introduced before.
I open *Dog from Hell's* pages
readjust the glue
attempt to recover
the nonstick binding,
and pour myself a glass
of his words.—

I hate that
it's always Bukowski
I go back to—
that chauvinist,
that drunk bastard.
But- it's a strange love affair.
Nobody tells it
so devoted
like a cigarette burn.
So impulsive
like a back alley boxing match.
So brazen, you can't
deny his truisms.

Damn him!
Doesn't he know
this goblet will slide to the floor
as my own words dribble
from my lips
and pen stumbles over paper?—

Still, like a hand
raised to the bartender,
I turn the page,
hailing another poem.

HONORABLE MENTION!

Doing Everything Right

Sandra Pace

I grew up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a section of Brooklyn, New York. We have a saying where I'm from, "Bed-Stuy do or die." The motto says it all.

Long story short, I lost my father young and my mother was a crackhead. I lived with my grandmother for two months right before I turned seventeen; she died eleven days before I graduated high school. I was homeless for a few months after that but I was smart enough to promptly get a job as a Home Health Aid for an elderly blind lady. I would shower at her house while she thought I was cleaning the bathroom really well. I met the love of my life, Nakia, while I was on the way to work one day and the more time I spent with him, I fell in love with him. He just had this way with words, a true intellect. He found out I was homeless and was the only person that cared enough to help. That is how I came to be where I am now.

I ain't like these hood rats around here. I am smart. Well that is what my grades say even though my actions say otherwise at times. I am a college student at Columbia University studying Chemical Engineering. Since I'm a ward of the state and get good grades, my school is paid for; seems to me like that's the government's way of saying, "Sorry that no one loves you." I maintain a 4.0 and I am the only black female in most of my classes. No one really talks to me in my classes and I feel like they think they are above me; I show them they are not with my grades. Like it or not, next month I will be walking across the same stage same as them. That's a major step that will feel so good. I already got a job offer from the spot I am interning at and things are really looking up for me. I feel like I can finally give my baby the life I never had. She can grow up in a house with a yard, a pool, and go to a good school. I can't wait to start this new chapter in my life.

Today was one of the worst days I've had at school. I usually let certain things go but what happened today really tested my temper. In my Soft Matter Physics class, I had to hand a paper in on DNA melting and I was looking forward to finding out my grade since I'd worked so hard on it. I left the classroom to go to the bathroom, and came back to find coffee spilled in my book bag and all over my desk. Not only was my paper ruined, this heifer got coffee in my laptop!! This was one more situation I really didn't need; thank God I back everything up so I asked my teacher if I could print it out again after class and turn it in to him so he could have a clean copy. He said, "Yes, but next time have it in on time." I was like, "You're kidding me right?! Your fool behind let this brainless twit spill coffee all over MY stuff and you say something to me?!" I guess it must be nice that daddy bought her seat at this fine establishment. This female is barely making it grade wise in the program. I wish she would end up on my block, I would beat the breaks off her! She's been doing stuff like this to me from jump! You know something though, at the end of the day it makes me stronger, so I don't care anymore; next month this will all be over." After all that happened today, I need a drink.

After I left campus, I stopped by the electronics store and got some great news, because of my insurance, they will be able to replace my laptop. That's the best income tax money I ever spent. The only messed up part is, it may take about a week to get me the new laptop.

As I rushed to pick my daughter up from daycare, I thought about how before my little girl was born, I wanted to get out of the hood, after her I realized that I have to. Her father is not a part of her life, not because he's a dead beat. He had dreams and like me he'd been working towards them. He was the one that pushed me to go to school. He could have done anything and I mean anything, but he loved cars and was striving toward becoming a mechanic hoping to start his own garage one day. His mother would take him to visit his uncle in Glen Cove, Long Island. His uncle was the closest thing to a father he had and the two of them would work on cars, talking for hours. Him (name here) not having a father is why he worked so hard to be active in our daughter's life. We got the apartment I'm in now because his cousin works for housing and got us in the projects. He promised it would be a short stay because he was going to get us into a better place, a safer place once we finished school. When I told him I was pregnant, he was a lot happier than I was about it; that man put the world at my feet. Once, I was craving Chinese food. I asked him to get me some, he smiled and said, "OK." I remember like it was yesterday, he kissed me on my forehead and asked me if I wanted a grape soda or an orange soda. Funny, it didn't matter what I said because he would bring me both anyway. It was 11:38pm when he headed out the door to The Golden Place. At 11:52pm I heard the shots. I just knew . . . I knew before I ran outside, up the block and collapsed next to him, cradling his head as he lay gasping for air and choking on his own blood. I held him close to me, almost in a last attempt to keep him from the inevitable and with his last breath he said, "I love you and always remind Jayce I will always be with her." Doctors told me that I went into preterm labor because of all the stress of his death, I gave birth to our daughter two months early. Funny thing, we did not know what sex the baby was. We wanted to be surprised.

As Jayce and I get off the J train, I stop at the store to get her an icee to cool her off from the intense heat; I still can't believe it's eight o'clock at night and 100 degrees outside. I pull out my keys to unlock my apartment door and as I open the door, there is my next door neighbor peeking out into the hallway. She's always complaining about me being too noisy, I don't understand why she thinks it's me because I am never home. I'm out by 5am and back by 8pm every day during the week. One day, I told her, "Look, when you hear me being noisy, have the building manager come to my door because I won't be there." The elevator broke down, but that is nothing new, I'm more shocked when it is working, but these people don't know how to treat anything. When it does work, all you smell is pee, weed, and Newports. As I pick up my baby to prepare for the six floors I have to climb, I put my blade in my free hand because you do not want to be caught off guard in the stairwell. Last week, a woman was dragged to the roof, raped and thrown off the roof. Not me, and not today; I could tear someone apart with no remorse or second thought. We make it to our door, home at last.

I cooked and we ate dinner, Jayce chattering away in her happy baby talk, bits of what I can understand thrown in here and there. I gave Jayce her bath and put on her favorite movie so she could watch it until she fell asleep. This was a rare night, I had no school work or studying to do. I didn't see this down time as a good thing since it gave me time to dwell on what happened in class. I mean, what is the deal with this chick. Why does she hate me, always trying to make my school life hell? Thoughts heavy on my mind, I went to check on my baby, she was fast asleep. It was a little after 11 and I really needed a drink, that seems to really be what keeps me from going off in class. I got ready to run out real quick, something I have done so many times since I was never gone more than ten minutes. I grabbed my keys, my blade, and quietly walked out the door. I stood silent for a minute to make sure Jayce did not get up after the door shut. When the coast was clear, I was off, walking at a fast pace to get to the store. I made it there and was almost to my building when I heard shots ring out. The noise sounded far but was close enough for me to see the gun fire light up the night. I felt an intense heat on my inner thigh, I was hit. Looking down, I didn't even feel the three bullets that hit my chest; I couldn't stand any longer. It all happened so fast, I come to staring up at the night sky, the sounds of the city continuing uninterrupted.

I realize I'm dying, here alone on the concrete, flashes of my baby's face invade my mind. I shudder from the cold or the realization I have sealed my daughter's fate. All this time, I thought if someone had a crappy childhood, her adulthood was supposed to be great. What is so great about dying, knowing I never got to live my dream, I have so many loose ends . . . I don't want to die alone like this knowing my body won't be found until morning. My baby . . . if she does make it, what kind of life will she lead? Will she become all the things I worked hard for her not to become? "Please God, don't take me from her, I am all she has!!" I yell as loud I can but it comes out like a whisper as blood trickles from the corner of my mouth. It's 90 degrees, why is it so cold? It's getting harder to breathe; strange to me how I don't feel the physical pain, just the pain of leaving my baby. I was doing everything right, going to school, working, and taking care of my child. I was doing everything right . . . now I will be no more than a number in my textbook. A statistic. My vision is becoming more narrow by the minute. I will be nothing more than one of the 37% killed between the hours of 11pm and 5pm, the 36% killed in Brooklyn, and the 57% killed by gunfire in New York this year. I had so much promise, I was so close. My baby . . . is home . . . alone, she can't open the door . . . She is only two. I have always said life is not fair, but now I know it and so will Jayce.

HEATHER
MARSICANO



A stylized illustration of a cat with a large, black, curly mustache. The cat is depicted in a seated or crouching position, facing forward. Its fur is represented by a dense, repeating pattern of small, light-colored circles on a darker background. The cat is set against a background of bold, radiating lines in two shades of blue, creating a sunburst or starburst effect.

**THANKS FOR
READING!**

**48TH
EDITION**