

EDITORS' NOTE

This year, *Hemetera* is publishing thirty-two pieces from twenty-one very talented writers. While the subject matter of the submissions varies, there are some consistent themes: loss, the passage of time, and personal growth. This year's issue opens with Jonathan Drapinski's play "Cobwebs," which explores failed relationships and unfulfilled ambitions. From there, we move into poetry, where Anne Peacher reflects on growing older. Gerard Buckley expands on his piece from last year with a complex and layered poem. Arianna Alcorn and Jessica Nguyen muse on relationships and the troubles that failed love can bring. Shogofa Amini writes two powerful poems and an essay on life in a war-torn country, the loss war brings, and its long lasting implications. The essays we received this year present deep struggles with suicide and depression, standing up for one's beliefs even when it's unpopular, learning new and unexpected things about a loved one, realizing how your family has changed while you were away at college, and coping with death as a friend and as a caregiver.

We are proud to publish such powerful and honest writing. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we all enjoyed putting it together.

Sincerely,

The Hemetera Team

HEMETERA 2015

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In 1946 a “doughty seedling poked its vigorous head” into the Regis College Community with the emergence of the new literary magazine *Hemetera*, meaning “Our Own” in Greek. The magazine was founded as an opportunity to spotlight the creative talents of the student body. Published annually by the students of Regis College, the magazine welcomes submissions of poetry, prose, artwork, and photography.

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DRAMA

Cobwebs

BY JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

Characters:

DANNY – YOUNG MALE, MID-20s. UNEMPLOYED, RECENTLY DUMPED BY HIS GIRLFRIEND AND HAS A VERY NEGATIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

JENNA – YOUNG FEMALE, MID-20s. COMES FROM A WEALTHY UPBRINGING. DUMPS DANNY BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO GET MARRIED.

EUGENE – MALE SPIDER, SENSITIVE, NAIVE, WANTS COMPANIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER AND HAS STRONG AFFECTION TOWARD ESTELLE.

ESTELLE – FEMALE SPIDER, VERY POLITE AND CONSIDERATE, CARES FOR EUGENE.

Setting:

A large old house, Danny and Jenna have been living there together for about two years. The house is unkempt, with trash, random belongings and cobwebs all over the room. The room is set with an arm chair, table, lamp and TV, which all have cobwebs dangling from them.

(Lights up)

(Danny is sitting down in the armchair as Jenna walks around the room, picking things up and putting them into boxes. Danny sits in the chair watching her move about the room. Jenna finishes grabbing the belongings she had dispersed around the room. Jenna picks up her box full of her belongings and starts to walk out the door. Danny notices a shirt that belonged to Jenna on the floor and gets out of the armchair to give it to her)

DANNY

Oh, you forgot this. (Hands her the shirt)

JENNA

Thanks (starts to head for the door. Hesitates. Turns around)
Listen, Danny, I'm sorry. It's just...

DANNY

Don't apologize, Jenna. I don't want to hear it.

JENNA

I didn't mean for it to end like this Danny. But, let's face it, we both saw this coming. We both wanted different things...

DANNY

It's fine Jenna, I don't care. (turns away)

JENNA

Fine, fine...you know, this is your problem, Danny. You just don't care.

DANNY

I seriously don't need this right now.

JENNA

I want to stay Danny, but how can I when you just stand there doing nothing?

DANNY

Well, what would you like me to do? I haven't had a job in months...

JENNA

You know I support you, you just won't let me.

DANNY

(Snarky) I'm sorry I don't have a positive outlook on life like you. We all can't be Harvard graduates working in their daddy's big-time law firm.

JENNA

Give me a break!

DANNY

I'm sorry, but someone that is "supportive" wouldn't allow their parents to tell me that I need to reconsider my career choice.

JENNA

They were being realistic. Everyone knows that journalism is a dying profession. They just want to be hearing wedding bells and crying babies in the near future, you can't blame them for that!

DANNY

Of course they do!

JENNA

You need to get over yourself!

DANNY

How do you expect me to open up to you when you're being so condescending?

JENNA

Oh what a classic Danny move, turn the tables on Jenna because you know you're wrong!

DANNY

I don't want to talk about this right now!

JENNA

Of course you don't, you never do! But don't you worry, I'm not going to be here to bother you anymore. You'll never have to talk about anything with me again. (Picks up suitcase and starts to walk towards door) Goodbye, Danny. Have fun sulking in the corner with all the goddamn cobwebs.

(Exits)

(Danny paces his apartment, knocks over the stuff on his table)

DANNY

(compulsively cleans) Everything's a mess. I can't deal with this right now.

(Picks up old glass of water, has cobwebs dangling from it, takes a sip.)

DANNY

Cobwebs! This is fantastic!

(Eugene crawls out. He's crouched down, avoiding being seen. Eugene is trying to get across the room to the other side but doesn't want to be seen by any humans. Danny is startled by the spider.)

DANNY

Shit! A spider!

(Danny takes off his shoe and gets ready to kill the spider with it. Eugene realizes what's about to happen and begins to scurry away. Danny chases the spider around, hoping to kill it but Eugene escapes.)

DANNY

(Kicking table) I can't deal with all of this right now! It's too much. I can't even kill a goddamn spider!

(Danny storms off into the other room. Eugene crawls out to center stage)

EUGENE

What's with humans needing to get rid of what they think is unsightly? Do they realize how rude it is to just start smacking us with a shoe? Be respectful, at least use a magazine or newspaper. Using a shoe is just so aggressive, and, well...mean. I once had a buddy that made his web in some old lady's house. She would always spray his web with perfume, as if she was trying to stun him or something. Like, that's just wrong, you know? (Beat) I think all of this, running away from humans, dodging shoes, getting sprayed by perfume would be bearable if we didn't have to suffer through it alone. Webs get pretty lonely. Well sometimes I have a fly or two stuck in my web, but I never like to make friends with my dinner. I just want something consistent in my life. (Beat) Momma always told me to never trust the girls though. She said that they will just use you and abuse you, literally. My mom would know, she ate my dad after mating. Well, what do you expect from a Black widow spider? I guess sexual cannibalism is just a part of life. Boy meets girl, boy fertilizes girl's eggs, girl eats boy. It's just the harsh truth.

(Estelle crawls out onto the stage)

EUGENE

Estelle, is that you?

ESTELLE

Hello Eugene.

EUGENE

You look great! How's everything been?

ESTELLE

Well I just laid eggs.

EUGENE

Oh I see. Who was the lucky guy?

ESTELLE

His name was Roger. He was a lovely companion. Great lover, great taste.

EUGENE

That's great. I'm really happy for you.

ESTELLE

So what's new with you?

EUGENE

Nothing, really. I just finished making a new web, because my old one got knocked down last week. Here's a tip: never, ever, EVER make a web up on those star shaped things on the ceilings.

ESTELLE

You mean the ceiling fan, right?

EUGENE

Yeah, those fan thingies. I made my web on it, and let me say it was probably the best web I've ever made. It took over an hour.

ESTELLE

Impressive.

EUGENE

Anyway, last week that human just randomly pulled a switch and my whole web started spinning, it went round and round and I was whipped across the room. It was terrifying! I thought I was going to die!

ESTELLE

Come on Eugene, everyone knows the best place to make a web is upstairs in the attic

EUGENE

I hate it up there, it's just filled with babies and estrogen. It's not really the place for a guy like me.

ESTELLE

I forgot that you weren't the kind of guy that enjoyed the family scene.

EUGENE

(Beat) Estelle, do you remember when we were younger and would spend our days just making webs up in the attic?

ESTELLE

How could I forget? Everything was just so simple then. Those were the golden days. I sometimes wish we could go back.

EUGENE

Remember that one time we got a whole swarm of flies stuck in the web we made together?

ESTELLE

Oh yeah, my siblings were so happy. We had a full week's worth of meals from it.

EUGENE

Your siblings never seemed to like me...

ESTELLE

(laughs) No, it's just in those eight eyes of theirs they saw you as, well, useless.

EUGENE

Right, right the only thing they cared about was having kids.

ESTELLE

That's the only thing anyone cares about.

EUGENE

You know, I think about you Estelle, all the time.

ESTELLE

Oh...

EUGENE

Sorry, I shouldn't have said that...I didn't mean to make this awkward...

ESTELLE

I'm flattered Eugene, I really am, I just don't have the time for this.

EUGENE

Oh, I totally understand. (turns away discouraged)

ESTELLE

No, I don't mean it like that. I just literally don't have the time for you.

EUGENE

No, I get it Estelle.

ESTELLE

You know what happens when you lay eggs, by the time they hatch, I feel like I'm on my death bed. I don't mean to sound melodramatic.

EUGENE

I know Estelle, it's just I can't help but think about you.

ESTELLE

But you shouldn't waste your time thinking about me, I'm almost done.

EUGENE

I need you...

ESTELLE

Eugene...

EUGENE

I just want to build webs with you, have thousands of babies with you, I want to eat flies with you Estelle.

ESTELLE

You know that isn't a possibility.

EUGENE

I know, I know. I've always thought about you, though. Ever since I met you, when we were younger.

ESTELLE

Oh...I should go... (Begins to exit)

EUGENE

Wait (Estelle stops), I wish I didn't Estelle, I really do. (Estelle faces Eugene) It's just that you're the only beautiful thing that I've seen in my entire life.

ESTELLE

You know, Eugene, I've always cared about you too. But that's the problem, I care about you.

EUGENE

I don't quite follow.

ESTELLE

I couldn't be with you Eugene, because if I was, I would have eaten you. And I care about you too much to do that. It's nothing personal, it's just something I do. It's just a part of life.

EUGENE

I know all too well. (Beat) Estelle...

ESTELLE

Please...I should go. I should check up on my eggs.

EUGENE

Don't go, I need you!

ESTELLE

Eugene, we both wanted different things. I wanted babies and you wanted companionship. You know we can't have both. (Starts to crawl away) Bye, Eugene.

EUGENE

Goodbye Estelle.

(She Exits.)

(Danny walks back out, Eugene crawls down stage. Danny is talking on the phone.)

DANNY

Mr. Shooman? Yes, it's Danny! Are you calling about my interview? Yes...yes (starting to lose hope). I see. Well, thanks for nothing.

(Hangs up phone.)

DANNY

Goddammit!

(Notices Eugene moving)

DANNY

Gotcha you little bugger! (Grabs shoe) I'll show you who's boss!

(Danny raises his shoe over Eugene's head. Eugene is below Danny on the floor cowering. Danny stands in a pose that appears that he will strike Eugene.)

LIGHTS OUT

POETRY

Stocking Stuffer or Christmas at 50

BY ANNE PEACHER

A reluctant reminder that I am not twenty-four anymore
They arrive on Christmas, tucked in the toe of my stocking;
I need them, but don't want them.

You saw I couldn't read the menu
Settled for today's special to hide my handicap.

My brilliant grandfather went blind
His dignified slow walk with hand up gliding as if reading
Braille on the wallpaper.

Get your shoes out of the front hall, my mother hollers,
Papa could trip.

How awful to lose your way
Me, in my vanity, refuse the cure.

Simply up the font on my kindle
and read the paper at the window in full light,
Thread the needle by trial and error.

My nephew born so premature, he loses vision in one eye
From the oxygen they pump to save his life.

He grabs the world by storm.

Soars down the mountain on skis

Reads the grey shadows and snow white light
And when he finally hits a baseball for the first time
He runs to his Dad's arms, not first base.

Knowing his odds
Here sits my acknowledgement of all I have seen
In purple leopard print so I can claim fashion
While the world reveals itself in high definition.

Giving Thanks

BY ANNE PEACHER

I am even enjoying you back in my kitchen
Bossing me around
The mother hen clucking over family recipes
The Alpha female in my house
Two years since
I stared down cancer
You had to take over, carpool the kids, dish up the dinners,
I hunkered down in my fuzzy slippers
Secretly glad you couldn't unravel algebra either
Afraid of them knowing how awful I felt
Already marginalized, fearing worse
Cut from the picture with a scalpel
All drains and sutures,
you had to cover my chest in plastic wrap
To keep me dry in the shower
No mother should have to see her daughter so disfigured
But your strength spared your granddaughter from seeing
What I could only share with you
Today, I can savor the cold shrimp cocktail

Smell the turkey with fresh sage and hear
my nephew's silly imitation of the Grinch
It's all heaps of sweet potatoes and sheer awe
at the massive fortune I've been given
Another ride on the roller coaster
You master the gravy to perfection
Just as you let me wallow in my room with the remote,
Nap until dinner, and retreat again to recover
Now I can relish in fat joy
With a criss-cross of scars, I am whole again
I see cancer in the rear view mirror
And only a feast before me.

Nox

BY GERARD BUCKLEY

Unavoidably, it must be faced; the somber setting of lux to nox,
Where the umbral shadows dance their waltz of baleful bliss.
Catch the pestilential scent of the beautiful belladonna, as she locks
Her lovers to darkness' first kiss.

Above, the celestial dome shimmers with the heavenly children of their motherly orb;
Their glow is unknown from behind the moon's sapphire curtain.
But, set against the black canvas, a message is served to absorb
The memory that the nocturnal and diurnal coexist, this is certain.

Shall I be fearful of her peculiarities, or how she beguiles and charms
Her subjects to slumber in the cold silence of their cradles?
I must not be disturbed, however much I bear witness to her swarms
Of ethereal chills and wails.

Come, my sauntering spirit, let us drift into your newest creation!
Make haste, for I shall not wish to face morning damnation!

Entropy

BY ARIANNA ALCORN

Our love
Is a lotus flower.
Finding nourishment
In muddy water
Breaking through
Reaching clean air
Blooming in the sunlight
Basking in the rain
Growing and becoming beautiful through it all
Eventually dying, decaying, and becoming one with the earth.

Cornucopia

BY ARIANNA ALCORN

So happy
that I am sad.
Or am I actually sad?
My heart is overflowing.
My head is a dam.
Fear is in control.
I want you to know my heart
and how much it overflows for you.
Maybe it's all in my head.

Fine

BY ARIANNA ALCORN

Almost never
do I wonder
if you are wondering
about me.
Almost never.
Almost always
am I so happy
this day
has finally come.
Almost always.



BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

Dialing Ship #47098, Emergency

BY JESSICA NGUYEN

Give me hope in humanity again, lieutenant
Paranoid, Paranoid Androids are coming
They are here to seize us again
To tangle us in wires and circuit boards
Just to rid us of our inefficient and meaningless existences
They don't want to rule the world
They are going to fix it.
We have made a big mistake and they know it
Where was the point we should have stopped?
Ambition made our greed rear its ugly head
We dare defy human authority
but what about universal authority?
Who are we to say we are the advanced ones?
Please, lieutenant
Hear me out, hear ourselves justifying this
Who are we?
We have failed not just ourselves
But the other living species on Earth
We've gone too far
We've gone too far.

Love is Old

BY JESSICA NGUYEN

Love is old
My soul is dead
But my body is still warm

Come and let me hold your head
Let your head lean on my shoulder
I'll kiss your milky cheeks
And tell you tales of many lifetimes I've lived

I don't know if you will hear my heart or my words
Or rather you'd prefer to hear my moans in your ear
I don't know if you see the galaxies in my eyes
Or if you'd rather see the flesh I've hidden away
I don't know if you see a decrepit soul
Or if you see my pouted lips and charming eyes

Love is old
My soul is dead
But my body is still warm

Blind Date

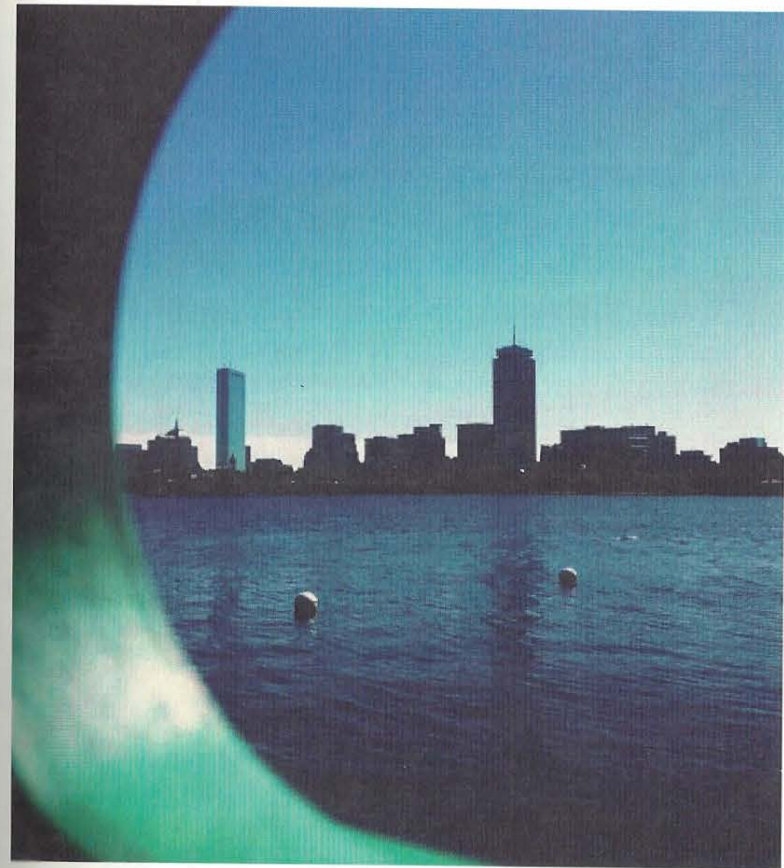
BY JESSICA NGUYEN

Your voice is monotony personified
Your eyes are brown boredom
Your lips are banalities
"Boring, boring, boring" I thought to myself
You must be boring
But I thought I'd be counter-intuitive
It was all a mistake
You are boring
You are not inspiring whatsoever
I've yet to have really written anything
About you
Because of you
Because you are boring
Boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring, boring,
boring, boring...

Dreaming

BY HENRY BALAMAZE

My dreams rise before me
Long nights stave off loneliness
On my back I move to the furthest of places...
My projections are real and limitless
I am senseless in my efforts therein.
Not sentiment, emotion or fear stands in my way
I wander away
far, far away.
I behold the most heroic of welcomes there.
All bow to me, and all I need I get
That's not just as good as it gets
Respect flunks me,
Beauty loves me
Wit seems to be my breath
And death so far away.



By ARIANNA ALCORN

Lament to Bacchus

BY ELLISA GOLDBERG

Last year I bought concert tickets, which were sent to my
other home, Long Island, land of duck farms and vines.
It was, in turn, mailed here by my mother,
who snuck in a present, a gift card for wine.

What joy! What wonder! What absolute glee!
I dreamt gladly of free bottles of that singular drink!
The most glorious of blessings had been given to me!
But as I read further, I felt my heart sink.

"Expires 3/31/14" I read through bitter tears;
bereft, I could hardly believe my eyes!
The card had hid in my drawer since last year,
but ignoring the envelope had stripped me of my prize!

And now here I sit, wine-less, the saddest of all girls,
having learned a lesson in timing from this cruel, cruel world.

The Treehouse

BY ELLISA GOLDBERG

A childhood, I decided early on, requires a certain wildness
which is difficult to find in suburban New Jersey; but there is no lack of stubbornness,
and so the treehouse went up in a single sudden weekend,
all scraps of damp plywood salvaged from the garage and nailed to a long-dead tree,
a scalene triangle I would pretend was the prow of a ship,
bobbing impatiently on a sea of leaves,
waiting to take me far away.

But the ocean was far from my suburb, and so
every day I'd walk home from school and climb aboard,
straining to glimpse the sky through a web of branches, dreaming
of buildings impossibly taller than the trees around me
(because if childhood was wild, I decided, adulthood required a certain civility).
I would imagine a world of glass and concrete and the subway rattling away under my feet,
and a time when I wouldn't feel so small and things would make sense.
When we moved away, though, I carved my name into the floor-
for posterity, I told myself, liking the feel of the word in my mouth-
and reminded myself of my asphalt dreams, decided that a fire escape was like a tree.
It almost worked.

At fifteen, I am already as tall as I'll ever be
(and, I like to believe, as poised)
and so it is that wavering, overly made-up girl who makes the long journey back
and kicks pebbles on the curb across the street for long, silent minutes,
staring at the razed backyard,
squinting hard but still standing too far (or perhaps too close)
to see the place where my childhood ended
and I began.



BY ARIANNA ALCORN

So Much, Too Much

BY ANONYMOUS

An encouraging word, a soft smile.
A gentle touch.
My guardian angel, my everything.
More than I could have ever hoped for.
Everything I've ever dreamed of.
You are my one, my only.
I love you.

My North Star, my all.
My special rose, my perfect gentleman.
Forever, an eternal light.
What more can I ask for?
Nothing.
I love you too much.

Doubtful

BY ANONYMOUS

Someone special to hold.
Never knowing such companionship until now.
Is it always like this?
My confidant.
My heart. My mind. My body.
Ours.
Reaching for the moon that you promised to bring me.
Patiently waiting for the day when I can finally touch it.
Cupping the moon, more than I could ever imagine.
You by my side.
Perfect.
Yet, a tingling fear, a worry in the back of my mind.
How long will this last?
A question too terrifying for so perfect a moment.
Daring myself to answer, but fearful of what it might be.
How long can this last?
Will I know when it's over?
How hard will I cling? Fight?
How long will I get to enjoy these perfect moments?

Tonight is My Night

BY SHOGOFA AMINI

Tonight is my night

Come with me

Tonight is a night for poetry, love, and honesty.

I have my candle, my deep, dark night and
the lonely moon in a big sky.

My pen, my paper,

So much to talk about,

So much to write about,

I don't know if I will have them tomorrow.

Tonight is my night,

Come with me

And I will tell you the secret of life.

Everyone is sleeping,

I am awake,

And I am deep in love with life.

It is sweet, it is bitter, still I love it.

It is silent now, but there is so much
noise in my memory. Life makes me cry,
makes me laugh, reminds me I can be

a child again, even with gray hair.

My cane will hold me,

guide me to the end of my journey.

Tonight is my night,

Come with me before tomorrow

When the sun will rise again,

Birds will sing again,

Seasons will come again,

But when I am gone,

You will not see me again.

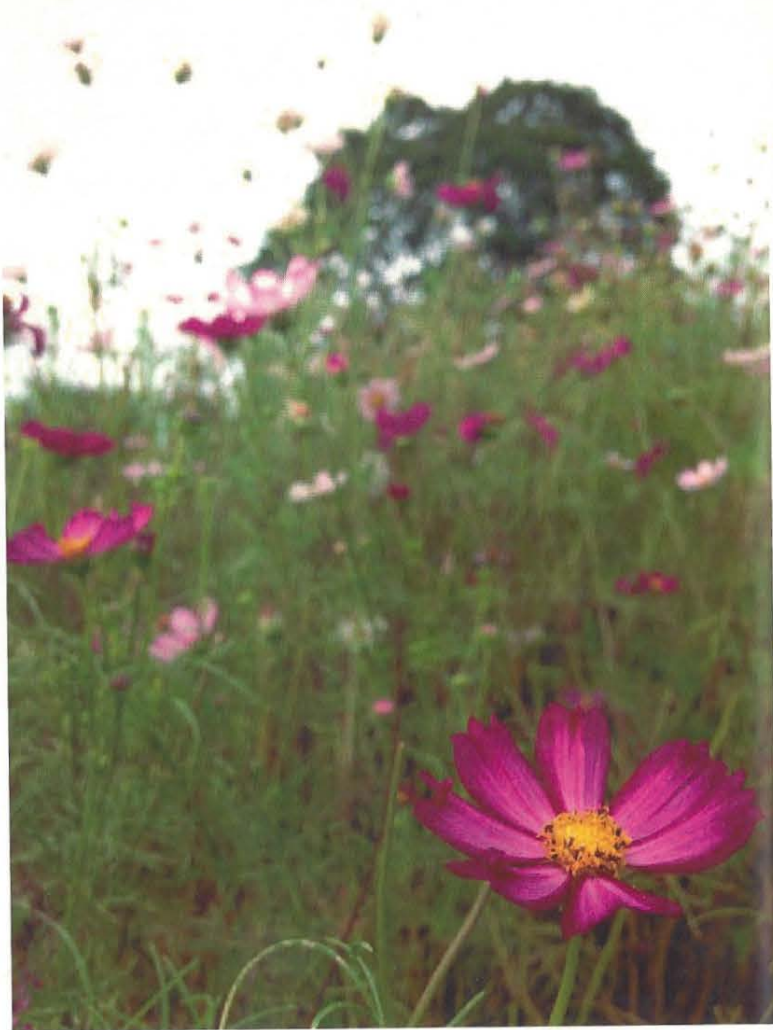
Tonight is for poetry

Tonight is for laughter

Tonight is for uniting with life

Tonight is my last night

You will not hear me again.



BY ARIANNA ALCORN

I Am an Afghan Woman

BY SHOGOFA AMINI

This story begins with me

Me as a woman

Me as a daughter

Me as a mother

I am an Afghan woman

I am an incomplete puzzle in my land

I am an Afghan woman

My name is in the books

You see me on TV

Beaten, burned, and killed

This is me—

A writer, a fighter, and a mother

An Afghan woman

Who writes poems, stories

Read me, know me

I lost myself

I am locked in by a chain of rules

Who am I?

I can see injustice

I can hear false words about me
But I cannot speak
I am a silent woman
Who knows everything but can't do anything
I am a candle that burns slow from sorrow
I am a woman
Invisible but still alive
I am known as an other
I cradle the world as a mother

CREATIVE NONFICTION

War Child

BY SHOGOFA AMINI

Today was the 4th of July in America. Everyone was so happy. As early as a month before, Americans start getting ready for the celebration. They plan cookouts and picnics and they are very proud of their Independence Day. For me, it is not the same, but I like to see the people gather and celebrate.

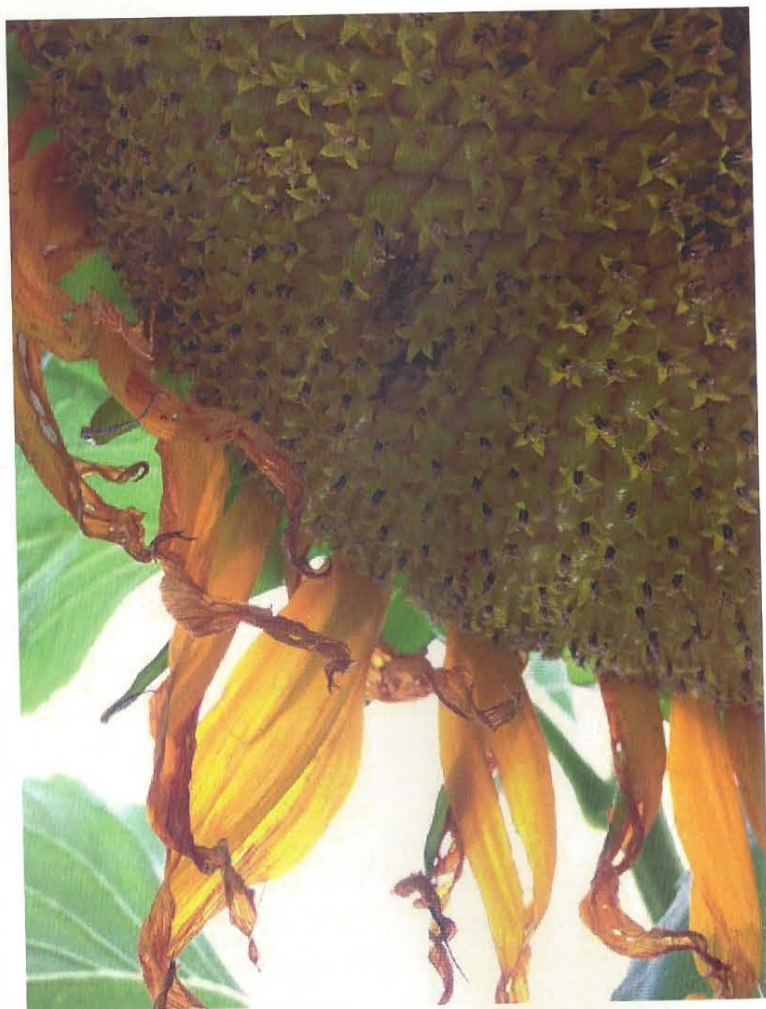
All day I walked around the town in America where I have been living and enjoyed the celebrations. When the fireworks started, the sound was like gunfire. All the fears I had in Afghanistan came back. Every boom reminded me of how I spent my entire beautiful childhood in a war. How we hid under the basement stairs, crying and in hopeless fear of the Taliban. The fireworks reminded me of being homeless and fleeing from one place to another to survive.

I remember the day we lost hope. We all knew that we would die soon because our house was very close to the airport. Every explosion shook the house so you couldn't even sit. We spent the nights in the basement with water and bread to eat, if we had any. In the morning, when the fighting had quieted for a while, we came out and collected debris from our yard and cleaned up broken glass. When the bombing started again, we ran back to the basement and hid. We prayed to God to keep us safe, never mind that we expected to soon be dead. It was hard for my parents to see their children so scared. They didn't know how to keep us safe from the war.

I am grown up now, but these memories still make me afraid. I feel bad when I see that the situation is still the same in my country, children experiencing war as I did, losing fathers, mothers, and homes. Even our politics have not changed, always in competition to see who will corrupt the country first. The last election cost the lives of hundreds of people; some had their fingers cut off for voting. Yes, years later, the result is still the same. People are dying in my country like animals. Every day there are explosions, every day blood runs like a river on the streets, every day bodies are everywhere.

The only thing that can bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan is education and unity. We need to stop blaming each other. We need to stop focusing on each other's differences. Deep down we are all the same. We must make our country a place where people can live peacefully.

In America, people see happiness in their fireworks. They see the symbol of their war won and their freedom earned. They enjoy the colors and smell and the sound of the fireworks, but I don't. I don't want to hear the boom of the fireworks. I don't want to see the bright flash of light. I don't want to smell the smoke.



BY ARIANNA ALCORN

December in Worcester

BY ELLISA GOLDBERG

1. It's freezing nowadays, the nightly walk home from work a horror movie that makes my hair stand on end. It's freezing and it's dark and so I sing to myself, all the while feeling guilty for not protecting my voice from the weather, even though it's been two and a half years since I could rightfully call myself a singer, thirty quiet months since I last dreamt of sheet music and opera houses like my mother and grandfather before me. But every evening I still hollow out the back of my throat, take a deep breath, and sing. Music wraps itself around me and keeps me warmer than all my layers put together, because better than wool is history, better than scarves and hats and mittens is the legacy coursing through my veins as my poor stupid heart tries to keep up while I traverse a mile's worth of hills two hours past the weak winter sunset. Snow-tinged air stinging my face and making my nose run like the tears in my stockings. It's cold and it's dark and I can't get warm, can barely breathe if I'm being honest, but I still sing somehow. Still fill my tired lungs with cold clear air, still open my mouth and try to make sense of whatever comes out.

2. My heart is kind of broken lately, a sort of study in defunctness I guess, but I'm okay, really I am. I've always been a good seamstress, good enough to mend secondhand dresses and piece together patterns, good enough to stitch myself back together when there's nothing else left to do. Sometimes the moon rises round and orange and I keep my eyes fixed on it as I cross parking lots and avenues. Following it until it leads me back to my cold bedroom with its flickering light bulbs and piles of dusty bracelets. Sometimes I open my mouth to sing but nothing comes out because my heart's blocking

the way. Words are not enough. The red thread between us that stretches tauter every day and holds me together like a marionette is not enough. Tea and books and the rare sunny day; it's never enough and to be honest, I'd be hard-pressed to find anything that was.

3. I miss you. I miss you. I miss you. You are the tranquil green to my frantic red, the song that waits in my throat, the light I leave on to come home to. You are the last rays of sun when I leave work early, the quiet in the park at twilight, the early-morning fog that curls against my window as I carefully apply the day's first coat of lipstick. You are in every stitch I knit, every letter I write, every cup of hot chocolate I make because I don't know how else to be kind. I will probably never figure out a better way, but maybe you can teach me. You are the word on the tip of my tongue, the ribbons that are too lovely to use, the laughter echoing up the ladder of my spine. You are every poem I've memorized, every tulip bulb I've planted, every breeze that's ruffled my hair and rumbled my dress from the top of a swing-set. You are every bit your mother's daughter the same way I am mine, but we are so much more than the sum of our parts, love, so much more than atoms. You are the overture to the song I don't ever want to stop singing, the accent I'll never lose because it reminds me of where I'm from, the tiny earrings with the ladybugs that I got for my eighth birthday and still wear most days. You are my roots. You are every cathedral I have ever seen, and also some I haven't. I would say I love you, but the truth is that I've never really known how to say anything else.

Choices

BY ANONYMOUS

I clutched the note to my chest, slightly crumpling it. I had written this note so many times, and yet each version seemed wrong. I glanced at it again, reminding myself of the choice I was going to stick to this time. All of the other incarnations swarmed in my head, from the lie of just heading out for a few hours, to the all too real confession of suicide, to the melodramatic explanation of wanting to get away, to what I now held in my hand.

It was time I cut the umbilical cord. But at this point it felt like a noose. I was 19 and felt like I had been sentenced to death. I had gotten into every school I applied to, but after my father lost his job, there was no way I could go to college. I stayed home while I watched my classmates leave their old lives behind. I stayed home and sunk back into my former self, the one I had hoped to leave behind in high school, the one who was quiet and boring and lonely. I was surrounded by bad memories, unable to see a blinking red Exit sign.

But I couldn't contain myself anymore. Desiring to go, a lust for travel had been growing in the depths of my soul since the day I realized that I wouldn't be leaving. Feeling trapped made me slowly drown in self-pity, which all too quickly became some form of depression. I needed to move, to go somewhere. It often felt like I needed to go somewhere other worldly, somewhere not in the living world. But instead I wanted to find all that I could in the living world with whatever time I was given, whatever time I felt I had left. I felt a hotness inside that needed to be free. The itching was under my skin and if I ignored it, if I didn't scratch it soon, I would

surely burn away from the pain of wanting.

Late at night, I often had conversations with my demons. We all sat around for tea, and they would let me know what was wrong, and I would listen, grateful that anyone - even the things inside that were slowly killing me - would want to talk to me. These demons weren't all that cruel, they were just oppressive. I was suffocating, slowly, slowly, and one night, I couldn't take it anymore. The demons threw their tea in my face, screamed at me, and suddenly it all went black.

I was lying in my bathroom, curled on the floor, hyperventilating and shivering. In my hand was a small paring knife I had stolen from a drawer ages ago, covered in blood. My blood, I realized slowly. My wrists were stinging, but I felt some sick satisfaction. I shakily stood up and looked at myself in the mirror, with mascara running down my cheeks, bloodshot eyes, ratty hair, and a deranged grin on my face. I suddenly felt fear. I didn't recognize this girl in the mirror, and I wasn't sure of myself any more. I began to sob, and I was inconsolable, which is a trivial point because no one would have comforted me anyways.

By dawn I was able to wrap my wrists in bandages, tape, and some pieces from a torn up shirt. I knew that I was beyond repair, beyond contentedness here, and I needed escape. If I couldn't escape my mental prison, perhaps a change in scenery would at least distract me. I no longer felt welcome in my own room or home, I was so distant and morose that my family rarely spoke to me, and quite honestly, I had nothing to say anymore.

So I sat for hours the next night drafting all sorts of letters to leave for my family. They were all just different variances of a suicide note, really, but I knew that I wasn't

quite ready to die. I wanted to see the world before I finally committed to my decision of death. So after tedious minutes that leaked into hours that eventually turned into a night passing by me, I had my final version. As the sun rose, I read over my handiwork for the umpteenth time:

Hi guys - I'm sorry to do this now, but I need to leave. I will try to check in every now and then, but I need time to myself, to think and recover and find my path before I end up going insane. I mean, I'm almost there, but I want to at least see some landmarks before I am ready for the psych ward. Please don't follow me, please don't look for me. I have money and mace, I will be smart. I will do my best to stay out of trouble. If I ever feel unsafe I will take the necessary steps to feeling safe again. I love you all, even though it may not have seemed like it of late, but I really do love you guys. I will come home eventually. See you soon. Annie

It would suffice. It hit on all the necessary points, and it wasn't too damning or terrifying.

I packed a meager duffel bag with the necessities - mainly underwear, socks, toiletries and several variations of black tops - and gathered all the money I had stashed in my room, about \$200 in total. I would have to hit up an ATM somewhere outside of town, but it was enough for now. By this point it was still too early for anyone else in my house to be up, so I snuck downstairs, clutching the note to my chest, breathing heavily and reminding myself that this was my alternative to death.



BY JONATHAN DRAPANSKI

No Parking

BY LEONARD PAUL

On Monday, twenty-four inches of snow fell on Brooklyn, piling on sidewalks and filling the spaces between cars. The snow was wet and icy, mixed with debris from dirty tires. The plows made piles close to four feet high, and when neighbors started shoveling their sidewalks, stoops, and cars, the piles grew. Usually we're lucky to find parking within three blocks of my great grandmother's brownstone house, but the snow and the plows have filled even the closest spots.

Across the street, a Chinese teenager spent the morning digging out a parking space. When he finished, he set up a pink and white beach chair and sat waiting in the cold. When cars slowed down and put their blinkers on, the boy would wave his hand and say, "No park, no park!" The drivers would curse as they drove away looking for a snowless place.

From the living room, I hear a car horn from the street, then my aunt's voice. "Len, I think your father's gonna get in a fight." My family crowds into the umbrella room between the hallway and the street. All of them shout with my father, "You can't save a spot! Where the hell do you think this is? I don't care if you shoveled it! Move!" My father inches our family van closer to the pink and white beach chair. The kid standing in the street is yelling back the best he can, but his argument is lost under my family's shouts.

There are too many people in this tiny house. They are tired of calling funeral homes and answering calls from relatives whose flights have been canceled by the massive

blizzard. My aunt's children have caught the flu, started puking on the drive up, have been quarantined too late, and my sister and mother are now throwing up in the basement. There are too many people living in rooms they grew up in, reliving memories of Nan's singing, nurturing, and wisdom. My family shouts together in their shared home. A home that has just lost its Sister, Mother, Grandmother and Nanny.

As the shouts grow louder and my father blares the horn, a woman begins yelling from a stoop across the street. She points from the boy to a pile of snow next to him and he shouts back while pointing to the shoveled pavement at his feet. He folds up the chair and carries it with him as he lets my father park. My aunt, standing on the tips of her toes, shouts, "Yeah, that's right!" as the boy walks down the block, holding his shovel.

After my father parks and walks into the house, my family starts muttering about all the Chinese living in the neighborhood. They keep their eyes on the neighbors until my father is inside and closes the door. The old neighborhood is nearly gone. Nan was one of the last originals, a staple of a lost community. No one could tell you when it happened, or why, but Nan's neighborhood had filled almost entirely with Chinese immigrants. Over the years she watched friends and family grow up, move away, or die, leaving empty houses to be filled with strangers. Moving vans constantly came and went, replacing the neighbors she knew with people she didn't understand.

As my family crowds around my father, I open the closet under the staircase, pull the metal chain to turn on the light, slip my arms through my coat, and grab the blue plastic shovel. I am still wearing my black dress pants and white

collared shirt from an early showing of Nanny's wake. I slip on my black loafers.

As I walk down the hallway towards my family at the door, I feel the heat of embarrassment rush over my face and down into my stomach. The hallway can't be more than fifteen feet, but as my aunt, uncles, and grandfather stare at the shovel in my hand, I feel my feet grow heavy and the hallway becomes long and narrow.

When my father sees me he laughs. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to help him shovel." I say without stopping. I pull the door open and walk down the stoop and across the snowy street. I can see that he is about the same age as me, maybe a year older. We lock eyes as I approach and exchange a *hey* for a *hello*.

We do not speak as we crack through the icy snow and heave it over the pile on the sidewalk. Other than the sound of tires slushing behind us, we work in silence. The snow is heavy at first, packed down from the plows and cars and what he had flung from the other parking spot to this pile. As the lighter snow inside is revealed, we scoop bigger loads, but there are still feet of snow before we reach the curb.

He scoops a shovels worth, and I scoop a bigger one. He sees my scoop and digs his shovel in deep, a piece of snow cracks and he thrusts a heavy chunk behind him. We play this unspoken game until we rest. I take off my jacket, even though it is still cold enough for fresh snow to sprinkle lightly through the empty trees. We hold our shovels in one hand and prop them on the exposed pavement, surveying the empty space we've created and estimating how much more we have to

move.

Just as we finish shoveling half of the snow out of the street, a white van slows and stops in front of us. I keep digging as they speak an unfamiliar language to the kid I have been shoveling with. A few men leave the van and walk inside a house, coming back with shovels as the van drives away. Snow disappears quickly with the five of us shoveling together. They speak to each other in a language I can't understand as we work and I keep my head down, suddenly feeling awkward as I imagine the young man I've been working with explaining why he's shoveling a second parking spot.

The handle is warm from where my hand has gripped and turned the shovel, and I can feel blisters forming in the palm of my hand. The shovel is old and the smooth varnish has rubbed off where hands have gripped in the past. The wood has expanded in places and thin cracks occasionally pinch the skin of my palm. The men around me plunge their shovels into the snow bank next to me. Some pull off a glove and extend their hand to me. The boy I started shoveling with waves and smiles. They thank me, and I realize there is no more snow to shovel.



BY JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

Blackwater Falls

BY LEONARD PAUL

Fire warms my legs, but I am cautious not to let my sneakers sit on the edge for too long, skeptically tapping them as if they are fresh from the oven, checking if they are overcooked. I throw a piece of wood on and stoke the embers; pushing the hottest up to the top, exercising control over the fire I have crafted and maintained. The flame rises and I feel the heat against my chest. Swinging my legs over the side of my chair, I use the hood of my sweatshirt to shield my face.

West Virginia sky is not the sky I know in Connecticut. It opens wide and stretches deep like I have never seen before. Sun's too far away to comprehend speckle the darkness that she and I watch. The longer I stare up into the sea of dazzling stars, the more I can see out of the darkness. My eyes adjust to the stars above me.

"Why does it look like it's different right there?"

"I don't know what you mean."

She moves her blanket and points straight up. "Doesn't it look like it's purple in the middle?"

"Yeah, that's the Milky Way."

"No way..."

Our galaxy, the stars in it, show so intensely, uninterrupted by pollution or light in the small mountain town of Davis, West Virginia. Clusters of stars make a light purple brushstroke across the dark. I lose Orion and the Big Dipper in the stars that surround them. There are constellations that I have never seen, and know nothing about. Stars fill nearly every dark area in the sky. Back home I can see Orion on a clear night. I know to look for the triangle above his belt, to search for the club raised above his head and his hunter's bow. I am so overwhelmed that I see Orion in every direction, connecting any cluster of stars to his shape.

"Look right over there! That's Betelgeuse and then there's Orion's belt." She points above the trees to where the moon is about to rise. I search for something familiar, but can't find it.

"I think that's the Big Dipper, babe."

She is bundled in a flannel she bought for this trip, a sweatshirt beneath it, and mine on top. Her socks come out of her combat boots and our blanket cocoons her.

Her hand in mine, we talk about the stars.

"Did you see that one!?"

"Nope. I was looking into the fire."

She stares up, straining to see every star.

"Will you promise not to make fun of me if I ask a stupid question?"

"Of course."

"So like, shooting stars, they're not really stars right?"

"That's not a stupid question, babe."

"Yeah, but I feel stupid for having to ask it."

"They're meteors passing by our planet. When they get close to our atmosphere we see them burning up."

"Really? That's way lamer than actual stars." She pulls the blanket tighter and I drop another log on the fire. "They're still beautiful though."

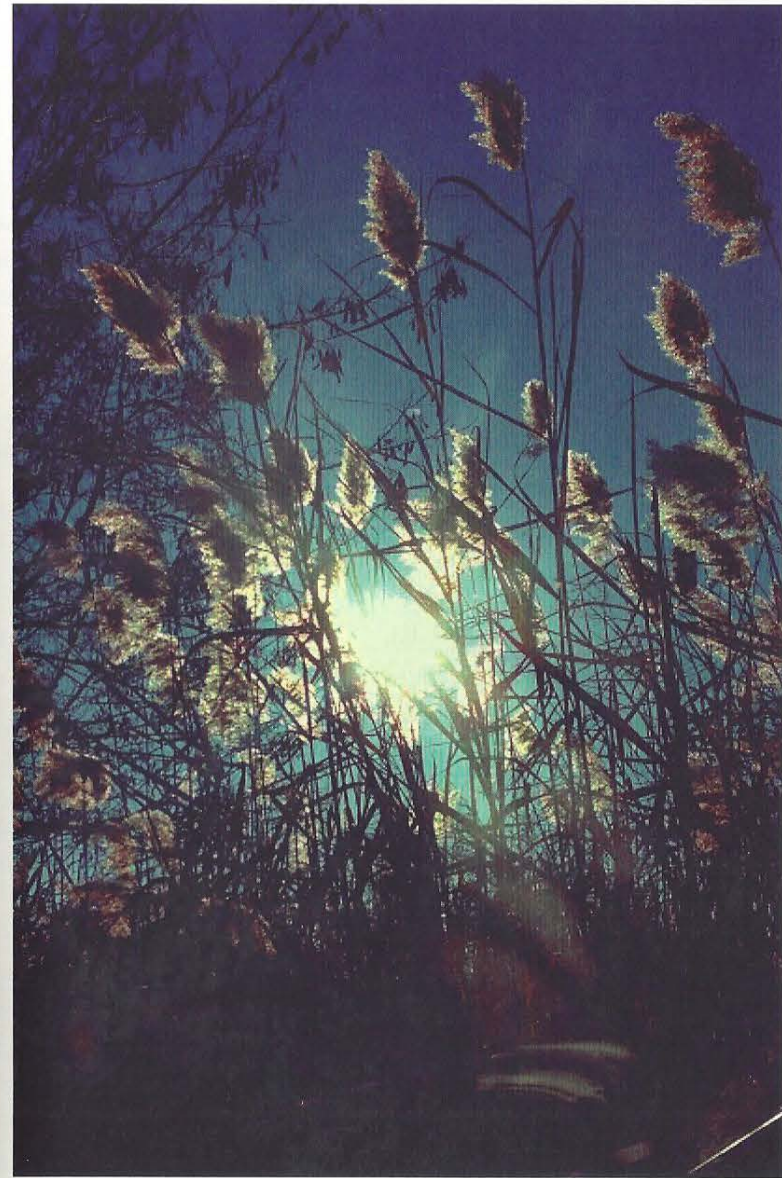
By midnight the moon has fully broken from the tree line. Round, but not quite a circle, its glow surpasses the brightness of the stars as it rises. It is three nights after the full moon, and the moon is closer to earth than it has been all year. We watch it rise and fill the sky. Like a midnight sunrise, the field becomes clear and silhouettes of tents are revealed. The last generator of the last RV has quieted, and we listen to the fire. It is almost one and Ari has fallen asleep bundled in her blankets and sweaters. Her eyes are closed, but she still looks up like she is searching the stars.

As the fire dwindles, I see a man walk the path that

cuts the field. His head is low; he watches the field below him and is guided without a flashlight. Halfway through the field he stops; with hands in his pockets he raises his head to the sky. Unmoving he stands bathed in grey light. He stares long at the moon. I follow his gaze and stare into the enormous moon with him. It is yellow and orange. The reflection of the sun sends rings across the sky, a heavy stone falling and rippling through a still lake. We watch it hang effortlessly and massive in the air. I am in awe of the moon and so is he. He begins to walk again, and I turn back to the moon.

I wake Ari and we fall onto the tiny air mattress of our tiny tent. It is August and we cuddle in our sweatshirts to stay warm. Only three nights before in Georgia the heat was so unbearable we sweated without moving. The shivering is a welcomed contrast and we push together close. She nestles back to sleep and I stare into the tent. Listening to the long snore of our neighbor and wondering what attracts the black bear that the kid at the check-in cabin told us roams the campground.

As I stare past the nylon roof I hear the piercing howl of a pack of wolves. My body freezes as I wonder how close they are. I have never heard anything like it. It is a long and clear song to the nearly full moon. The call of the wolves is echoed by a pack farther in the distance, and echoed again. Three packs of wolves howl their homage to the moon as I lay in bed. They call back and forth, howling long and beautiful to each other deep in the wilderness. It is a declaration of their wild and their love. I sleep.



By ARIANNA ALCORN

Burned

BY TAYLOR RAUCHER

I am drawn to fire. I always have been. I was taught to be afraid of the flames, to never go near them, but I'm ensnared by their sensual and intimate licks and lapping, the way they sizzle and crackle and ignite something inside of me. I was taught to be nervous around an open flame but I never was.

Maybe that's why I couldn't see that he was made of fire. I didn't realize I had engulfed myself in the flames he threw and that I was burning from the inside out. He set me ablaze with his personal fire and let me burn.

And I didn't learn. I felt the same heat from the next one...the same excitement, the same adrenaline when I ignited. His fire was different, it blazed more brightly and more clearly; I thought I would see his flames before they hurt me, but I just became accustomed to the painful warmth.

These boys played with matches and that excited me. It was far too late before I saw the danger of their careless arson. I was left scarred and smoldering. I was drawn to them. I walked into their blaze of my own volition. I am still drawn to fire hazards. I crave the warmth and heat, and maybe even the pain that comes with being burned. I've still got a boy made of fire. But his flame is small. He is a taper, a candle casting illumination where there once was darkness, shining light on my healing scars. He only throws heat when I get too close. This candle, despite its small risk, has burned me once - but compared to my previous burns, this hardly left a mark.

I feel the urge to be tossed into flames still. I feel drawn to the fires of the world. But when I look at my candle and gently caress its tiny flame, I see what it has brought me: contentedness, safety. It sheds light on what I have lost, what I have learned, and what will heal.

Jim

BY CHRISTOPHER LEGEE

The winter air is bitterly cold. The snow from the last storm sits fresh on the ground and has yet to be dirtied and packed down by cars. The cold causes the townhouse I live in to creak, as the wood contracts. The heater clicks on, and the vents whirl as they begin their work. It's a night in early January, and I'm sitting in my bedroom, home from college for winter break. My mom, with her gray hair and sleepy brown eyes, stands in front of the sink doing dishes. She's wearing blue jeans and an old purple Disney sweatshirt, one of her favorites. I come downstairs and sit on the blue sofa in the living room and open my laptop. I refresh my Facebook feed, acting mostly on autopilot. On the top right-hand corner of my screen, I see a notification, specifically a friend request. As I click to see who sent it, I assume that it's someone from Regis. I'm wrong, and my curiosity is piqued.

The woman on the screen shares my last name, but we've never met. I look at her picture, and all I can see are the sad green-hazel eyes of my deceased father staring back at me. She has his tan complexion, which he developed from years of hard physical work on farms as a young boy.

She's clearly related to me, but I don't know how. She's much older than I am, easily in her forties. She has young children, and must have been married at some point in her life, because her last name is hyphenated. I decide that this can't be ignored.

"Hey mum, who's Robin?"

She turns the water off at the sink and stops washing

dishes. There's a brief pause, and she looks unsure of how she wants to proceed.

"Chris," she sighs and doesn't make eye contact. "I knew we'd need to talk about this eventually, but I was never sure of when to mention it. Before I tell you anything, know that I waited because I didn't want you to think differently of your dad."

"Mom, whatever it is, it won't change how I see him."

I knew my dad had a rough life. From what I remember of him, he was a short but broad man, about five-foot-six, with a strong build and a full head of silver hair. When he'd hold my hand as a boy, his were rough and strong, but always gentle. He loved classic rock, and Elvis Presley was his idol as a teen. He would have been an old man now, born in May 1944 and deceased in May 2003, eight days shy of his birthday. Originally, the doctors said he was going to die from his alcoholism in the 1980s, but through his own willpower and my mom's watchful eye, he somehow beat the odds and kicked his addiction. He could never quite kick the cigarettes, though. He started smoking when he was 14 and couldn't stop until it was too late. In 2000, he was diagnosed with lung cancer, and he was only given a few months to a year. Like always, we thought he'd beat the odds.

"When your father was a young man, he would have done anything to get out of his home. His old man was a bastard, selling him and his sisters out to strangers to do farm work as children. He dropped out of school to provide for his sisters, and..." She paused. "Well," she sighed and finally spat it out, "he got married, and had three other kids, Robin was one of them."

I closed the lid of my laptop and angled my body in my mom's direction. At this point, she had moved from the sink to the small yellow sofa adjacent to me. Unsure of what to say, I let her continue.

"Her name was Paula. It was the 1970s, several years before I met him. They were young when they met, and they quickly moved in together. They had two girls and a boy. Robin and Dawn are still around, I think his son passed away recently. They were all troubled, their home life was terrible. Paula divorced your father and kept him from seeing his kids, until they were adults and she had no say. We had paid out of pocket to put Robin through beauty school, and that side of the family never liked me. Another time, Joey accidentally killed someone while he was drag-racing, and we had to buy him clothes before he went to jail. He didn't own anything that he wasn't already wearing."

I could feel my jaw gaping, but this news had sent my mind so far out of my own body that I didn't have the mental presence to do anything about it. I didn't think anything differently of my father, but I was shocked nonetheless. It's difficult to really know your parents, sometimes. We forget that they had lives outside of and before ours. As my mom told me stories, I could see my father in an old, beat up sedan, pulling up to Paula's house with a modest bag of gifts for his kids. She rushes them out the back door so they don't know he's there. He rings the doorbell, and waits, maybe smoking a cigarette. After a minute, he sets the bag at the door, and rings the bell again, then walks back to his car and drives away.

Conversations turned from stories of his old life, into some of our favorite stories from when he was with us, we went back forth for what felt like hours.

"I told you this wouldn't change anything." I reassured her. I gave my mom a hug goodnight, and went up to my room. I sat with my lamp on, looking at my father's desk plate from his old job that read "Jim Legee." My eyes crawl up the bookcase, to a framed photo from nearly 12 years before, on a winter day not much different from the one that had just gone by. I'm about 6 years old, in a winter coat with snow-pants, mittens and a hat. My father is wearing his prescription aviators and leather jacket, his hair long and full. We had built the first and only snow man of my life. The snowman, and everything in that photo is frozen in time, exactly as it was in that day. The snow from that day is left undisturbed; it's clean and clear white. The snow outside today will melt away, left to be nothing but another memory.



BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

Tan Lines

BY MAGGIE MCCARTY

I looked across the subway car at my father. I had not seen him in over seven months, and although it was subtle, he had changed; there were lines etched around his eyes, and his arms appeared to have more freckles than in December, but who can really tell when it comes to freckles? His worn, navy, Red Sox ball cap covered his short hair. It was more grey than brown at this point, peaking out at the sideburns, cut high and clean, just above the middle of the ear. His hands sat closed in his lap, his right leg bouncing up and down as he squinted at the MBTA map above my head. He looked to the right as the train slowed, checked the map again, looked down at me staring at him, and mouthed "7." He smiled, flashing large white, perfectly straight teeth, square and wide that transformed his face from "commander-in-chief" of our small family to happy father. He was excited to finally not be in the brutal summer heat of Arizona, leaving all of the stress of work and business back in Phoenix. I smiled back as the train stopped and the car doors swung open.

People began to fill the space between my father and me as I silently tried to figure out why my father looked almost like my father. Did he always have that Red Sox shirt, or did he buy it specifically for today's game? His green-gray cargo shorts were the same, fraying at the edges, fading where his wallet sat snug in the upper thigh pocket. I looked at my brother, Peter, who stood up against the wall of the train with his sunglasses still on and his arms folded, trying to remain comfortable with his back propped up against the metal side of the car. He looked the same. Slightly heavier, or were those

just tighter jeans? The doors swung closed and people braced for the lurch of the train, and then settled into the rhythm of the car, moving in unison.

My father grew up in New England, moving when he entered his teenage years, and then moving a second time to Arizona toward the end of high school. He left what he would always consider home. Marooned in the desert, he met my mother and remained, thirty-some-odd years later, having my mother, my brother, myself, and a small Cairn Terrier as his company. His job as a manager at a large microcontroller company was fine. We had limited family scattered over Arizona, making for homey holidays and a comfortable life, save for triple digit summer days. But given the choice, my father would ride the T in the snow every day if it meant living in New England again.

Dad glanced back up at the map above my head, flashed a "4" to me as we pulled into the Brookline Village Station. My eyes had shifted to the ground, my head resting on Luka's shoulder, as Luka tried not to fall asleep next to me. His hand was on my knee as my leg jittered in place. It was a pair of white shins that brought me out of the subway-daze: white, smooth, almost hairless, up to the middle, like two white socks, in contrast to the tan knees.

"Dad! Hey, Dad!" I shouted across the sea of people.

My father snapped to attention, looking at my brother, then at me. Frowning, he put a hand to his ear and leaned forward.

"Dad, what happened to your socks?" I asked.

My dad smiled and rolled his eyes, "Well, apparently I'm not 80 yet, and shouldn't be wearing old man socks. Your

mum made me buy these.”

He pointed to the small white ankle socks.

“Are the shoes new too? What happened to the white New Balances?”

“They were relocated to the trash.”

“Well, I like them. Comfy?”

“Eh, they’ll do.” My father smiled, and rested his head back on the subway window, the trees and building whipping behind him a mirage of green, blue, and gray. His leg had stopped shaking.



Dystopia

BY JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

Playing with the silhouette of constructions sites in the city, I felt that it almost looked destructive rather than constructive. The fog over the city creates this eerie, apocalyptic vibe that makes the city look empty and destroyed.

A Memoir

BY CHELSEA AKO-BREW

BZZ! BZZ! BZZ! My phone vibrated repeatedly. When I looked to see who could be calling me at 1:30 in the morning, I saw that it was Alliyah. I was way too tired to hear what Amari had done this time, so I ignored it and drifted back to sleep, without a worry in the world.

On November 27, 2013, I woke up annoyed that I was going to spend another Thanksgiving without my whole family. Ever since the big argument, my father's sisters and my mother haven't talked, and I haven't seen my cousins. As I laid in my bed, smelling the mouth watering scent of glazed ham and sweet potatoes, I decided to get up and help cook, like I do every year. Just as I got enough energy to raise my head off of my pillow, my best friend Amari called me. "Happy Thanksgiving!" I exclaimed, as I laid back down. "Hey... um, did you hear what happened?" Amari responded. Of course I just thought something happened between him and his girlfriend, Alliyah, especially since she called me earlier that morning. They were always arguing, and their solution was usually venting to me about it. "Oh gosh, what did you do...let me brace myself." I joked. I heard Amari take in a big breath, and I knew I was in for some news. "Allison... Allison Dwarska passed away last night, Chels." he said sadly. Without comprehending what he had just told me I said, "What?" Was this a joke? A second after, my phone started

vibrating viscosly. Everyone from school was calling, texting and tweeting me asking if I was OK and for me to call them. I realized I was still on the phone with Amari. "This isn't funny Amari, what do you mean she passed away!?" I yelled.

"She got into a car accident last night around 11:30 and didn't make it. They pronounced her dead at 1:00." I instantly started to panic. My heart was now in my stomach as my legs grew weak and I fell to the ground. Tears rushed down my cheeks onto my shirt and my heart was pounding as if it was going to come out of my chest. I hung up from my call with Amari and called Ali's phone. Hearing the dial tone, I prayed she would answer and with that joyful voice of hers say, "hey Cheeeeelseeee..." but she didn't. I received another phone call from Alliyah. "Hello!?! Alliyah tell me it's not true! Say this is a joke!" I cried. There was a moment of silence, as if she didn't want to say it herself, but she answered "It's true Chels." I couldn't hold it in anymore, It just couldn't be true. My best friend, the one I could talk to about anything...gone...just like that? No. I refused to accept it. "What happened!?" I yelled, crying harder than before. As Alliyah told me everything, I ran into the living room to my mom and sister laying on our sofa watching the Thanksgiving parade. "What is it? What happened!?" My mom asked. I couldn't even speak clear through all the tears rolling into my mouth. "Ali's dead!" I responded. As she grabbed her chest, my sister and mom began to scream and cry. I was still in shock. This can't be true, this is a dream, I kept telling myself. My mom decided to call Ali's mom. When her dad answered

and I saw more tears run down my mother's face, I knew this dream had become a nightmare. My best friend was gone. I called all of my other friends, and we all met up at Ali's house. When I got there, so many cars were parked and I saw Ali's cousin outside crying. I instantly ran inside looking for Ali's mom, my second mom, the one who had accepted me as her own child. All I could do when I saw her was run into her arms and cry. "This isn't happening. Please tell me this isn't true, mom!" I cried.

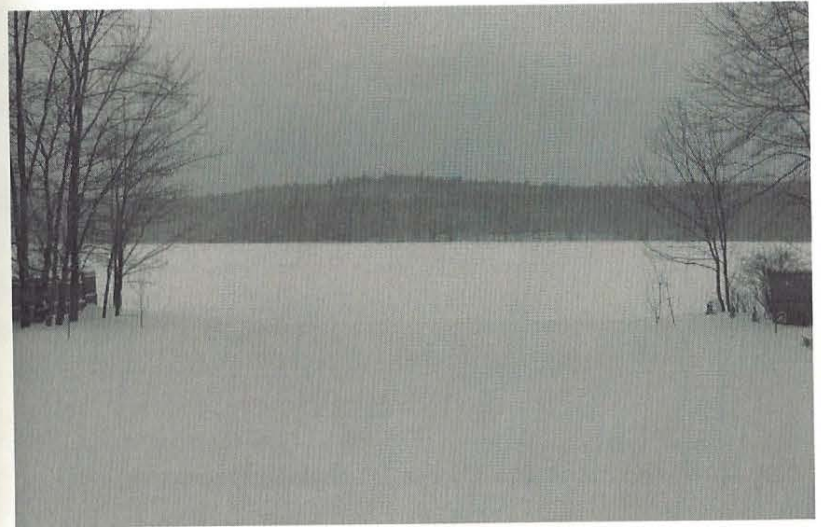
"Yes, Chels, it's true. I'm so sorry." She cried. Her eyes were pink and swollen just like her face and you could see her black eyeliner's remains on her cheek. We all sat at the dinner table as she told us what happened the previous night. "The car she was in hit a corner, and the doctors believe she died from impact." I saw the pain in her eyes as she told us the tragic story. I couldn't take this. I had to leave so I ran outside and just looked up into the clouds, hopefully to see Ali's face, but all I saw was a grey sky, slowly breaking apart. "Ali, what am I going to do? Come back, please," I cried, "Please...just come back." I wanted to go to sleep, wake up and have everything go back to normal. After hours of grieving, we all decided to go home, and as soon as I got in my bed, I accepted what had just happened in my life, and knew this wouldn't be better when I woke up. A piece of my heart was gone, and I would never get it back. That week was the worst week of my life. I had to go to school, knowing her navy blue Altima wouldn't be in the parking lot, she wouldn't be there every morning in home room to say "Good Morning

Cheeeelsseeeee" like she always did with that bright smile and I would have to take charge and finish the school's yearbook without her. But as the days went on, I tried my best to be strong for everyone else. Deep down, it still wasn't real. Every day, I waited for her phone call to come through and to hear her say: "Ha! You guys really thought I was gone!?!..." Yeah, that's exactly what she would have done.

On the day of her funeral and burial, I saw her brown casket lying in front of me, hovering over the rectangular dirt pit made for her, and the tears that I held in over the past week came down rapidly. I wanted to stay there forever with her, waiting for her to come back, waiting for her to smile, but none of this happened. Some laid purple lilies and flowers down and blew kisses to her casket. Others walked away slowly, still turning back to get one last look at her, but I stayed. Motionless and in shock. "Come on, we need to go" my mom said, holding me. I really didn't want to, but reality was slowly setting in— Allison wasn't going to open that casket, so I slowly began to turn away. "I love you Ali, see you soon baby girl." I said in my head, as I laid her purple lily upon her casket. As soon as I was close to my mom's car, I broke down completely. This wasn't fair; she didn't deserve to die. Kayla, Shemarea, Chelsey, and I were all supposed to be enjoying our senior year together, partying and counting the days until graduation, not at a cemetery, burying our friend. I had so much sadness and hatred in my heart. I wanted Ali back, and that was my only wish; a wish that was never granted. After a couple of weeks, things sort of went back to

normal. Along with my fellow seniors, I became determined to do everything for Ali, whether it was score points for her in my basketball games or even get good grades for her; because she couldn't, we were going to do it for her. Ever since Ali died, I started to appreciate life more. I began to treasure every day and lived it the best I could. I really can't remember the last time I thought about suicide, and if I did, Ali came across my mind, which blocked those ideas out of my thoughts. As the months went on, my senior class became very close. We were a family. It is sad that such an incident had to occur for us to become this close, but everything happens for a reason. All the good things that have happened, I know Ali was a part of it. Everything that had to do with the color purple or her favorite number 13, I knew it was her, and all I can do is smile and think "Hey Ali."

No matter where I am I feel her presence, a sense of comfort and love. She is my guardian angel. For those who wonder why a loved one was taken or why bad things always happen to good people, know that God always has a plan. He places people in your life for a certain time, and a specific reason. Appreciate those moments you have with those people, because you never really know what you have until they're gone. I love you always Ali, rest in peace.



BY CHRISTIE JOHN

Inside of Me

BY SARA WEAVER

Burning. Angry. Frustrated. Irritated. Jealous. None of these feelings are a pretty color on anyone. Hating myself for even thinking of my friend that way, but unable to stop myself. The words of another friend echoed through my mind, she has a chance with her crush, but you don't. She could have what you can't. I frown to myself as I listen to the ring of truth in her words. Biting my lip, I stare at my homework, and try to concentrate on the math in front of me. The letters and numbers blur in my vision. I feel the burning feeling resonate within me, again. Control yourself, hide it from her. If she wants to be all over him and make it obvious, that's her business, I tell myself. My friend walks into the room, and luckily I am a professional at hiding my feelings.

"Hey, Sara."

"Hey, Savannah." I scribbled my name in fancy cursive on the side in an attempt to keep my temper in check.

"Whatcha working on?"

"This stupid math stuff. I don't understand why I have to do this, this has nothing to do with my major. Plus, when am I ever going to use this?" My brief rant clears my head of any hostility towards Savannah. She nods her head empathetically. Even though we are of completely different majors, we both know the pain of taking a class that is torturous; for Savannah, it's chemistry, for me, it's contemporary math.

"I feel ya, I feel ya." She grimaced.

"How much do you like him?" My question came out tentatively, like I was afraid of what her answer would be. Her slow smile confirmed what I already suspected.

"A lot." Something inside of me growled, and it wasn't my stomach.

"Do you know how obvious you are?" The beast inside of me roared, furious. I shouldn't let myself get this angry. What is wrong with me? Savannah's smile was more for herself than for me, and she nodded.

"Yeah, I know." The beast howled a long, agonizing note that lingered in my ears. "Well, I'm going to try find somewhere quiet to work, so I'll see you later." The door closed softly behind her. I bit the inside of my lip, again, and was aware of the direction my thoughts were going in. I pounded my fists against my head, hoping that it would put some sense in me. I can't do it; I just have to bear it. If I blow up at her, she's going to be upset, and this really has nothing to do with her. It's me being stupid, and jealous, and irrational.

"I should be happy for her." I muttered to the empty room.

She has a chance with her crush, but you don't.
She could have what you can't.

Irritation stirred in the deep pits of my stomach.

This thing inside of me growled long, and lonely.



BY JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

The 2:30 Club

BY JASON JOYCE

Throughout my tenure at Boston College High School, I was an avid member of the 2:30 Club, the group of individuals who did no extracurricular activities and left school as soon as the final bell rang. A short walk down Morrison Boulevard brought us to a footbridge that crossed the street, and after traversing the bridge, we would arrive at the Shaw's supermarket.

The Shaw's parking lot was a special place for us young men. It functioned as a perfect halfway point between the JFK T-station and the school. In the mornings, we would walk through the cold, head into the supermarket and grab some pastries at the only time when they were fresh, warm, and perfectly chewy. We could grab a coffee and have a cigarette outside before enduring the day ahead of us, all while conversing about the upcoming day with other like-minded classmates. Many good friendships came from these morning powwows, and those present in the morning were almost all members of the 2:30 Club.

While the morning grind was important to Shaw's Club, as the parking lot was called, the real value in the location came after school. Any given day there would be fifteen or more students, sitting in cars, forming circles of conversation based on the subdivisions within the Shaw's population, and generally having a good time celebrating the end of the school day. That is not to say there was no strife within the Shaw's parking lot. In several instances the police would roll through and break up the massive assembly of students gathered in the parking lot, not buying anything.

There would then be a rapid diaspora of the Shaw's faithful. There were plenty of reasons for the management of Shaw's to be upset at our presence, and on multiple occasions the school made a morning and afternoon announcement telling students not to hang out there. This did nothing of course as our group had no place else to go. Our numbers appeared to increase after each announcement.

I was not an athlete in high school, but at Shaw's I was a semi-professional hackie-sack player, a boxer with an undefeated record, and a professional drinker. Countless hours were spent kicking around a bean bag, playing 'one, two, boot', where the hackie-sack is kicked twice, then it is 'live' and is kicked at whatever person is nearby as fast and as hard as possible. However, hackie-sack was like little league compared to the Shaw's Boxing Club. When two other students said they had boxing gloves in their cars, it was inevitable that boxing matches were coming to our parking lot. The first bout was a poorly attended three-minute scrap that was busted up by the manager of the store, but that did not deter us. The second fight was scheduled a few days later and was well attended. Many people didn't show up to Shaw's to smoke weed and cigarettes, they were just the regular straight edge students, coming by to watch a bit of sport. The fights got progressively larger, and better. One scrawny kid fought an offensive lineman on the football team and was knocked to the ground after four punches. Attendance continued to grow.

In perhaps my finest moment of high school, towards the spring of senior year, I decided I wanted in on a boxing match, and stole the lighter of another student to initiate the 'beef' that would cause the fight to happen. I wanted to box someone, but I didn't want to end up like Paul Kelly, who got

rocked in a one sided bout with a meathead. I choose to call out my old friend Zack. Zack was roughly my size, about four fingers taller and ran his mouth like any immature high school student would. We had some history together, but by this time in high school, most students just saw him as an annoying loudmouth. It was really simple in getting the match set up, I just told Zack that I stole his lighter and he should box me for it. As soon as that challenge was issued, all of the important moves were made: the kids with the boxing gloves would be at Shaw's, and word of the event spread like wildfire among the school. The stage was set as soon as the final bell rang, and I gathered my backpack for the walk to the parking lot.

I was the underdog, and there were about forty or fifty kids in attendance for the fight. Most importantly, the all-male school had taken on six French foreign exchange students for a month, and it just so happened they were female. They found out about the fight and wanted to see it. Their presence drew a massive following. The circle was established, large enough to be considered a rotary you would drive around, and camera phones were whipped out to cover the event from every angle. I was not a fighter, and received a pep talk from an acquaintance who had some experience. His name was Mike Troy and had the nickname Rocky Balboa, not because of his boxing prowess, but for his voice which sounded like the marble-mouth of Sylvester Stallone.

"Ay Joyce, what's your plan for the fight?"

"I don't really have one, I was just gonna jump in and see what happened."

"Buh gawd, you gotta have some sorta plan for the opening blows."

"I'll probably lead with three strong rights."

Mike Troy laughed, and I squared up against Zack and touched gloves. As we pulled our gloves away, he took half a step backwards and I took a full stride forward, leading with a strong right that connected somewhere below the eyes. This was followed up with a second quick right, and a third. There were cheers erupting as no one expected me to actually be able to land a punch. Following my third strike, I took a soft shot to the side of the head and stepped back to see that my opponent was gushing blood from his nose. I thought it was perfect. "I drew blood, no way anyone will say I lost this match" I thought.

He took a few steps backwards as he was attended to by the crack medical crew standing by, offering him a Dunkin' Donuts napkin from someone's car. "You wanna reschedule?" I asked, with a mocking tone that really said, "ya done got hurt, didn't ya?"

He shook his head, sending specks of blood left and right, and we moved back in. Another glove touch and we resumed. I laid off the aggressive strategy, and mostly worked to block his blows with my gloves, taking the occasional shot here and there, while also landing a few more punches and jabs to his face and the sides of his head. We moved around, throwing punches and getting fatigued. Both being avid smokers, we were absolutely gassed after about three minutes. Following a period where neither of us threw a punch, I lowered my gloves and started to ask "Are we done?" But I only got to the start of 'we' before I took a quick shot to the nose, and the fighting resumed.

"Cops!"

Within seconds the fight was over and over 40 teenagers were quickly walking off in different directions. Cars were packed to capacity and quickly sped off. I hopped into my friend's car and celebrated my victory during our escape. The short kid with glasses had pulled off the upset, and a few short weeks later, the Shaw's club gathered one last time the day before graduation. A group photo was taken, filled with the familiar faces of the Shaw's family, and for many of us, that was the last time we saw each other.



BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

Open Windows

BY MICHAELA TRIDENTO

She was frozen. It was hard to bend her frail arm, as if lifting it a few inches would make it snap, but it had to be done. Her skin bore no resemblance to a human's; it was not soft and beautiful. It had become discolored, as if she had been soaked in tea for ages. The soft fabric of the hand towel gently went over her limbs, in hopes to wash away whatever did this to her. I couldn't focus because of the smell. Her mouth was open at an awkward angle, a black hole where her sparkling white teeth had once been.

After the limbs were dried, it was time to wash her chest. Putting the warm soapy cloth on her neck, I could see her chest rise and fall. It was not as we do naturally; she struggled to breathe. Rise. Hold. Fall. Hold. Rise. Hold. Fall. Hold. With each breath, I washed gently and carefully. Then I began to pat dry the skin that wrapped around her rib cage.

I looked at her face. Then she took her final breath. I saw it. It came out of her mouth so softly, like a butterfly, like mist in a hot summer morning. I've heard numerous stories told by old seasoned nurses about what happens when someone dies. The one consistent detail in each story is how the room becomes stuffy. The room becomes small, the air thick. I stood there for a few more moments and looked at what remained of the woman. I covered her body with a towel and walked to the window to open it. It only felt right to open the window, it was the only thing that I knew was right at the time. When I turned around, two head nurses had walked in and look at me with kind, understanding eyes. I was unable to move my feet or open my mouth. I stared at the woman.

None of it made sense. She was breathing just a few moments ago, wasn't she? Did I just witness death? Before I could

comprehend this event, a thousand emotions hit me all at once, but not one could be singled out. I softly began to cry.

On that day I knew death was real, too real. We will all have our final thought, our final breath, and our final goodbye. This once beautiful, vibrant, young woman died, and all I or anyone else could do was open a window.



BY NICOLE JEAN TURNER

The Most Dangerous Cup of Tea

BY DANIELA CHANDLER

I absolutely love tea. Drinking tea is typically thought to be relaxing and soothing for the mind and body. Its history goes back thousands of years in hundreds of countries all around the world. In my home, my tea kettle is my best friend. As long as I am there, at least once a day the piercing cry of the kettle will go off, startling everyone in the house. Ever since I was little, I remember drinking tea with my family; I'd sip yerba mate with my Argentinian cousins at breakfast, and have a cup of chamomile or chai to relax before bed, then an English breakfast or Earl Grey in the morning, and green or black tea during the day. Even at school, I still drink at least one cup each day. Although, it was not long ago that I was recovering from my painful encounter with a cup of boiling hot tea on my left thigh.

It was a school night like any other, during junior year midterms. Other than the noise of the tea kettle, the house was at complete peace. My Nana sat reading in the sitting room, as she liked to do on the nights when my mother worked late. My friend Grace sat at the dining room table, already studying when I walked into the room. I approached the table, tea cup in one hand, and a stack of books in the other. The next series of events happened so quickly, as a result of my clumsiness. I failed to notice, when placing the tea cup down on the table, that it was just a little bit too close to the textbooks. The next thing I knew, my left leg was in excruciating pain, and the teacup was rolling on the floor. This was not the kind of pain that takes a minute to register; I knew immediately that I was feeling boiling hot

water penetrate my exercise pants and burn my leg. A sense of shock and panic came next, as I stood up, suddenly alert to the situation. I saw Grace laughing at me in disbelief and felt a little appalled that she would find the situation humorous, but then I looked down and realized I had just whipped off my pants and was standing in front of her half-naked. I remember yelling some obscenities in the heat of the moment, unable to properly explain myself to my Nana or Grace. Instead I just followed my instinct by sprinting up the stairs to my bathroom and starting a cold shower.

Once I had turned on the bathtub and sat down, still half clothed and worked up on adrenaline, I managed to explain my situation to my Nana and Grace, both of them admitting that they had no idea what had happened. I was able to laugh at myself with them for a few minutes, before realizing that I could not get out of the bathtub without being crippled by the burning pain in my leg. None of us knew what to do next. Sitting in my icy bath, I watched as the patches of red on my thigh grew more irritated and textured, gradually swelling and spreading even more despite the cold running water. In the bath I felt relief but I knew I could not stay there for the rest of the night and decided to call my father to come over and help me figure out our next move. Based on my descriptions, he was already insisting on emergency care.

When my dad walked into the bathroom he knew I was not in good condition. After helping me put on some pajama shorts, grabbing a dry towel and ice pack for my leg, he supported me as I hobbled out of the bath and out to the car. The twenty minute drive felt like hours and when we arrived the pain had gotten much worse. Luckily, there were not many other patients in the waiting room, so I was not forced to wait very long. Sitting in my wheelchair with my dad, we admired the damage. I actually had two burns: one on my lower right

leg and a big one on my inner left thigh.

After being briefly examined by a nurse, she told me that I had second-degree water burns and there was very little that they could do for them now. My doctor explained that water burns were the second worst type of burns, next to steam and oil, because the heat opens up the pores and since your skin can actually absorb the water, the burns tend to be deeper and more painful, but are rarely third-degree. They administered a strong painkiller and gave me a few more ice packs, since they were each melting so quickly on the warm burn. The nurse seemed extremely pleased when I told her my reaction to the incident; removing my clothing immediately and applying cold water to the burns was basically all I could have done to help myself after the infliction of the injury. I was told to apply a burn ointment three times daily and to wrap up my leg with sterile gauze and an ace bandage. I had to miss school the next day because it was so difficult to walk around, as the burn had begun to blister pretty badly. The weeks that followed were filled with frequent visits to my pediatrician, where they helped me deal with the blisters and discuss scar prevention.

Although I no longer have visible scars on my legs, thanks to topical vitamin E oil, this experience stayed with me. Aside from being hesitant before heating up the kettle for the next few weeks, I learned that how I deal with emergency situations pushed me to be an emergency room nurse. I feel more confident in my ability to make urgent decisions, especially when there is a person's health at stake. When it comes to troublesome situations, I have a strong, natural instinct about how to remove myself and others from danger. This confidence pushes me to go into some form of urgent care-nursing, and I also just love the adrenaline and

satisfaction that comes with being in control of a chaotic situation. However, I also have a deep compassion for the wellbeing of people, which I have always practiced on myself. I believe in health as a holistic concept which includes wellness, happiness, lifestyle, and applying that interest in my own life is a passion of mine.

Tea drinking is one enjoyable activity that I apply a small amount of sentiment to; it is more than just a cup of stimulant or a refreshment- in fact it is not typically very effective for either of those purposes – but instead a part of my meal as well as a choice that I make every day. Like this experience I had with tea, it is important not to be discouraged by setbacks in something you love doing. You can, ultimately, learn and move on from a bad experience. When it comes to nursing, there will be times when I cannot control the outcome of a situation, or it may be out of my hands. However I should continue to pursue the activity, because the virtues outweigh the vices, and to fear tragedy is not a healthy way to live your life.



BY ARIANNA ALCORN

One of Them

BY SUZIE COLDWELL

Fourteen years ago, on a perfect summer day, something magical happened. It might not seem magical to others, but it was for me. On that August day, I was adopted. I had lived with these people for some time, and on that day I became one of them. At the tender age of four, I knew that my life was about to change. These people were so friendly and every day with them was filled with the sounds of laughter; I couldn't wait to officially be one of them.

The day was perfect. The sun was shining and reflecting off of the trees that were swaying in the breeze. It was one of those days where you wake up and know that the world has to be made up of something good. Knowing that sunflowers were my favorite, my soon-to-be mom dressed me in a flowing dress with yellow sunflowers all over. My black hair was pulled up in an achingly tight bun which made my head seem to feel heavy, but I looked cute, so I did not complain. I was a quiet child that did not complain much, and I loved when she did my hair.

The courthouse seemed enormous, like how a Barbie doll's playhouse seems enormous to the little Barbie dolls that my soon-to-be siblings played with every day. Inside, my soon-to-be parents and I sat down on a hard, wooden bench. The bench was far too small for the three of us and I kept squirming to try to get comfortable. The judge droned on and on but I never paid attention to what she was saying, I was too uncomfortable in my seat. I was so bored that I had to keep suppressing the yawns that were threatening to escape me.

"Suzie," the judge called, "I want you to come up here so that you can help me with something."

I was scared to go up to her desk, but the judge had a kind face, especially when it crinkled with a smile. All my nervousness and fear vanished when she smiled, and I became

confident. I quickly climbed up the wooden stairs and approached her desk.

She smiled at me and said, "I need your help to stamp the official seal into the paper." I nodded my head yes and she handed me a cold, metal object. I tried really hard to press the seal but it was very difficult. She placed her warm hand upon my cold one and helped me press the seal. I was so excited, as I had just done something that seemed important. That seal officially made me one of them.

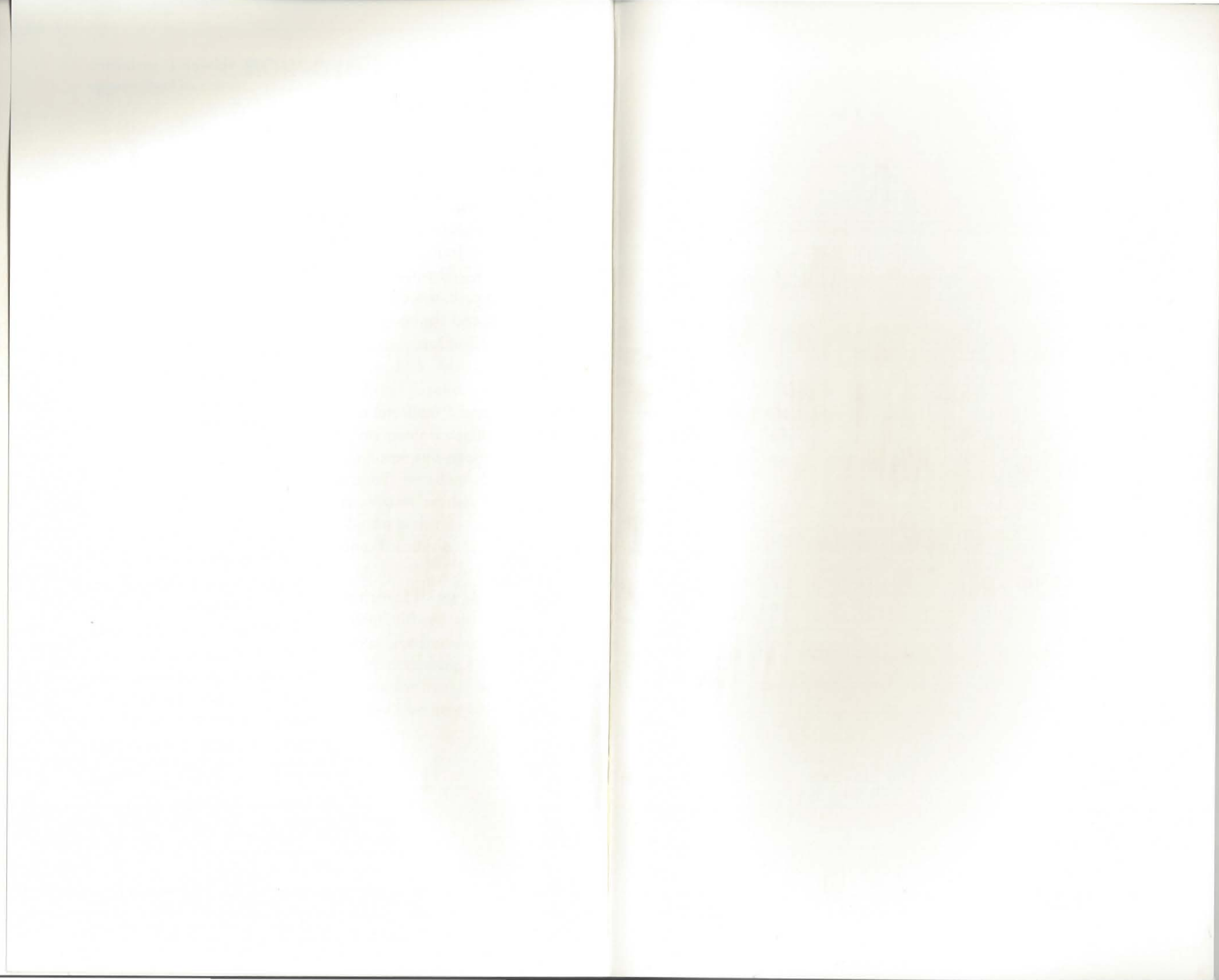
I will never forget the tears of happiness that I saw streaking down my sister-in-law's face. My new, large family was happy to have a new addition, to have me. Not only did I gain a mom and dad, I also gained sisters and brothers. My parents had three of their own children: Erik, Melissa, and Garon. At the same time, they were foster parents and took care of children that were in between families. When Erik, Melissa, and Garon became adults, my parents decided that they wanted to give more children a home and adopted four more, including me. I was the last one to be adopted, meaning I grew up in a large family. Now, my oldest brother Erik is forty-one, Melissa is thirty-eight, Garon is thirty-six, Justine is twenty-three, Brandon is twenty-one, Jennifer is nineteen, and I am the youngest at eighteen.

The moment I finished, she turned to me and said, "From this day on, Donald and Vidia Coldwell are known to you as Mom and Dad." With a serious face I nodded and the courtroom erupted with applause. The next thing I knew I was being passed from person to person for hugs. I will never forget how on that perfect, summer day I became one of them. And I will forever be one of them.

COLOPHON

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